

Technopolitics of Historic Preservation
in Southeast Asian Chinatowns:
Penang, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
DPC	District People's Committee (<i>Ủy Ban Nhân Dân Quận</i>)
DVCI	<i>Dịch vụ công ích</i> (Public Services Company Limited)
GTGP	George Town Grant Programme
GTHA	George Town Heritage Action
GTWHI	George Town World Heritage Incorporated
GTWHS	George Town World Heritage Site
HMP	Heritage Management Plan
ITPC	Investment & Trade Promotion Centre of Ho Chi Minh City
MBPP	The City Council of Penang Island (<i>Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang</i>)
MPC	Municipal People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City (<i>Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh</i>)
MPPP	The Municipal Council of Penang Island (<i>Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang</i> , upgraded to MBPP in 2015)
PDC	Penang Development Corporation
PHT	Penang Heritage Trust
SAP	Special Area Plan
Unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the technopolitics of historic preservation in three Southeast Asian Chinatowns: Penang, Bangkok, and Ho Chi Minh City. I situate this work in the literature on the politics of governmental intervention that views programs of improvement in the larger nexus of knowledge and power (Legg, 2006; Li, 2007; Mitchell 2002; Scott, 1998). Rather than an apolitical technique of intervention, historic preservation goes beyond a strict field of aesthetic restoration. Historic preservation, too, entails its own technopolitics, in which the technical necessarily entails the political. To tease out the technopolitics in historic preservation, I attend to four points of analysis: *technique*, *space*, *rationale*, and *politics*. First, in urban planning, governmental intervention is enacted through various forms of what I call *planning techniques*, e.g. maps, zoning, architectural guidelines, and heritage inventory. Second, each of the planning techniques is a kind of spatial intervention. It has its own program of intervention, in which the object of intervention is *space*. Space, too, takes variously corresponding forms: building height; conservation areas; residential units, construction material; traditional livelihoods, among others. Third, each spatial intervention is justified through a certain rationale, underwritten by a certain epistemic vocabulary. Each spatial intervention is done in the name of vocabularies such as ‘heritage’, ‘density’, ‘progress’. Fourth, in its own way, each planning technique activates its own politics. The term *politics* in technopolitics implies the twofold deployment and contestation of power. While the chapters take on different planning techniques, from mapmaking to zoning, each of the chapters loyally traces the unfolding of these four points.

I make four arguments. First, while the planning techniques are conceived as solution to a problem, they themselves are not problem-free. The planner attributes his authority to technical knowledge, which, in fact, does not constitute the universe of knowledge, but a selection thereof. Second, a planning *problem* is often a *problematization*. A problem does not exist readily. Instead, it has to be constructed and rationalized through a certain vocabulary. It has to be framed in a certain way to lend itself to solution. Third, there are limits to the problematization and its corresponding solution. If technical knowledge may be viewed as selection, there may very well be omission. Fourth, in the face of such omission, contestation is inevitable. I pay attention to the moments of contestation, where the planning techniques clash with things they seek to omit in the first place.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Technopolitics, space, vocabulary

This dissertation is about planning techniques. Maps delineates zones of intervention. Zoning categorizes landuse activities. Architectural guidelines guide building design. Heritage inventory provides a list of sites worthy of preservation. I trace the various planning techniques that urban planners in three Southeast Asian Cities employ to intervene upon the predominantly Chinese district, the ‘Chinatown’ of the respective city. At the heart of this inquiry is a rejection that a planning technique is ever simply a technique. Instead, a given technique activates its own politics. Here, I will define my conception of ‘politics’ by, first, defining what it is not, and then, defining what it is. First, my focus is not on a *cultural politics* of meaning and symbolism of the built environment. The dissertation does not address architecture and urban form as mnemonic devices, viewing the built form as a broad site of remembering and forgetting, where some memories are forged and others submerged (Lee and Yeoh, 2006; Kusno, 2000; 2010; Murray, 2013). Second, this dissertation is not about an *identity politics* between the Chinese and the Native, a battle between Self and Other, where Us is pitted against Them (Jacobs, 1996; Yat, 2016) – a flavor that the reader might infer from the title. Third, it is not about a *political economy* of heritage and historic preservation, where the built environment is ‘produced’ in the Marxist sense through the state institutions and mechanisms, e.g. commodification of space, tourism, and gentrification – a line of inquiry pioneered by Sharon Zukin (1989; 1993; 2009). This is not to deny their immensely helpful contributions to my work. In fact, the three conceptions of politics have found their expression in this dissertation, immensely constituting its contours. As will be shown, I write extensively about the absence of minority heritage (Chapter 9) and the presence of gentrification (Chapters 4-5).

However, such absence and presence, I argue, are made possible by another kind of politics - the *technopolitics*, the kind of politics I am interested in. This dissertation is about the technopolitics of planning techniques. I situate this book in the literature on the technopolitics of

governmental intervention (Scott 1998; Mitchell 2002; Li, 2007). To unpack the term as it is used in this dissertation, let me enumerate four points. First, in urban planning, governmental intervention takes various forms of planning instruments, such as maps, zoning, architectural guidelines, and building inventory. Second, the object of the governmental intervention is *space*. Each planning technique is a kind of spatial intervention. Space, too, takes various, corresponding forms: building height (Chapter 7), conservation areas (Chapters 3 and 6), residential units, construction material (Chapter 4), traditional livelihoods (Chapter 5), among others. Third, each spatial intervention is justified through a certain rationale, underwritten by certain epistemic *vocabularies*. Each spatial intervention is done in the name of vocabularies such as 'heritage', 'density', 'progress'. Fourth, in its own way, a given technique activates its own politics. The *politics* in technopolitics implies the twofold deployment and contestation of power. In Foucault's famous tenet, where there is power, there is resistance. Each chapter traces the unfolding of the four points. I show the government's program of intervention; its targeted space; intended goals; and the politics that arises.

Therefore, to summarize in the most abstract terms, my unit of analysis is the *governmental relation of planning technique*, by which I mean the intricate municipal process in which the state deploys its tools to achieve its desired outcomes. This is a process-oriented research question that involves actors, institutions, and mechanisms. In more concrete terms, the relation varies across space and time. To contrast with the three conceptions of politics, where I write about the absence of minority heritage (Chapter 8), my focus is not the ethnonationalist debate, but the *inventory* as a planning technique that forgets the minority heritage. Where I write about gentrification (Chapter 4), my focus is not the market and its financial actors, but to *zoning* as a planning technique that makes gentrification possible.

I make four theoretical arguments that will recur throughout the book. First, while planning techniques are conceived as a technical 'solution', they themselves are not problem-free. The planner attributes his authority to technical knowledge and its sanctioning vocabulary. In fact, such knowledge is not the universe of knowledge, but a selection thereof. Planning technique results from a certain format of knowledge in a selected, reduced form. Second, by the same token but in reverse, a 'problem' is often a 'problematization'. A problem does not exist readily; it has to be constructed. Here, too, a problem is rationalized through a certain vocabulary. It has to be framed in a certain way to lend itself to solution. Third, as a corollary of the first and

second, there are limits to the problematization and its corresponding solution. If technical knowledge may be viewed as selection, there may very well be omission.

Fourth, in the face of such omission, of such reductive knowledge, contestation is inevitable. Narrowly conceived, the technical always entails the political. People refuse to become 'population'. Objects of intervention are, in fact, subjects with full personhood. Space is space, not spatial attributes. I pay attention to these moments of contestation, where planning techniques bring about slippages. On this point, following Tania Li, I argue that the 'technical' can never be separated from the 'political'. In an otherwise constructive review of my article manuscript submitted to an urban studies journal (Chapter 7), one reviewer mentioned that my paper on Bangkok's density zoning was 'pretty technical'. He or she suggested a 'planning journal' as a more suitable destination. Likewise, my discussion on lime plaster in George Town (Chapter 4) is, too, pretty technical. I was at pains to show the making process from slake lime, to lime putty, to lime mortar and lime wash. In Chapter 9, my detailed presentation of the Vietnamese 1:500 plan is very technical, if not esoteric. I explain the plot-by-plot landuse change in Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown. Yet, this is precisely my project: to obliterate the line between the 'technical' and the 'political'. By magnifying into that amount of detail, by attending to the technical, we can open up the political. From plot to plot, from one line to another, we can most clearly highlight the precise point of contention, and thus see why a minor thing can be so contentious.

Historic preservation

This dissertation about the technopolitics of planning techniques, with a special interest in historic preservation. I use the term 'historic preservation' to refer to the public-sector professional activity of preserving an urban setting. Here, I stress the 'public-sector', because there exist a wide range of other professionals (e.g. architecture firms, private restoration builders, etc) engaged in the field of historic preservation. This book concerns historic preservation as a public-sector, municipal sphere of intervention. 'Historic preservation' is itself a collocation of North American origin that caused confusion during my fieldwork. In the three sites, the activity is known under different names. In Penang, as a British influence, 'conservation' is much more common. But even so, 'heritage' is by far the predominant word of choice. It sanctions and saturates (and dangerously so, as I hope to show in this book) all of the state interventions. In Bangkok, the public-sector professional activity is much more recent. The official English title of this administrative unit within the city government is 'urban renewal', a

term that should make many planners in the West uncomfortable for its specific meaning in Western planning history. Yet, the term 'urban conservation' has been gaining traction in recent years. In Ho Chi Minh City, such professional activity barely exists at all. Whatever resembles 'historic preservation' in Ho Chi Minh City can be best described as archaeology.

Therefore, 'historic preservation' is clearly a convenient shorthand of my own choosing. It is a particularly effective shorthand to communicate to the North American audience (e.g. my dissertation committee). But more importantly, the collocation, I hope, is a neutral-enough umbrella term that encompasses all the planning techniques used in preserving an urban setting. For example, it offers a more generous (and more forgiving) conceptual terrain than, say, heritage - a rather loaded term that signifies different, and sometimes antithetical things in different places, from Malaysia to Vietnam, as the following pages will show (Chapters 5 and 8).

Chapter outline

In Chapter 3, *Contour*, I trace the cartographic construction of George Town World Heritage Site. I show how the state used mapmaking to articulate a field of intervention. George Town is a predominantly Chinese capital of the predominantly Chinese state of Penang, Malaysia. In 2008, an area of George Town was demarcated as a Unesco World Heritage Site. My purpose in this chapter is to destabilize what has been cemented as a stable, fixed, singular contour. I argue that the contour is a recent invention. Prior to 2008, there have existed many cartographic imaginations for what should be conserved as historic George Town. I provide examples that expose a classic contradiction of mapmaking, where thin lines can serve to include as much it excludes. In addition, I discuss material implications that result from the symbolic demarcation of lines and boundaries. In Chapter 4, *Content*, I zoom into the contour of George Town World Heritage Site in order to explore the government's attempt to curate its contents. In particular, the Special Area Plan (SAP), an authoritative masterplan, is a key document that prescribes the contents of George Town. I first chronicle the struggle in which the government seek to gazette the ambitious document, outlining the repeated delay and the resulting ad-hoc style of intervention. Then, I attend to three contents of interest: hotel, home, the Ideal Shophouse. Since 2008, George Town has seen a burgeoning of 'illegal hotels' as more and more shophouses are converted into hotels. The government devised many programs to control their spreading, often finding themselves caught in the limits of their own intervention. Second, in a hope of retain residential population in the rapidly gentrifying historic core, the SAP proposes 'Residential Overlay' - an extra zoning layer that favors residences. Here, I show contradictory

examples in which residents are evicted the so-called Residential Overlay, and premises turn from 'home' to 'business' with the state's full blessing. Third, I discuss the difficulties of curating the Ideal Shophouse, George Town's distinctive architectural typology. The vision departs from the realities, opening up an design politics of material and expertise.

Chapter 5, *Soul*, explores the attempt to capture George Town's losing soul: traditional trades and their human bearers. As the gentrifying World Heritage Site is giving in to commercial development, traditional traders are replaced with hotels and cafes. I investigate the role of George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI), a state agency established as the site manager. In particular, I pay attention to their intervention upon George Town's 'intangible heritage'. To ground my analysis, I highlight two forms of intervention: Directory of Traditional Trades and the Annual Heritage Site Celebrations. The former documents the inventory of traditional traders, artisans, and craftspeople of George Town. The latter is an annual event that celebrates each 'theme' of intangible heritage, e.g. crafts, food, games. I analyze GTWHI as the producer of heritage knowledge, exploring how heritage is, first, conceived, and then, mobilized. I am particularly interested in what forms of heritage are present in, and absent from, such conception and mobilization.

Chapters 6 and 7 introduce the modernist city planning of Bangkok. Chapter 6, *Extension*, explains Chinatown as a cartography of extension. I piece together a series of ordinance maps between 1980s and 1990s that were employed to construct Rattanakosin, Bangkok's official historic district. Subsequently, the area of Chinatown was added as an Extension to the prestigious historic district. *Extension* evokes an appendage, appendix, addendum, or something added on one established core. Then, I revoke this imagery. Another set of evidence refutes the cartography of Extension, showing that Chinatown is as old as, if not older than, Rattanakosin itself. Chapter 7, *Category*, further explores the lasting implications of Chinatown as an Extension. On the zoning map, Rattanakosin is categorized as historic-preservation landuse. By contrast, Chinatown is categorized as a commercial CBD (Central Business District) landuse. Although Chinatown is, for certain, commercial by nature, there is another depth of commercial experience unaccounted for by the zoning map. I outline contestations that arise in response to the universal vision that constructs Chinatown as a CBD. Similarly, Chapter 7, *Geometry*, discusses material consequences of one fashionable planning policy: transit-oriented development (TOD). Aiming to promote high-density TOD, the BMA, the city government of Bangkok, forcibly *upzoned* the areas within a 500-meter radius of every metro station. Today, a large-scale development is permissible, if not actively encouraged, if it is

located within the radius. The geometry of high density is producing a peculiar effect on Chinatown: eviction. Elite landowners latch onto the new opportunities, fulfilling the high-density vision and evicting long-time tenants. Both *Category* and *Geometry* speak to the unintended problem of universal zoning that omit, or *unsee*, particular conditions of a place. Claimed to be neutral and universal, they end up privileging some and disadvantaging others.

Chapters 8 and 9 introduce Cholon, the predominantly Chinese district of Ho Chi Minh City. In particular, I shed light on Cholon's time and space. Chapter 8, *Past*, explores heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City in general and in Cholon in particular. Here, I draw attention to the persistent power of the past in influencing today's construction of heritage. Historical geographer Dennis Hardy would call Vietnamese heritage a *conservative heritage*, or heritage that is employed to support a noble, elite past. For Vietnam, this means socialist past as ancient sites and structures are valorized to commemorate (and validate) the country's official historiography. Even in Cholon, a district with its wealth of history, the official heritage sites are ones that recall the Communist Party's significant personalities and exploits. Chapter 9 shifts gears to the *Future*. It investigates the idea of future to shape the present in its image. I highlight how the government shapes Cholon as a 'growth district'. In particular, I attend to a wide variety of planning instruments and bodies that are ready to rewrite Cholon's space to accommodate the future vision. As far as historic preservation is concerned, it is not a concern. The state itself is an active promoter of modernization and demolition.

Audience

The book straddles disciplines, from Southeast Asian studies to urban studies. Addressing the multiple audiences is a challenge for the presentation of material. Regionalists would yearn for more detail, while comparativists warn against writing a city biography. Postcolonial scholars will be troubled by a stark absence of the colonial specters. After all, the three places are fraught in their own ways with undeniable colonial pasts of imperial Britain and France. As one commenter rightly suggested, even the name of 'George Town', the capital of Penang, is colonially inflected. Diaspora-studies scholars would go so far as note the absence of another potential colonizer: China, the People's Republic of China.

Chinatown invokes a particular methodology among academics. Zhou and Logan (1989) pioneered the study of New York's Chinatown as an 'ethnic enclaves', paying attention residential mobility of new Chinese immigrants. Ten years later, Jan Lin's (1998) landmark book

Reconstructing China has become a scholarly template to interrogate Chinatown. So has Anderson's (1991) *Vancouver's Chinatown*. In such a well-established terrain, even when his work is different, it is hard for a novice scholar to *not* acknowledge the authors, to not at least briefly nod at their contributions. Ignoring will be read as ignorance. However, by way of acknowledging them, I must stress that my approach is different from those towering figures of Chinatown. Sociologists and geographers of migration will be disappointed that this book is not about Chinatown as an ethnic settlement, but Chinatown as a technical interface (Watson, 2009) (see more in Chapter 7). That is, I write less about how Chinatown is constructed than how it is regulated. Yet, I stand by my interest in technopolitics. I hope that by emphasizing that Chinatown is shaped not only by socioeconomic processes, but also by a plethora of municipal techniques, we can carve a tight line of investigation into the otherwise broad politics of culture, identity, and the market.

Chapter 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Logic of case selection

In selecting my three cases, I follow Yin's logic of theoretical replication. In his *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, Yin makes a distinction between a single-case study and multiple-case study (Yin, 2013). Perhaps one of Yin's greatest contribution (and one that resonates deeply with my work) is that multiple cases resemble multiple *replications*, not multiple *samplings* (Yin, 2013, p. 54). That is, multiple cases within one study are more suitably viewed as experiments, not as samples in survey research. The idea of replication as experiment hints at, and makes greater room for, within-case complexity that the researcher needs to be mindful of (I address this below). Further, for multiple-case studies, Yin makes a distinction between literal replication and theoretical replication. While the former selects multiple cases that predict similar outcomes, the latter chooses cases that predicts 'contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons'.

This dissertation follows Yin's logic of theoretical replication. The three different cases were chosen to reflect three different regimes of spatial intervention in the Chinatowns of three Southeast Asia cities: Penang (Malaysia), Bangkok (Thailand), and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). The intention to provide contrasting accounts was clear from the start. The area that may be called 'Chinatown'¹, I hoped to show, received distinctive state recognitions and interventions. Penang is the most predominantly Chinese state in federal Malaysia. George Town, its state capital, was once a trading entrepot run by Chinese traders during the colonial days. In 2008, George Town was inscribed by the Unesco as a World Heritage Site in recognition of George Town's cultural and historical significance. Since then, a plethora of state programs are devised to intervene different aspects or 'themes' of the city's space: boundaries, buildings, occupations, among others. There is an attempt at extensive curation. Even so, despite being predominantly

¹ Chinatown is a convenient shorthand of my own choosing, not because they are called 'Chinatown' as such either in English or the local language, but because they are predominantly ethnic Chinese in residential composition.

Chinese, George Town is cast under the banner of multiculturalism that both the Unesco and Malaysia seek to promote. The Chinese and their spaces are subsumed into the city's larger multicultural fabric. In Bangkok, the city government's stance towards Chinatown is less clear, being buried instead in its generalized modernist vision of city planning. In fact, cultural intervention, e.g. heritage-making, historic preservation, is relatively recent and less formalized. Instead, the device of zoning reigns supreme. Land is seen through universal landuse zoning. Such universal intervention, as I have shown, produced particular impact upon Chinatown (Chapter 7). Lastly, Ho Chi Minh City is chosen to illustrate a Chinatown which received the least preservation intervention. Where the government attempts to preserve the city's heritage, they do so in the name of socialist ideology (Chapter 8). Further to that, Chinatown is positioned as a growth district, where they government write and rewrite their planning instruments to accommodate this vision.

Two caveats are in order. First, the three sites were chosen, in short, to typify three styles of planning intervention. In this sense, this is the researcher's heavy-handed intervention to stage a 'bespoke comparison' (Robinson, 2015), in which the 'cases' are not natural, but instead are consciously brought into the same frame. Quite naturally, the intention here was for the three cases to provide 'contrasting outcomes' (Yin, 2009). In other words, the selection hints at the Weberian ideal-types: the three contrasting accounts seek to provide contrasting experiences of historic preservation in Chinatown of Southeast Asia. Second and relatedly, the case selection does not imply a spectrum. It is tempting to view Penang as the most-intervened case, Ho Chi Minh the least-intervened, and Bangkok as something 'in between' the two 'extremes'. Yet, the spectral imagery is problematic. A spectrum implies a variation of quantitative degree. Instead, in my design, I am more interested in a thicker matrix of qualitative differences.

Therefore, this dissertation is an antidote to the two potential misreadings: the three 'distinct styles' and the three 'distinct points' in a spectrum. I hope to show that the three types or styles are not as internally coherent as the bespoke selection has seemed to suggest. Often, within a site, an intervention is fraught with its own complexity, dilemma, and contradictions. Similarly, given such internal complexity, they cannot be thought of three variants of the same entity. In this regard, while departing with three ideal-types, this dissertation is committed to (1) dismantling the ideal-types and their discrete boundaries; (2) doing away with a spectral reading; and (3) providing, in its stead, a thicker matrix of differences. What framework may one draw upon to achieve the three tasks? I followed Charles Tilly's (1984) 'individualizing

comparison'. As an early attempt to organize comparative strategies in historical sociology, Tilly proposed four types of comparison: individualizing, variation-finding, universalizing, and encompassing. This dissertation is my attempt at the 'individualizing comparison', the first type, which seeks to 'to *contrast* specific instances of a given phenomenon as a means of grasping the *peculiarities* of each case (Tilly, 1984, p. 82, emphasis added). In comparative urban studies, researchers use individualizing comparisons to bring to light 'the peculiarities of particular places and institutional contexts' (Brenner, 2001; Ward, 2010; Robinson, 2011).

A few examples illustrate Tilly's individualizing comparison, as reviewed by Brenner (2001) and Ward (2010). Clarke (1995) studied 'local political processes' as a result of 'global economic transformation and attendant social changes' in eight American cities – Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Macon, Oklahoma City, Seattle, Tacoma and Tulsa. Savitch (1988) compared New York, Paris, and London, where each was made to represent a different 'type' of governing regime and its particular power constellations in the era of inter-city competition. The focus was on the dynamics of competition in the three different places. Or, in comparing the governing regimes, 'the focus is on process and behavior'. Janet Abu-Lughod's (1999) landmark book *New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles* traces the historical processes of urban transformations. Her ultimate goal is to 'interpret the differences among the three cities in in the era of urban restructuring (Abu-Lughod, 1999 cited in Brenner, 2001). In other words, constructing a series of ideal-types, these authors sought to uncover the political-economic parameters within a regime (Ward, 2010, p. 477). Individualizing comparison is compatible with three of Yin's propositions: case-study as experiment; theoretical replication; and theoretical proposition. First, in conducting individualizing comparisons, the researcher treats each 'case' as an experiment, not a sampling in a survey. Each case is generalizable to a theory, not to a population. The researcher's goal is to 'expand and generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)' (Yin, 2003, p. 10). Similarly, Clarke (1995) did not use the eight-city cases to confirm a certainty or to corroborate a statistical significance. Rather, each of the cases is akin to an experiment that pushes and is pushed by the theory of interest. Second, individualizing comparisons expect contrasting outcomes, not unlike Yin's theoretical replication.

In choosing three different cities, New York, London, and Paris, Savitch's (1988) interest was to provide a range of regimes in which local processes and politics played out differently. Third and most importantly to my research design (see below), individualizing comparison is interested in

within-case particularities. Again, the intention is to contrast the cases in order to magnify the peculiarities of each case. This intention is in line with case study as a research strategy that provides room for a host of ‘variables’ interacting in a host of processes. To this end, Yin specifically highlights the role of ‘theoretical proposition’, or the theoretical framework that the researcher develops to guide the analysis of the cases. A theoretical proposition is a ‘[hypothetical] story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur’ (Sutton and Staw, 1995, p. 378, cited in Yin, 2013, p. 38).

2. In-case analysis

As a point of departure, I used the combined insights from the two logics – individualizing comparisons *and* theoretical replication – to guide my analysis. In my mind, the combination accounts for both depth (table 1) and comparison (Chapter 10). It provided both room for in-case discussion and structure for cross-case comparison. The combination is friendly for comparative researchers who want to do justice to the depth of the cases, and at the same time not compromise the scope. To this comparative end, across the three sites, my unit of analysis is the *governmental relation of planning technique*. By that, I mean the intricate municipal process in which the state deploys its tools (‘planning techniques’) to achieve its desired outcomes (‘space’). The handy parallel with the Marxist notion of capital as a *social relation of production* is intentional. In mimicking the notion, I had in mind a process-oriented research question that would lend itself to process-rich analysis.

My coarse parallel with Marxism ends here. More fundamentally, the term *governmental* is a direct nod to Foucauldian governmentality. Planning technique cannot be thought of in isolation from power, so much so we can speak of one technique/power nexus. Since this dissertation is about planning techniques as a form of governmental project, I cast my unit of analysis in the mold of Foucauldian power. To Foucault, power is not a monolithic thing. Power is not centralized in a certain figure, institution, or place. Rather, power has to be exercised. Even then, the exercise of power is dispersed. Power is not exercised vertically from top to bottom, but horizontally across state institutions, through diverse means, and societal bodies. In Foucault’s own words, power is ‘capillary’ and is ‘exercised through a net-like organization’ (Foucault, 2003, p. 94; 98). To analyze power, to capture its capillarity, Foucault proposes an *ascending analysis*. In his second lecture at Collège de France, he defined his ascending analysis (*analyse ascendante*) as one that attends to:

'the actual instruments that form and accumulate knowledge, the observational methods, the recording techniques, the investigative research procedures, and the verification mechanisms' (Foucault, 2001, pp. 33-34, cited in Ghertner, 2015, p. 203).

'[power's] infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see[s] how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc, by ever more general mechanisms'

The two quotes respectively illustrate (1) governmental techniques and (2) their deployment. First, the language of 'instruments', 'methods', 'tactics, and 'techniques' should hint at a suit of techniques used in a project of government. Apparently, the Foucauldian suit of techniques inspires the term 'planning technique' as it is used throughout this dissertation (table 1). Second, the term *ascending* should speak to the dissemination of these techniques, to the processes in which these techniques/tactics are practiced. The practice of power/technique cannot do without knowledge that justifies it. As geographer Ghertner advises, the ascending analysis focuses on the 'micropractices of knowledge formation demands attention to the diverse forms in which knowledge is...used to craft grids of intelligibility: how governmental programs use carefully selected metrics to assess and assign value and meaning to their targets' (Ghertner, 2015, p. 203).

Methodologically, then, there is an affinity between case-study methodology and Foucauldian analysis. This is not to say case study is the only method amenable to the study of power. In fact, ethnography and historical methods have extensively been used to study governmental programs across space and time. Legg's (2007) historical study of urban governmentalities in colonial India comes to mind. Yet, the one parallel I see between the two is the encompassing framework that they both champion. At the most basic level, although again not necessarily situated within Yin's formulation, governmentality studies calls for in-depth analysis. More specifically, scholars agree that governmentality is the study of the 'how of government' (Chang, 2016; Dean, 2010; Rose-Redwood, 2006).² In parallel, Yin's case-study seeks to answer 'how' research questions. Unsurprisingly, many excellent Foucauldian-inspired projects take the form of monographs rooted in a certain place (Ghertner, 2016; Legg, 2007; Li, 2007). The 'capillarity' of power should evoke the imagery of depth as the researcher traces the trajectory of the technique-power nexus from its intention, through its medium, and finally to its target. That is,

² Here, I would also add that governmentality is both the 'how' and 'why' of government.

explaining the machinery of power in its fullest manifestation deserves that kind of length and depth.

Now, let me return to my unit of analysis — the governmental relation of planning technique — and format it in light of Foucauldian ascending analysis. To render such a detailed analysis, to generate that kind of depth, one ventures into a staggering ecology of state actors, and their institutions, tools, and mechanisms. Therefore, in practical terms, I have adopted Legg's framework for analyzing governmental programs (2005; 2006; 2007). In his exemplary study of urban governmentalities³ in colonial India, historical geographer Stephen Legg offers a series of 'analytics of governmentality', through which a governmental program may be analyzed: episteme, identities, visibility, *techne*, and *ethos*.⁴ He developed the analytics upon the prior works of Rose (1996), Dean (1999), and Hindess (Dean and Hindess, 1998). Scholars have usefully applied Legg's analytics to a variety of topics: boycott movements in West Germany in 1980s (Hannah, 2009); public health as urban politics in Seattle (Brown, 2009); gendered geographies in North America (Knopp, 2005; Lewis, 2012); politics of regional geography in contemporary Europe (Painter, 2013). In their own ways, these otherwise topically different studies employ the analytics to shed light on different forms of governmental space.

The framework resonated greatly with me as a novice researcher, for it gave a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for analyzing spatial governmental programs. In adopting the analytics of governmentality, I have also adapted them to suit my inquiry. While Legg is interested in the broad governmental regime, where 'techne' and 'visibility' are studied as part of the regime's operation, I focused extensively on the techniques themselves.⁵ In this light, the framework that I have developed — the governmental relation of planning technique — may be broken down into four aspects: *planning technique*, *targeted space*, *rationale*, and *contention*. Each of them translates to a series of questions that guide my analysis (table 1). The first is what I call, perhaps rather dryly, *planning technique*. These are the planning tools, instruments, devices, etc, that planners use to intervene space. I am interested in both the tool and its implementation

³ Legg traces various moments of urban governmental programs in colonial India, including the hierarchies of knowledge in New Delhi, the police's disciplinary power and policing, and the biopolitics of urban development, health, and congestion.

⁴ Legg's analytics are (1) *episteme* (the use of certain vocabularies for production of truth), (2) *identities* (the conception of people to be governed), (3) *visibility* (tools of specialists/policymakers), (4) *techne* (mechanisms of government), and (5) *ethos* (the moral form that distributes tasks in relation to ideals/principles of government).

⁵ Not all of my questions and Legg's are aligned. For example, Legg is interested in *ethos*, the moral obligation of the state.

process. First, what is the tool in question? How is it conceived? How does it see and represent reality? Second, what implementation process does it require? How does it intervene in reality? That is, 'through what mechanism, procedure, or tactic is a rule accomplished' (Legg, 2006).

Second, *targeted space* is the conception of space to be governed. Here, I am interested in the space targeted by the planning technique. Again, space comes in many forms: building height (Chapter 7), conservation areas (Chapters 3 and 6), residential units, construction material (Chapter 2), traditional livelihoods (Chapter 5), among others. I ask: For each planning planning and its corresponding target space, what is the intended spatial outcome? What forms of space are expected? How does the planning technique seek to direct desire and shape agency?

Third, *rationale*. What is the rationale that underwrites the planning technique and its spatial intervention? What *epistemic vocabularies* are used to justify the planning technique? This third aspect corresponds to the word 'vocabulary' used in the dissertation's title. I prefer 'vocabulary' over other terms, e.g. rationale, rationality, justification, or the frequently invoked Foucauldian 'discourse'. In my mind, vocabulary conveys a more precise focus on words. Rationale has to be enacted through words. As Foucault suggested, power cannot be exercised without certain discourses of truth; 'we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth' (Foucault, 2003, p. 93). For example, each spatial intervention is done in the name of certain vocabularies, or truths, such as 'heritage', 'density', 'progress', 'order'. Therefore, I am interested in the logic of problematization, in which the planning technique problematizes a certain entity (e.g. persons, space, behavior) as a 'problem' to be solved. Studying rationale calls for a suite of anchoring questions. What forms of thought, calculation, and rationality are deployed? What vocabulary is mobilized? What relations are suggested between subjects and space? How are problems represented, and remedies suggested?

Fourth and lastly, *politics*, by which I mean political contention, conflict, openings that arise from the implementation of planning technique. Indeed, this nods at the term *technopolitics* in the dissertation's title, signaling my interest in, not just any political contention, but a contention caused by a given planning *technique*. To do so, my analysis foregrounds the specific moment at which planning technique activates a conflict. I prioritize the instances in which local conditions are incorporated and exploited by the planning technique in a particular way. I must say that I am interested in both overt and covert forms of contestation. In truth, contestation need not be overt display of political strife. Absences and silences are equally telling.

Each chapter is a loyal unfolding of these four aspects of the technopolitics of historic preservation (table 2). Since a given planning technique needs to be evaluated in its own terms, the in-case investigation is in order as follows. First, it articulates the planning in question. Second, it specifies the space targeted by the planning technique. Third, the discussion explains the rationale behind the planning technique, and the epistemic vocabularies employed to support it. Fourth and lastly, I highlight the politics that responds to the conception of the planning technique. Of course, these four aspects may not be analyzed in isolation. Planning technique is always conceived to deal with a certain space in mind and with a certain rationale. Therefore, this table should be read suggestively, not definitively. It is a summary of, not a substitute for my longer analysis in each chapter.

The governmental relation of planning technique	
(1) <i>Planning technique</i>	(a) What planning technique is in question? (ways of seeing and representing) (b) What processes are involved? (ways of intervening)
(2) <i>Targeted space</i>	(a) What space does the planning technique target? (b) What is the intended spatial outcome? What forms of space are expected? How does the planning technique seek to direct desire and shape agency?
(3) <i>Rationale</i>	(a) What rationale, or <i>epistemic vocabulary</i> , justifies the planning technique? What forms of rationality are deployed? What vocabulary is mobilized? (b) How is an entity (e.g. person, space, behavior) problematized as a 'problem' to be solved? How are problems represented, and remedies suggested?
(4) <i>Politics</i>	(a) How are local conditions incorporated and exploited? (b) As a result, what conflict does the planning technique activate?

Table 2.1: the governmental relation of planning technique

Chapter	Planning technique	Targeted space
Chapter 3 <i>Contour</i>	Mapmaking	George Town World Heritage Site (GTHWS)
Chapter 4 <i>Content</i>	Hotel regulation	Hotels in GTWHS
	Zoning	Five 'activity-cluster zones'
	Architectural guidelines	Category II buildings

Chapter 5 <i>Soul</i>	Inventory	Traditional trades
	Walking trail	Traditional trades (selected)
	Annual celebrations	Intangible heritage of GTWHS
Chapter 6 <i>Extension</i>	Mapmaking	Rattanakosin historic district & the Extension
	Zoning	Rattanakosin historic district
Chapter 7 <i>Category</i>	Zoning	Chinatown zoned as a CBD (central business district) zone
Chapter 7 <i>Geometry</i>	500-meter radius of high-density development (upzoning)	Transit-oriented development (TOD)
Chapter 8 <i>Past</i>	Inventory	Relics
Chapter 9 <i>Future</i>	Zoning	Growth district and land plots
	Institutional arrangement (DVCI)	Development projects

Table 2.2: the unfolding of the governmental relation of planning technique

3. Cross-case comparison: Comparison as defamiliarization

Having outlined the need for in-case investigation, I now turn to cross-case comparison. One productive tension emerges from comparing the planning techniques across the three sites. On the one hand, the sites are distinct. After all, they are three different cities. In essence, the three-case design is chosen to explicate contrasting experiences of historic preservation intervention. Indeed, the unit of analysis — the governmental relation of planning technique — will and does vary across the three sites. As I have set up earlier, the theoretical interest is in the unfolding of the ideal types. Yet, on the other hand, the planning techniques are so *familiar* to the field of urban planning. At the most basic level, urban planners everywhere apply these planning instruments: mapmaking, zoning, building guidelines. Distinct as the three regimes may be, they intriguingly employ comparable tools or ‘planning techniques’ in intervening their respective Chinatowns. From the prestigious Unesco World Heritage Site to Bangkok’s commercial Chinatown to Ho Chi Minh City’s growth district, the planning techniques find themselves in the daily operation of urban planning. Therefore, since the onset, despite in-case particularities, the comparable planning techniques may lend comparative insights.

However, while these techniques are so familiar they can appear similar, they are not. This is precisely my point of cross-case comparison: to defamiliarize familiarities that are taken as similarities. Towards this project of comparison as defamiliarization, the multiple-case design provides a unique ground to see how familiar instruments unfold differently (and how differently), as they interact with different local imperatives. (Even so, the notion of 'difference' needs to be qualified - a point I will develop in the last chapter). In other words, comparison, in my usage, is a sensitivity device. In employing a three-case design, my comparison seeks to forestall two things: generalization (single-case study) and dichotomization (two-case study)

(1) Single-case study and generalization

First, the multiple-case design preempts overdetermined generalization. One common approach in urban studies is to use a single-case study to interact with theory. In this tradition, a case is mobilized to confirm; refute; or clarify theory. In so doing, we might end up with an overdetermined account of, say, a certain actor (e.g. the city government) and its policies (e.g. urban planning techniques). In other words, we might end up with *refamiliarization*, where a singular narrative is told vis-a-vis theory. By contrast, comparison brings in comparable experiences from elsewhere to speak to the same phenomenon. In my case, the phenomenon is the planning technique in question. For example, take the theory of critical cartography. The tenet of critical cartography is that mapmaking is a classic technique of spatial exclusion (Chapter 6). However, by bringing in a contrasting experience (Chapter 3), where map purports to include, we broaden the view of map. In so doing, comparison forestalls a totalizing explanation of map. Comparison destabilizes a hegemonic reading of mapmaking as strict exclusion. Similarly, had I analyzed the use of list in Ho Chi Minh City alone (Chapter 8) without the benefit of other experiences of list (Chapter 5), an overdetermined conclusion would be that list is a planning technique that supports the status quo. In short, comparison provides a check on an overgeneralization, an overdetermined narrative.

(2) Two-case study and dichotomization

Second, the three-case design forestalls dichotomization. It is wary of assigning pairs of binary to two cases, thus pitting one against the other. In my case, Penang and Ho Chi Minh City seem to occupy two distinct polarities. In fact, in a two-case design, they would be each other's antithesis. In Penang, the government employs intensive, extensive preservation tools. By contrast, in Ho Chi Minh City, Chinatown receives very little preservation attention. For certain, I did stage this contrast somewhat in my comparison. Take the inventory for example. The two

cities make use of inventory as a planning technique, yet to two very different ends. Penang’s Directory of Traditional Trades was an attempt to safeguard the city’s disappearing intangible practices (Chapter 5). By contrast, Ho Chi Minh City’s relics inventory recognizes little more than socialist and religious monuments (Chapter 8). In this sense, the two cases illustrate the two axes in historic preservation. The first is the ‘ideology’ axis that distinguishes between *conservative* heritage (elite, high-style, history of nobility) and *radical* heritage (vernacular, ordinary, everyday) (Hardy, 1988). The second is the ‘object’ axis that distinguishes between preservation’s focus on buildings (architecture, structure, facade) and on people (human, livelihood, practices). In this grid, Penang and Ho Chi Minh City occupy two diametrically opposing quadrants. In short, Penang is seen as more interested in the city’s *soul* and Ho Chi Minh City in its (socialist) *past*.

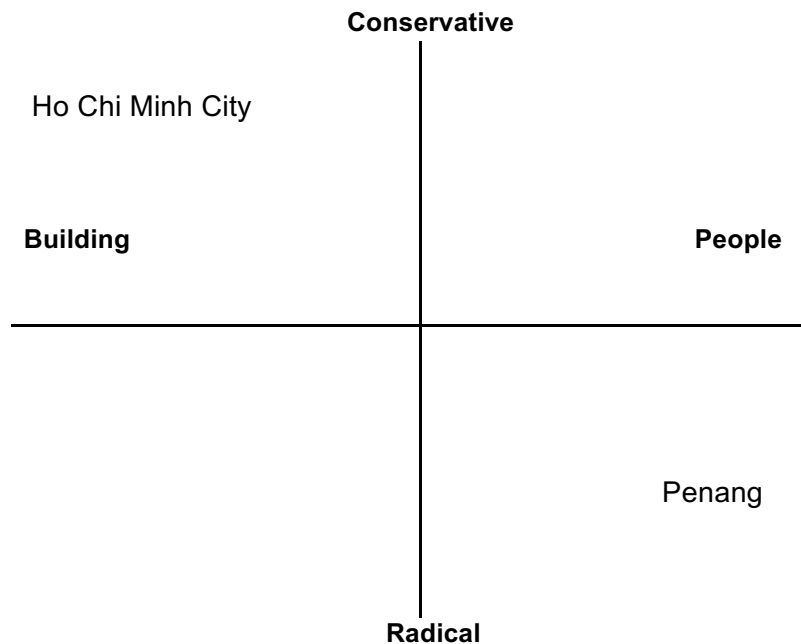


Figure 2.1: axes in historic preservation

However, my attempt at contrasting the two ends here. I see two flaws associated with the two-case design as ‘variation-finding’. They are overemphasis on (internal) coherence and on (relative) difference. First, by dichotomizing two cases as binary, one risks treating each of them as coherent. Far from coherent, Penang, too, is caught in its own politics of heritage recognition. In fact, Penang prioritizes conservative heritage, not unlike Ho Chi Minh City and most cities in the world. Today, the government distinguishes between ‘Category I’ and ‘Category II’ heritage

buildings. In practical terms, the former are monumental sites and the latter the shophouses that make up the majority of the buildings within George Town.⁶ Mimicking the National Heritage List for England's (NHLE) 'Grade I' and 'Grade II', Penang's system makes a similar distinction between the exceptional minority and the democratic majority, thus paralleling Hardy's distinction between conservative and radical heritage.⁷ More importantly, the two categories speak to different levels of protection. As I went to great lengths to show (Chapter 4), the Category II buildings, the shophouse, do not always 'warrant every effort being made to preserve them' as professed by the Penang Government (SAP, 2016). While Penang's attempt at protecting vernacular practices is to be congratulated for upending the two axes of preservation (Figure 1), the attempt ends up being showcasing, rather than safeguarding (Chapter 5).

Similarly, it is inaccurate to see historic preservation in Ho Chi Minh City as decisively conservative. Ho Chi Minh City's heritage-making, too, is not static. In fact, as Chapter 8 shows, since its inception in 1970s, the heritage inventory has expanded to recognize more vernacular types. Heritage is, indeed, heritagization. Rather than a noun, heritage is better thought of as a verb (Harvey, 2001), for it involves a longer, more dynamic view of heritage's evolution, shift, and reconciliation. If we understand heritage as verb, any heritage/preservation regime, then, is far from internally coherent. Its dynamism keeps producing new sites, reflecting new understandings and political climates at the time. Therefore, we cannot reduce heritage to one zeitgeist. We cannot trim heritage for 'comparison' with another regime by caricaturing it as one totalized, coherent theme. While internal coherence would make for neat, easy comparison across sites, it does disservice to the otherwise complex picture of heritage-making in each site.

The second and more dangerous concern is the risk of overemphasizing relative difference. In a two-case design, it is tempting to excavate *binaries* or pairs of difference, magnifying them to generalize a theory. In policy studies, such as urban planning, the two-case design might be used to illustrate, say, relative success and failure. Success may be readily assigned to City A, and failure to City B. In my case, Penang could be conceived as a relatively successful case.

⁶ Category I buildings are 'buildings, monuments, objects and sites of exceptional interest' and those 'declared or registered as ancient and gazetted under the [Malaysian] National Heritage Act 2005'. Category II buildings are 'buildings, objects and sites of special interest that warrant every effort being made to preserve them'.

⁷ Again, the national, federal context is important, for it enables and constrains the range of possible outcomes. The act is Malaysia's National Heritage Act of 2005. Although Penang's own State Heritage Enactment was passed in 2011 (thanks to the Unesco inscription), it has thus far not been invoked.

Indeed, compared to other cities in Southeast Asia, Penang has been successful on many counts. In specific, it is blessed with many 'ingredients' for success. Its Special Area Plan is a comprehensive, well-written masterplan. It has active heritage-focused NGOs. The press has long been interested in the topics of history, culture, and heritage. By contrast (or, in hope of staging a contrast), one would be tempted to turn Ho Chi Minh City into a bespoke 'failure case'. Unfortunately, Ho Chi Minh City seems to have woeful ingredients: a less democratic governance, less educated middle-class, underlying socialist ideology. However, if the success-failure binary (or other binaries for that matter: least-most, presence-absence) were the logic, one could easily substitute Ho Chi Minh City with any other city in Southeast Asia (except Singapore!), a region where heritage as a collective consciousness is in its nascent state. In fact, Bangkok, too, could be portrayed as Penang's polar opposite. After all, the state has provided little intervention to recognize Chinese cultural heritage. Worse yet, the existing interventions only serve to uproot the residents and pre-existing built forms (Chapter 7). If the success-failure binary should be the logic, the lesson drawn from comparing Penang and Bangkok in a two-case design would be the same as comparing Penang and Ho Chi Minh City (save for their particularities, of course). The lesson will be: City A as Success and City B as Failure. I capitalize Success and Failure because I want to hint at the danger of allegorizing cities, the danger of emphasizing their relative difference in order to stage a neat, easy comparison. In my three-case design, the 'third term' (i.e. every site is one another's third term) is inserted to forestall a binary reading. Being mindful of the existence of Ho Chi Minh City prompted, I rethink Bangkok in relation to Penang not in terms of binary difference, but a wider terrain of (qualified) differences (see the last chapter).

Comparison beyond comparing traits

The three-case individualizing comparison is, then, helpful in forestalling the two risks of internal coherence and relative difference. The two risks share the same problem of pigeonholing, in which internal coherence and relative difference are overdetermined at the price of the larger in-case complexity. Quite opposite, the individualizing comparison can redress the two flaws by providing deeper, in-case analysis and the 'third term' to forestall dichotomization and polarity. Let us recall Tilly's individualizing comparison, one that is meant to render all the in-case particularities and peculiarities. In this sense, individualizing comparison is not a lateral comparison, one in which 'traits' are compared. In assembling multiple-case individualizing comparison, the researcher does not necessarily compare a set of traits, but parallel processes (Abu-Lughod's, 1999; Clarke, 1995; Savitch, 1988). In this spirit, I have chosen to treat each of

the cases in their own fullness, focusing on their peculiar constellation of technopolitics — state intervention, rationale, and its outcomes — with which each planning technique is fraught. That is, I accord importance to, first and foremost, the unfolding of the unit of analysis in *each* planning technique (table 2). At times, much to the chagrin of neat, tidy comparison, this required stepping out of a comparative matrix in order to address unique phenomena which may not be common across the cases. Yet, this is the purpose of conducting individualizing comparison, really. It provides a ‘sensitivity device’ that guards against reducing a case to a set of traits, which may fall prey to dichotomization. This point goes back my early caution against (mis)reading the three cities as three different points in the same spectrum/variation. The city is not a set of comparison-ready criteria.

The following chapters embark upon, first, unfolding the unit of analysis: *the governmental relation of planning techniques*. The planning techniques are, again, the familiar instruments of mapmaking, zoning, building guidelines, among others. For urban planners, the familiarity of these techniques is almost mundane. Yet, in unraveling these planning techniques and their respective technopolitics, the chapters provide grounds for defamiliarization. What appears to be a familiar/similar planning technique, I argue, emerges from a distinct rationale and thus responds to distinct urban concerns. The chapters set out in the track of comparison as defamiliarization.

Before method:

Three foundational views: culture, practice, critique

Cultural geography underwent radical invigoration in the 1980s, introducing a renewed approach to the study of culture and space. In the 1970s, cultural geographies were preoccupied with the role of human agency in effecting change. Accounts were written on space as physical artifacts, pure human agency and inventiveness, and bizarre, exotic places. This gave rise to a unitary view of culture, culture as a ‘way of life’. In the 1980s, with the introduction of social and cultural theory, a unitary view of place gives way to a plurality of cultures. Scholars increasingly paid attention to culture as politically contested, to dominant cultural ideologies and forms of resistance to them (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987). From the ‘old’ cultural geography that is particularistic, individualistic, atheoretical, apolitical, unproblematic, scholars moved to a ‘new’ cultural geography that is theory-informed, political, attentive to power relations and social structures, attentive not to pure human invention but to structure and agency around it (Rowntree, 1988). In the words of geographer David Ley, the approach retrieved scholars ‘from

oblivion in positivist science... [where scholars] have tended to celebrate...values, meanings, consciousness...while context, constraints, and social stratification have been underdeveloped (Ley, 1981, p. 252). In short, the new cultural geography is a critical cultural geography.

Following the 'social' turn in cultural geography, scholars have become interested in the role of actors and their varying agency in negotiating space. As Jacobs (1996) has noted, past cultural geographies were full of 'spatial metaphors'. Places were viewed as an 'expression' of this value and that ideology, spaces a manifestation of this and that. In their stead, she called for 'real geographies', ones that pay attention to actors and their activities and practices in negotiating space. Similarly, Lees (2001) warns against a simplistic reading of iconography, favoring instead theories of practice. Cultural studies, Creswell (2003, p. 279) argues, can be made more meaningful, popular, and political through a closer engagement with practice. Urban geographer Ann Markusen (2003) succinctly articulated this as an *actor-centered approach*, one that privilege the analysis of practices over grand social processes. Her approach has inspired a following (Yeoh, 1999; Olds, 2002; Shatkin, 2008).

This dissertation subscribes to critique as a methodology. Here, critique is not about pointing out what is right and wrong (i.e. a methodical judgment), or what is good and bad (i.e. a moral judgment). Instead, a critique is about rendering the familiar strange (Hostolon 1989; Li 2007; Roy 2012). Often, the job of scholars is to render the strange familiar. In researching a topic, scholars familiarize themselves with a given phenomenon, rendering it from strange and foreign, to familiar and well-stood. A critique does the reverse. Critiquing is the act of rendering strange what we think we know, what we take as given, what we accept as real or natural. This view of critique is in solidarity of a 'new' view of culture I presented above.

This dissertation's methods

In various ways, this dissertation is informed by the three methodologies. It views culture as a political, social relation. My dissertation is not intended to be a perfect embodiment of the new cultural geography. (In fact, the radical approach incorporates Marxist-materialist view of culture, analyzing culture in the larger process of capital accumulation and production — an approach that markedly differs from mine). Instead, what I share with the new cultural geography is an attention to contestation of space and culture. The approach should not be viewed as 'anti-culture'. Instead, it questions the unitary view of culture. Culture is a not romance; nor is it aesthetic — an issue I developed in great detail in Chapter 5. Second, this

dissertation engages with the actors' practices. These chapters pay attention to the techniques by which actors operationalize the notion of culture and space, and the 'vocabulary' with which they use to justify them. Third, this dissertation is, first and foremost, a critique. Researching technical expertise in the Global South, I found deep resonance in Tani Li's landmark book *The Will to Improve*. In her monograph on development projects in agrarian Sulawesi, Indonesia, Li was bewildered by the planners' unwavering faith in development, by their strong will to improve forestry. I, too, was bewildered by the Penang Government's faith that they can safeguard heritage by 'celebrating' it (Chapter 5), by Bangkok's faith in TOD density to promote sustainability (Chapter 7), and by Ho Chi Minh City's aspirations for 'future' (Chapter 9). Therefore, I set out to render strange these spatial interventions. To borrow Li's elegant phrase, I scrutinize the *will the preserve*, and examine the claims made in the name of space. Having briefly sketched the broad methodologies in which I situate my work, I now turn to outline specific research tactics (Groat and Wang, 2013) by which I assembled my research materials.

(A) Plans

I intensively consulted historical planning archives. I located past government documents of various types, e.g. masterplans, zoning codes, building ordinances, and national heritage-related acts. In Penang, I pieced together the government's long, yet unmaterialized interest in historic preservation, from the city's first masterplan, the 1973 Interim Plan to today's Special Area Plan. In between, I located urban design proposals, pilot projects, committee reports, meeting minutes, Unesco nomination dossiers. In addition to internal documents, I also sourced externally circulated publications, such as brochures, posters, and press statements. Similarly, in Bangkok, I found myself accumulating piles of document. For urban planning, I located the city's first building ordinances, subsequent landuse zoning plans, revised planning standards, interpretation manual. For urban design, I also drew upon BMA-commissioned documents, such as landuse survey and also the famous 2000 'Specific Plan Draft' for Chinatown, one that is constantly referred to but never was implemented. In Ho Chi Minh City, I combed through the Socialist Government of Vietnam's *quyết định*, or 'government decisions' on heritage (or 'relic') matters, from 1976 to the present day. In the absence of 'urban planning' as we know of, I turned to Construction Law of 2003 to learn how 'urban planning' was done for its name. Later, when Urban Planning Law was formally institutionalized in 2008, I sourced the pursuant *quyết định* on multi-tiered (and at times conflated!) planning, e.g. general plans, zoning plans, and detailed plans issued for Cholon (District 5) between 1990s until today.

In tying together the otherwise scattered historical planning archives, I closed the documents very closely. First, a close reading has allowed to reconstruct the city's history of intervention (and a lack thereof) vis-a-vis Chinatown. Historic preservation began in Southeast Asia between the late 1970s to 1980s. Within the span of decades, through a review of the documents, I was able to trace a progression of ideas. I saw both new things and old things reintroduced as new. For example, I detected Bangkok's shift from simple landuse categorization to finer subcategorization, from basic density control to more sophisticated, fashionable TOD (Chapter 7). In Vietnam, while heritage-making in the 1970s revolved heavily around socialist historiography, today it has expanded, to my personal delight, to considering 'urban assembles' (Chapter 8). Yet, socialism is persistent through time. By contrast, other things are rather old but get a facelift. Penang's fascination in the clearly delimited spatial imaginaries of 'zones' and 'clusters' emerged as early as in the 1970s. Second, I was able to identify the key actors and their respective action. The state is rarely monolithic. In Penang, I learned that there are many state, quasi-state, and non-state actors who came together to collaboratively produce heritage. In Ho Chi Minh City, in a centralized country, the Hanoi-based Ministry of Culture determines what counts as heritage. Yet, in recent years, the city-level MPC has authority to list their own sites and structures. A close reading of government documents has allowed me to match the actors with their respective actions, accurately attributing power to its source.

Third, and very important to me, in assembling and reviewing the sources, I understood the official discourse of intention, will, and desire. Governmentality scholars stress the importance of 'discourse analysis', of listening to the government's narrative of intention. Huxley (2006; 2007) suggests we, first and foremost, unpack the rationale of government in order to appreciate their train of thought, their hoped-for cause and effect. Legg (2008) advises that what is conceived as a 'problem' may very well be a 'problematization', in which a certain phenomenon, subject, or behavior is rationalized as a problem. In presenting my analysis, I heed the advice rather diligently, for it offers me great clarity in thinking through government intervention. In each chapter, I tried to indicate, in the clearest terms possible, the intent of each planning techniques. In structuring every chapter, I first tried to identify the rationality and the hoped-for effect behind mapmaking (Chapters 3 and 6), zoning (Chapters 4, 7, and 9), and inventory (Chapters 5 and 8). There is a value in seeing, first, how thought underwrites action.

(B) Plans in action

Discourse is as meaningful as its enactment. To see how thought leads to action, I attended to the everyday experience of the aforementioned plans, proposals, and documents. I did this through the public records of, where available, (1) planning application and permission; (2) building permits; (3) planning petitions; (4) meeting minutes; and of course, a series of contestations that arise. Oftentimes, this attention to 'policy implementation' shows that the 'other side' of the shiny, polished surface of a plan, the underside of a golden policy rhetoric. The everyday experience exposed the struggles with which a plan is put into circulation. In Bangkok, the plan to make Chinatown a high-rise, high-density district is met with resistance (Chapter 7). The discourse of density is countered with other claims to space. In Penang, the glossy Special Area Plans (SAP) belies the realities of the lacking bureaucracy, political will, and expertise (Chapter 4). While the contour of Bangkok's historic district (Chapter 6) is confidently, although not unproblematically drawn, that of Penang emerged from a series of negotiations and contestations (Chapter 3). In essence, I noted the struggles in order to contrast plans with realities and thus render a more mundane, quotidian texture to the otherwise beautiful vision.

(C) Interviews

I interviewed a range of individuals who, thanks to their different roles, represent a spectrum of viewpoints in my research subject. In Penang, I interviewed the then GTWHI manager general. I also met with one heritage program officer, and one built-environment monitoring officer. While the former has been cooperative, the latter, after his first helpful meeting, has stopped answering my email altogether. At the MBPP, I interviewed the director of the Planning Department, also one operation-level planner. At the Heritage Department, I have interviewed the vice-director twice, while my request to the director herself was not responded to. Similarly, my requests to interview representatives from Departments of Building and Engineering were not answered. I also met with Dr. Neil Khor, the Chief Operating Officer of Think City, a government funding agency, on many occasions to learn about Think City's involvement in George Town heritage (Chapter 4). Penang is well known for its heritage NGOs. At Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), I was welcome by the then president Khoo Salma, then-secretary Clement Liang, and the current secretary Ben Wisman. I also interviewed Arts-ED program officer, who explained the early days of heritage advocacy in Penang (Chapter 5). George Town Heritage Action (GTHA), a new local group by Mark Lay and Joann Khaw, has always been helpful and welcoming. I also interviewed local researchers such as Tan Yeow Wooi and Dr. Gwynn Jenkins, who were active in producing heritage knowledge of Penang.

In Bangkok, during my two-week affiliation at the City Planning Department of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), I interviewed the directors and planners of three internal units: (1) Urban Development, (2) Zoning and Regulation, and (3) Urban Conservation, in order to appreciate the government's different interventions vis-a-vis Chinatown (Chapter 7). The planners were patient at providing answers to my constant questioning. From the City Hall, I also travelled to Samphanthawong District Office, the administrative office in which Bangkok's Chinatown is located. There, I interviewed the District Director. The head of the Public Works Department declined my interview request, sending me instead to the technical-level officers. In our first meeting, driven to immediately locate the Foucauldian conflict between power and resistance, I naively asked the technicians upfront: 'Is there any illegal planning cases in Chinatown?'. This question did not get across too well. However, I was fortunate enough to meet with the District's chief architect, who shared an interest in historic preservation. Also, I talked to community leaders of Charoen Chai, Talat Noi, and Sampeng, three main communities in Bangkok's Chinatown. They shared with me their experience fighting against eviction (Chapter 7). In recent years, Chinatown has been a site of research interest among many Thai researchers. While some allowed me to interview them and their informants, others decline. One of them actively shadowed me when I was talking other participants during public meetings she held. I interpreted to the incident be my perceived intrusion into their turf.

In Ho Chi Minh City, reaching out to government officials was a demoralizing challenge. One official turned down my request, directing me instead to talk to her senior-level 'superintendents' in District 1, explaining that she and the district office (DPC of District 5) only 'managed day-to-day affairs'. I tried again, through a personal connection in Thailand, who works for CP, Thailand's largest agribusiness conglomerate. CP has invested massively in Ho Chi Minh City, so she has business partners. Through this connection, I sent a formal letter again to the MCP and DCP. To date, I have not heard back. Yet, I was fortunate to gather a number of key, regular informants at the MCP. I had two long meetings with one senior-level official at the Department of Planning and Architecture (*Sở Quy Hoạch Kiến Trúc*). Despite a certain on-guard watchfulness, a UK PhD holder, he was sympathetic to me a foreign researcher. I also interviewed one urban researcher at Ho Chi Minh Institute of Development Studies (HIDS), a government research arm; one land economist at the Vietnam Fulbright Program; one architecture professor at Ho Chi Minh City University of Architecture, who has done research on Cholon Chinatown; and three academic researchers at Faculty of Urban Studies, a recently

founded faculty at Ho Chi Minh University of Social Sciences and Humanities (HCMUSSH), where I was an affiliate during my 2015 fieldwork. I also profited from conversations with architect Mel Schenck and historian Tim Doling.

When I told my friend, an art historian, that I used interview as one of my 'methods', he cautioned about possibility of self-report. He was not far wrong. When I started conducting interviews for this dissertation, I quickly learned a few things about interviews. First, government officials in Southeast Asia are not so fond of being interviewed. Particularly in Vietnam, as Tim Doling had forewarned me, an interview gives the impression of putting the interviewee under scrutiny. Second, for unknown reasons, some senior-level officials gave me misrepresented information altogether. For example, when I asked for copies of zoning maps, one of the Vietnamese officials said his office did not have them. The architect Mel Schenck was not convinced, telling me that every architecture firm in Ho Chi Minh City has zoning maps plastered on their walls. After my fieldwork, one young HCMUSSH lecturer later revealed to me that she was 'frightened' herself about the prospect of approaching government officials for her research. She worried that she might touch on 'sensitive topics'. In Penang, one senior-level officer said her agency had no involvement in a certain project when I had, in fact, learned the opposite. In Bangkok, I was barred by an academic from observing at one of her community meetings. Working in such environments, I learned to discern truths and facts, and appreciated cross-verification. In assembling my account in these pages, I do not take the interview transcripts at face value. Instead, I cast them against other sources in the larger phenomenon under study.

(D) Newspapers, speeches, press statements

Penang prides itself for being the birthplace of *The Star*, Malaysia's leading national newspaper. In fact, as a colonial legacy, Penang is an intellectual place with a strong print culture. It is home to local offices of most national newspapers. Moreover (and perhaps as a result), the Penang government has a culture of holding press conferences and interviews with journalists. This is not to mention the NGO Penang Heritage Trust's newsletters and press statements. In Ho Chi Minh City, where historic preservation receives very little interest, a small group Saigon Heritage Observatory circulates information and exchanges view. My research profited from these newspaper reports, media releases, and official press statements. They offer a few advantages. First, in piecing together the reports, I reconstruct a broader chronology of events and actors - a crucial ingredient in case-study research (see Chapters 4 and 9). Second, they provide access

to high-level figures who are otherwise inaccessible to public query, such as politicians. Again, like the interviews, I learned to contrast rhetoric and action. In 2010, the Penang Government told a local newspaper that an ‘enforcement taskforce’ would patrol the streets of George Town, checking illegal building alterations. Six years on, no one knows what has become of them. In 2015, the government announced that the Special Area Plan (SAP), the authoritative masterplan, will serve a basis for planning decisions. Yet, examples abound in George Town that depart from the SAP’s vision (Chapter 4). Like the interviews, my chapters reflected my balancing of these reports with other sources and observations.

(E) Representation

In my undergraduate class on nineteenth-century European painting, the professor showed paintings by Gustave Courbet, explaining how his ‘realist perspective’ drawing was ill-received at the time (figure 1). Courbet’s conflation of foreground and background mocked the ‘optical perspective’ favored by *Le Salon*, the French academy of art. The Renaissance optical perspective was held as ‘truth’, while Courbet’s perspective was viewed as a blasphemous deviant. Both, the professor explained, were equally representation. Both were not truths, but truth claims. She went on to draw parallel to the academy, where art historians earn less than historians, because the latter are believed to study ‘fact’ while the former ‘representation’. At one heritage conference that I attended in Taipei, one historian lamented that orthodox historians only consult the archives at the expense of the monuments. From Rhode Island to Taiwan, there is a shared bias where textual sources are privileged while visual sources are reduced to window dressing.

In this dissertation, I hope to show that visual analysis is not a lesser methodology. The dissertation draws generously on representations: images, maps, drawings, architectural guidelines, and other iconographic sources. In particular, cartography is one of my strongest preoccupations, and every chapter involves a map of some kind. I closely followed the methods of critical cartography pioneered by geographer John Harley (1989) and further developed by Jeremy Crampton (2001). As a former art history major, I cannot resist performing a ‘formal analysis’ of maps, or the art historian’s basic engagement with a given representation. I do so not because of allegiance, but because of use. Visual analysis should not be confused with semiotic overreading. When I deconstructed the contour of Rattanakosin, Bangkok’s historic district (Chapter 6), I did not do so for the sake of deconstruction. I did so to show how Chinatown is relegated to the status of its extension. When I dismissed Penang’s ‘Residential

Overlay' as simply orange hatching lines, a beautiful vision (Chapter 4), I also argued that there is no other mechanisms to realize such vision. My intention is to show that a line is not simply a visual representation; it has material implications. For certain, a map is nothing but a bunch of lines and colors. In itself, it does not bequeath any 'power', Foucauldian or otherwise⁸. But imagine for a second a line is drawn over the roof of your house, governing who you are and what you can and cannot do (Chapter 6), dictating whether you deserve a renovation grant (Chapter 3), especially in the face of counterevidence. That is the precise moment when technopolitics takes place.

(F) Secondary materials

Not all the sources were of my own collecting. This dissertation is immensely indebted to earlier scholars who pioneered empirical research in the research-unfriendly places and times. Arguably one of the first heritage authors of Penang, Khoo Salma's *Streets of George Town*, published in 1993, is my point of departure of every street in George Town. I regularly consulted Gwynn Jenkins' published dissertation *Contested Space*. The book is a monograph on George Town in itself. It provided invaluable guidance on what original sources I should scour, which pages I should bookmark. For Ho Chi Minh City, I amply cited and footnoted Tim Doling. His inquiry into original materials helped me understand Cholon and further theorize heritage-making therein (Chapter 8). Prior research on the Thai Chinese by Porphant Ouyyanont and William Skinner strengthened my argument that Chinatown is, indeed, an old area, prompting my first published academic article (Chapter 6).

Interpretive social science

Lastly, this dissertation is interpretive social science research, where I write a lot in first-subject pronoun. Again, my voice and 'positionality' is inspired by post-1980s human geographers. I conclude with two points. First, citing Jan Lin in full, this time in complete agreement with him, I do not pretend to have attained any kind of objective knowledge. Nor do I profess to have presented any 'raw data'. Instead, I sought to present a dialogue between the observer and the observed, rather than an explanation between theory and data (Lin, 1998, p. xii). In this interpretive tradition, the aforementioned research tactics, from A to F, gave me much trouble during the fieldwork and the write-up, because I often cannot tell where one begins and another ends. Yet, I tolerate the methodological untidiness, for it reflects the untidy space under study,

⁸ Critical cartographer John Harley would disagree, arguing there is 'internal power' to every map - an issue I address in Chapters 3 and 4.

allowing me to better unravel the everyday experience of ‘planning techniques’ than a survey research would. In this light, as much as I do not call my research materials ‘data’, I also refuse to call any of them ‘anecdotes’. Doing so would mean participating in the positivist language of inquiry as if anecdotes were outliers scattering around some convincingly patterned heartland. Second, I locate value in my inquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Thacher 2006). While not elevating my research to the status of engaged research or activist scholarship, I do see a need to highlight injustices. In the introduction, I argued that each planning technique entails some kind of omission. As I hope every chapter will show, such ‘omission’ is, in fact, instances of spatial injustice. In one peer-review of my forthcoming article, the reviewer questioned my ‘blanket ideology’ against zoning. What he calls ideological I call ethical (Chapter 7).



Figure 2.1: Gustave Courbet's *la siesta pendant la saison des foins* (1867).

Chapter 3

CONTOUR

1. INTRODUCTION

The contour of George Town World Heritage Site is crisp (figure 11).⁹ The historical settlement of Penang Island, Malaysia, George Town was inscribed as a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2008. Distinct from the rest of Penang Island, the site is bound by clean lines and sharp edges. However, the sharpness belies a longer history of shifts and compromises. Before the sharp contour came to be known as such, multiple cartographic imaginations had existed to capture historic George Town as a site of intervention. The chapter attends to these imaginations, bringing to light the shifting boundaries of the site and, second, to the material implications of such shifts.

First, I trace the constructedness of the site's contour(s). Through the archives of past plans and proposals, I closely follow the shifting boundaries as the Penang government sought to pin down areas worthy of conservation. This amounted to various manifestations under various names, from *historical enclave* to *conservation zones* (table 1). A lot of times, these manifestations are not informed by historical significance, but by human choice. The present contour, for example, is a result of compromise between a desire to protect and George Town's limited institutional capacity. Then, arriving at the present contour of the World Heritage Site, I unravel a classic contradiction of cartography, where thin lines include and exclude what counts as heritage. To explore the contradiction, I use two contrasting examples. Lying south of the World Heritage Site, Seven Streets Precinct was once designated as a *Conservation Zone* in the city's first conservation plan. Now, it is rendered 'outside'. By contrast, a group of traditional stilt-houses built into the sea, Clan Jetties were once considered a squatter area marginal the city. Today, they are annexed into the Core Zone, into what I call a new cartography of signification. In concluding, I reflect on the phenomenon of cartographic convenience and on the

⁹ This chapter was presented in an early-career organized panel on 'Urban Exclusion in Southeast Asia' at the 2016 Association of Asian Studies Annual Conference at Seattle, WA, in April 2016.

importance of Derridean deconstruction. Refuting the view that deconstruction is essentialization, I suggest that a contour, like that of George Town World Heritage Site, deserves critical deconstruction not because it is deconstructible, but because it is undecidable.

2. EARLY CARTOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

The first official concern for heritage conservation arose in 1973, when Penang prepared its first zoning plan, the Interim Zoning Plan. Here, conservation was expressed within the larger attempt at comprehensive planning for the Island's central area. A Central Area Planning Unit (CAPU) was formed specifically to prepare a comprehensive development for the Island's central area (Jenkins, 2008, p. 95). For most part, the CAPU's proposals aimed at modernization as the planners looked to upgrade the inner city. The proposals included (1) development of an urban center linked to the major highways system; (2) new areas for housing and integrated industry and; (3) reserved area for future development to cope with expansion. With regard to conservation, the planners expressed the need for the 'restoration and rehabilitation of historic parts of the city', and for the 'maintenance of residential zones and its existing character' (SAHCC, 1997). However, the early efforts did not amount to much. The plan was a rather vague policy intention. It did not stipulate in detail a suite of actions to be taken, and there were 'no specific policies or guidelines accompanying the intention' (MPPP, 1990, p 103). Importantly, a cartographic contour was not specified for the so-called Central Area.

It took twelve years, when conservation was picked up again in the Structure Plan of 1987, prepared by MPPP, the local authority¹⁰. Modeled upon the British planning tradition¹¹, the Structure Plan set broad, comprehensive 'planning goals', spelling out the 'intentions and proposals of the Council in the development and optimum use of land on Penang Island' (MPPP, 1987, p. iii). The goals were further broken down into fifteen sectoral 'Planning Objectives' (e.g. housing, industry, commerce, tourism, etc¹²), each supported by 'Strategies' or means to deliver such Objectives. I focus on two Strategies that pertain to conservation,

¹⁰ MPPP (*Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang*) or the Penang Island Municipal Council is the local authority of Penang. In 2014, it was upgraded to Penang Island City Council (*Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang*), henceforth MBPP.

¹¹ Already outdated in the UK, the Structure Plan is a planning document that a local authority was required to prepare to outline its broad planning goals. The Structure Plan is, in turn, supported by Local Plans, which are more detailed and specific in their thematic focus.

¹² The fifteen objectives included (1) Housing, (2) Industry, (3) Commerce and Services, (4) Tourism, (5) Agriculture, (6) Community Facilities, (8) Recreational Amenities, (9) Public Utilities, (10) Environmental Quality, (11) Transportation, (12) Urban Form, Townscape, and Landscape, (13) Bumiputera Participation, and (15) Finance and Organization

particularly to the early demarcation of boundaries: the 'historical and cultural enclave' and the general 'conservation areas'. In the former, the plan recognized the need for a 'historical and cultural enclave' (Strategy 7.3.2).¹³ As I discuss in detail in Chapter 4, in the early days of conservation planning, conservation was done in the name of tourism. In essence, the MPPP sought to promote a 'historical and cultural enclave' in order to 'increase the dwindling number of tourists to Penang'. To this end, 'a historical and cultural enclave is being planned to provide better economic usage of these areas while preserving and enhancing the cultural, traditional, and historical features of Penang' (MPPP, 1987, p. vii-viii). In the enclave, buildings were to be identified as 'tourist attractions', where 'steps have been taken to ensure these assets are preserved and enhanced', and 'certain parts of the enclave should be rehabilitated and developed' for a wide variety of traditional and tourism activities. (MPPP, 1987, p. 53). As far as cartography is concerned, the MPPP did not explicitly express the cartographic contour of enclave. Tentatively, it suggested that the enclave cover 'the area bounded by Lebu Farquhar, Lebu Leith, Lebu Muntri, Lorong Love, Lebu Chulia, Lebu Pitt, Lebu Melayu, and Lebu Pantai'. This broad area more or less covered most of George Town's original settlements. As will be discussed below, the loose delimitation was, in fact, far more liberal than what the subsequent versions of the 'enclave' would allow.

Second and more broadly, the Council expressed for the first time a need for 'Conservation Areas' in general (Strategy 14.3.1).¹⁴ Here, the MPPP broadened its conservation purview far beyond the aforementioned historical enclave and beyond its sole interest in tourism. Instead, conservation imperative is clear. In the context of the rapidly modernizing Penang, the MPPP began to ponder on the dilemma between development and conservation, for 'there is a need for comprehensive policy to protect the historical, cultural and architectural heritage of Penang Island from destruction' (MPPP, 1987, p. 97). The imperative amounted to Strategy 14.3.1, which proposed to 'identify areas and buildings of historical, cultural and architectural significance or with other attractive and pleasant features worth preserving and take appropriate steps to conserve to preserve these areas and buildings in the planning for growth' (MPPP, 1987, p. 98). The MPPP loosely outlined potential 'Conservation Areas'. These covered the aforementioned 'historical and cultural enclave' and its larger surrounds, the suburban

¹³ It is important to note here that this strategy is under the 'Tourism' objective, suggesting the earlier notion of conservation as linked to tourism - a topic I will return to.

¹⁴ This strategy was under the planning objective of Urban Form, Townscape, and Landscape.

residential mansions along the north shore, and the areas south of the enclave.¹⁵ In essence, the preliminary draft notes that the 'existing prominent streetscapes shall be conserved as far as possible' (MPPP, 1987, p. 99). In addition to the early attempt at boundary demarcation, the MPPP also sketched out four concrete 'actions to be taken'. These include (1) control of development under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1976, (2) incentives (e.g. TDR, adaptive reuse, and grants), (3) preservation of buildings and sites under Antiquities Act, 1976, and (4) development of a 'historical and cultural enclave', previously discussed. Given it is the first plan with an explicit interest in conservation, the Structure Plan of 1987 has constantly been referred to by later conservation plans until today.

In the same year, the 'Conversation Zones' took clear shape. The Structure Plan's intention of creating 'Conservation Zones' finally took off, materializing in the Island's first cartographic imagination of the areas worth preserving. In 1987, with the technical assistance of Germany's Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the MPPP published a Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town, Penang (MPPP, 1987). The Guidelines was a landmark document that officially set a cartographic precedent that later plans use as a basis of modification. Pursuant to the Structure Plan of 1987, this Design Guidelines plan follows up on the government's 'increasing awareness and appreciation' of the old built environment that had begun to dilapidate. Here, conservation was regarded as a policy agenda in its own right, and was treated in full detail. The MPPP articulates the specific objectives¹⁶ of urban conservation, 'conservation criteria'¹⁷ and 'conservation guidelines'¹⁸. Of particular interest to this essay is the demarcation of conservation areas. As a follow-up response to Strategy 14.3.1

¹⁵ The areas suggested as 'Conservation Areas' included 'the areas broadly bounded by Pengkalan Weld, Gat Lebu China, Lebu Pantai, Lebu Aceh, Lebu Chulia, Lorong Love, Lebu Muntri and Lebu Light, and the area bounded by Jalan Magazine, Jalan Brick Kiln and Jalan C.Y. Choy. Areas of pleasant residential environment and old grand mansions, such as those along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, Jalan Utama and Jalan Macalister' (MPPP, 1987, p. 99).

¹⁶ The objectives of urban conservation include image, socio-economic, environmental, educational, psychological, and touristic purposes of urban conservation (MPPP, 1987, p. 3)

¹⁷ The criteria include the considerations on (1) history (for example, whether the building or group of buildings is/are associated with a historic personality, organization, event); (2) architecture (whether the building represents one of few of its age remaining in the city ; a particular architectural style or period which would be of educational value; fine craftsmanship; or integrity of the original design); (3) setting (whether the building is important to the character of the locality or to the architectural continuity of the street); and (4) culture (whether the building shows traditional activities still viable or essential to the place) (MPPP, 1987, pp. 4-5).

¹⁸ The document proposes five sets of guideline for each different type of building or group of buildings: (1) Category I heritage buildings, (2) Category II heritage buildings, (3) Historical & Cultural Enclave, (4) Guidelines 'A' for development within conservation zones, and (5) Guidelines 'B' for development within conservation zones (MPPP, 1987, pp. 35-42).

of the Structure Plan that called for the designation of conservation areas, the MPPP proposed five 'Conservation Zones' (figure 1). Using streets as demarcators, each of the zones encompassed a sizeable collection of significant buildings. Within each zone, the Guidelines further identified 'Category I' and 'Category II' heritage buildings, 'conservation areas', and their respective guidelines. The five Conservation Zones, it was hoped, more or less covered most of George Town's original historical settlement. In 1996, Zone 6 was added, amounting to a total of six Conservation Zones. The zone lied in between Zone 1 and Zone 2, thus completing the loop of the Conservation Zones' contour (Jenkins, 2008, p. 282)

3. HISTORICAL ENCLAVE AS PRAGMATISM

In this section, I trace the emergence of a Historical Enclave. I show the ways in which the boundary(ies) of the Enclave shifted to accommodate new needs. While the 1987 Design Guidelines generously proposed five Conservation Zones, it proved too ambitious for a city to whom conservation was an unfamiliar policy terrain. Therefore, in light of a practical intervention, the attention was focused upon to the Historical Enclave alone. However, the Historical Enclave is not simply a pragmatic decision for management convenience. As will be shown, it was also a political one.

Between the late eighties and early nineties, George Town saw a frenzy of workshops, seminars, and roundtables jointly organized by the MPPP and foreign agencies to promote conservation. These workshops were meant to train and expose the local officials to the techniques of urban conservation. Key among them was the *International Training Workshop on Strategic Areal Development Approaches for Implementing Metropolitan Development Conservation* organized by United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCR) in July 1990. Here, MPPP presented the *George Town Inner City Area: Urban Sectors* (figure 2), a tentative policy document for the management of George Town's inner city.¹⁹ The focus here was broader than conservation, as the plan looked the areal development, or the broad 'urban planning' of George Town as a whole. The MPPP paid attention to the 'Business District', 'Whole Saling District', 'Shopping District', and other wide-ranging policy concerns such as inner-city sewage, housing, and local economy and workforce. Nonetheless, conservation loomed large an important theme. Note that the demarcation of the Historical and Cultural Enclave, for example, was large and generous. Here, the MPPP took time to reflect on the

¹⁹ Prepared by the MPPP's now defunct Structure Plan Unit (*Unit Rancangan Struktur*).

future of urban conservation in George Town.²⁰ In particular, they took stock of the existing legal instruments (e.g. the *Antiquities Act* and the *Town and Country Planning Act*) that the government had at their disposal, poring over their clauses and provisions that that may enable forward action. In essence, in quoting and elaborating the intention of the *Structure Plan*, they sought to keep up the early-year spirit that placed conservation at its heart, a spirit that had begun to falter.

The conservation spirit was picked up again in the following year, at a subsequent workshop in 1991. Now, the Historical and Cultural Enclave received exclusive attention. The MPPP presented another report carried by its planning taskforce.²¹ Although the report briefly proposed seven 'functional zones' of George Town, the report was, in fact, a technical case study on Lebuah Aceh and Lebuah Armenian.²² Here, the effort was more focused, as the taskforce narrowed the scope of the 'Historical and Cultural Enclave' down to the area of Aceh and Armenian Streets. The rationale behind narrowing down the site is that 'the area is smaller and it was felt that a more in depth and detail study of certain important issues was necessary, in order to prepare a more workable plan for the study area' (MPPP, 1991, p. 27)²³. The area of Lebuah Aceh and Lebuah Armenian is a quaint area characterized by small blocks, narrow, winding alleys and rows of shophouses (figure 3), punctuated by religious buildings of diverse faiths, e.g. Muslim mosques and Chinese temples and clan houses (further discussed below). The quaint spatial ensemble gives the impression of a 'medieval town' (MPPP, 1991, p. 27). More of a technical analysis than a policy, the case study reports on the area's brief history and significance, housing conditions (age, type, uses), and ownership and tenure status.²⁴ Directly

²⁰ The tone was at the same time hopeful and frustrated. While the MPPP admit to many legal tools, they had limits. For example, while the *Antiquities Act* 1976 can empower the government to declare any structure as an 'ancient monument' or a historical site', the application must be cautious. For example, the owner of a monument declared as an ancient monument is not entitled to any claim for compensation. Similarly, the *Town and Country Planning Act* 197 was viewed as a 'negative' rather 'positive' power, as its main role was to restrict private development. They also highlighted other difficulties, such as battles with landowners, development pressure, and limited budget. In this grim regard, the MPPP placed a greater hope on future local plans (thus far unrealized) in which conservation may be discussed in greater detail.

²¹ The report's title was *Case study of Lebuah Aceh - Lebuah Armenian Area, George Town, Penang - Planning for Conservation of Historical and Cultural Enclave*. The taskforce consisted of MPPP planners and university lecturers from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

²² Lebuah is Malay for 'street'.

²³ the plan area is about 4.2 hectares, consisting of 290 buildings and 139 housing units, with a population of 1,500 (MPPP, 1991, p. 2).

²⁴ Perhaps, the report was unique in its concern for public participation as a prerequisite for the success of the planning program. It highlights the intention that 'people should be involved as much as possible',

the citing the *Structure Plan* and the *Design Guidelines* of 1987²⁵ (see above), the case study also sketched out a preliminary 'Concept Plan for Lebuah Aceh and Lebuah Armenian' that repeated the need and techniques of conservation already stated in the precedent plans. The Concept Plan broadly proposed (1) the restoration of Category I buildings (e.g. temples, mosques, and mansions); (2) the adaptive reuse of Category II buildings (i.e. most shophouses that make up the bulk of the area); and (3) the upgrading of amenities and utilities.

In a more concerted move, the MPPP (through its Development Planning Unit) translated the Concept Plan into the *Proposal for the Development and Conservation of a Historical and Cultural Enclave at Acheen Street - Armenian Street Area, George Town, Penang* in 1992 (figure 3). The proposal itemized each significant building and outlined its needed intervention. The area's famous landmarks were all included. For example, Khoo Kongsi, Acheh Street Mosque and their respective compounds were proposed to be renovated. The Syed Alatas Mansion was proposed as a 'heritage training centre'. Armenian Park was to be landscaped into a open square, and so on.

Since much historical evidence acknowledges that George Town's original settlements lie in the north side of town, or 'Conservation Zone 3' in the 1987 *Design Guidelines* (figure 1), it is rather curious that Lebuah Aceh and Lebuah Armenian ('Conservation Zone 5') received much attention in the early years of conservation. The reason for encircling Lebuah Aceh and Lebuah Armenian as a Historical and Cultural Enclave, I argue, is a pragmatic, if not political one. This reason was rooted in the unique multiracial discourse of postcolonial Malaysia that, despite confirming the nation's racial diversity, gives nonetheless primacy to the native Malays. At this point, It is worth briefly sketching out the larger context of Malaysian multiracialism. Literally meaning 'sons of the soil', the *Bumiputeras* receive affirmative action enshrined in the New Economic Policy (NEP). Adopted in the 1971, the affirmative-action policy was meant to encourage the competitiveness of the Malays in employment and education attainment. Importantly, this favoritism trickled down to urban planning. For example, the *Structure Plan 1987* of Penang (see above) features one dedicated Planning Objective called 'Bumiputra Participation' (MPPP, 1987, pp. 103-108). The State of Penang identified what they termed as a series of 'imbalance', including the disparity of the living standards of the Bumiputeras, the proportion of Bumiputera

for, quoting Prince Charles, 'planning and architecture are much too important to be left to the professionals' (MPPP, 1991, pp. 3-4).

²⁵ The report cites the *Structure Plan's* objective on Urban Form, Townscape, and Landscape, particularly Strategy 14.3. 1 on conservation planning

land ownership and employment, and the tendency for ethnic segregation and polarization, among others. Cast as part of the goal of 'sense of belonging, security, and pride', the Planning Objective explicitly set out strategies to, verbatim, '*correct* the imbalance' (MPPP, 1987, p. 105, italic emphasis in original). These strategies include, for example, the quota allocation of housing and business premises; incentives for land ownership²⁶; training and opportunity enhancement for the Bumiputeras. Therefore, while George Town is for certain a predominantly Chinese city²⁷, this context of multiracialism still loomed large.

In this sense, the choice of Lebuh Aceh and Lebuh Armenian as a Historical and Cultural Enclave provided an answer to the Bumiputera question, both spatially and discursive. Spatially, by framing the Historical Enclave around the two streets, the MPPP generated an area that encompasses buildings representative of both Chinese and Muslim faiths. The spatial juxtaposition of a muslim mosque and Malay urban architecture in the midst of Chinese temples, shrines, and shophouses gives the area a unique presence. This spatial juxtaposition - the spatiality of mixed faiths - thus ties well into Malaysia's larger discourse of multiculturalism and racial harmony. More importantly, the spatiality makes political, pragmatic sense. Unlike the preceding conservation proposals, the 1991 taskforce report was prepared with public endorsement in mind. It was prepared 'with the request...to incorporate as effectively as possible the involvement of the community, the non-government organizations, and the other government departments' (MPPP, 1991, p. 6). It highlights the intention that 'people should be involved as much as possible', for, quoting Prince Charles, 'planning and architecture are much too important to be left to the professionals' (MPPP, 1991, pp. 3-4). Public participation was viewed as a prerequisite for the success of the conservation program.

The quoted Prince of Wales aside, the 'public' here clearly referred to the Malay public. As Jenkins (2008, p.148) points out, 'in a predominantly Chinese city, retention of the heritage architecture was perceived to emphasize the disparity between the urban Chinese and the former urban Malay communities'. Therefore, the proposal for Lebuh Aceh - Lebuh Armenian was an 'intelligent choice', not only for conservation's sake, but also for 'wider support from the

²⁶ The incentives may be in the form of: (1) permitting higher densities and plot ratios for Bumiputera developers and landowners; (2) exemption in planning/development fees and charges; (3) priority in processing planning permission and the like; (4) technical assistance in development projects (MPPP, 1987, p. 106)

²⁷ In fact, Penang is the Malaysian state with the highest percentage of Chinese population. (source: Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics, Department of Statistics, Malaysia)

Malay and Muslim sections of society and hence from the Federal government' (Jenkins, 2008, p.125). As a symbolic form of endorsement, the restoration of the Syed Alatas Mansion, for example, was inaugurated Mahathir Mohamad by the then Prime Minister of Malaysia. In 1997, the contour of the Historical and Cultural Enclave shifted again. The Malaysian government commissioned an action plan titled the *Aceh Street, Armenian Street, Kapitan Keling Street Historic Enclave Action Plan*, prepared by South Australian Heritage Consultants and Contractors Group (SAHCC). The contour was extended to encompass Kapitan Keling Mosque and what will come to be known as 'Little India' (image 4). What is important here is the consultants' rationale behind the expanded boundary of the so-called historic enclave. In revisiting the earlier plans made between 1993 and 1996, and in the early discussions with the Penang Heritage Committee, the consultants deemed it appropriate that the extent of the area should be expanded to include the Kapitan Keling Mosque and 'Little India' in order 'to better incorporate all representative cultural [i.e. Malay, Chinese, and Indian] and economic activities in the core zone'. The rationale behind a 'redefined historic enclave' (sic) was to elicit 'larger property stakeholders', and thus, their 'combined building assets... and contributions...represent sufficient critical mass to create the initial impetus...for cultural tourism "theme" developments'. It is important to note that while Aceh Street Mosque was founded by Malay muslims, Kapitan Keling Mosque was founded and is still patronized by muslims of South Indian descent. Along with Little India, Kapitan Keling Mosque thus deepened the multiracial narrative that the 'melting pot' Historical and Cultural Enclave sought to present. Therefore, what is at stake here is not so much *where* the demarcated boundary was, as *why* it came to be where it was. As is shown in the inlaid boundary (figure 4), the expanded enclave reflected a pragmatic human choice.

In what I call a spatiality of Malaysian multiculturalism, the framing of space to support to discourse of the multicultural 'melting pot' will be seen in placemaking in George Town in years to come (see later chapters). For example, it will be seen in the discursive construction of 'Street of Harmony' - Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling that is lined with religious sites of diverse faiths. In fact, the whole mobilization, nomination, and eventual inscription of the George Town World Heritage Site was in the name of multiculturalism, both Malaysia's and the Unesco's ideal.

4. Seven Streets Precinct: Outside the historic fence

While the above section dealt with the *heartland* of the historic enclave, I now move to the margins. Seven Streets' Precinct is a good example of an area that is rendered 'outside' the historic fence (figure 1). Lying at the south of the current World Heritage Site, Seven Streets'

Precinct has a history that dates back to the nineteenth century, a period in which the port city of George Town began to prosper. The area gradually transformed from swampy farmlands to a southern 'suburban' extension to the urban center. Wooden houses were replaced with brick terraced houses of working-class Chinese. While considered a dangerous area of gangs, crimes, and street fights throughout its early history, what is fondly remembered and recounted today about Seven Streets Precinct is its toponym. In official registry, the seven streets are named after Penang's famous (and wealthy) personalities in the colonial days. For example, Jalan Magazine²⁸ is named after the government gunpowder depot, Jalan Noordin after an Indian Muslim merchant, Jalan Mccallum after a colonial colonel. However, among the local Chinese residents, the streets are known by their relative distance from the town center. In this way, Jalan Magazine is locally called *Thau Tiau Lor*, a Hokkien Chinese term for the 'First Street', Jalan Noordin *Ji Tiau Lor* (the 'Second Street'), Jalan Mccallum *Sa Tiau Lor* (the 'Third Street'), and so on.

Given its distinct history, Seven Streets Precinct was once listed as a conservation zone as early as 1987 - the early year of conservation movement in George Town. In the *Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town*, Seven Streets Precinct was designated as *Conservation Zone One* (figure 5), recognized as an area that is 'already shown on a map of George Town dated as far back as 1883' and an area with 'some of the most unique examples of the style of architecture prevalent during the early 1900's'. Given the design of the buildings 'depict the popular styles of the period in which they were built.... the preservation of these shophouses will provide a historical link in the development of George Town' (MPPP, 1987, p. 8) (figure 6).

However, as the paper has shown, the boundary of what should constitute a proper area of intervention has shifted several times. In the final version, when George Town was formally inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2008, Seven Streets Precinct was cut from the map altogether. Once made 'outside' the site, outside the historic fence, the area is quickly undergoing an urban phenomenon rather recent in George Town: demolish and redevelop. There are two main conditions. First, in recent years, George Town has seen a booming property market thanks to tourism associated with the WHS. Second, the buildings inside the World Heritage Site are considered 'heritage' and thus protected against demolition. Given the two conditions, the buildings on the outside are deemed prime for redevelopment. One good

²⁸ Jalan is Malay for 'road'.

example is the fate of a row of shophouses on Jalan Magazine, the 'First Street' of the Seven Streets Precinct. On October 2, 2014, the MPPP approved a planning permission for a new redevelopment project to be called '*the Summit 191*'.²⁹ The project successfully secured a permit for an overhaul of five existing units and a construction of a 23-level tower (figure 7). The process involved the demolition of rear and front buildings, a planning permission that would be impossible in the World Heritage Site.

5. Clan Jetties: the unexpected fortunes of signification

The trajectory of Clan Jetties is the antithesis of Seven Streets' Precinct. A group of traditional stilt-houses built into the sea (figure 8), the Clan Jetties are as old as George Town itself. As a nineteenth-century port city, the docks and piers of George Town were busy and bustling. The port economies attracted waves of immigrants, particularly from China, many of whom were employed as port laborers, unloading goods and ferrying people between the island and mainland. By necessity, they settled in collective housing ('coolie-houses') that lacked privacy built on stilts in the sea next to their work sites (Bideau and Kilani, 2009, p. 143). In fact, this area was very much marginal to the urban geography of George Town. Bideau and Kilani (2009) argue, before the Unesco inscription, that the Clan Jetties long occupied a double marginality. First, their location near the port isolated them from the city, giving them a reputation of a 'dangerous place'. The area was known for 'illicit activities' and the likes of drunkards, smugglers, and gamblers. This depiction, I argue, is not unlike the popular stories told of Seven Streets Precincts. The second marginality is their inferior status vis-a-vis the 'Five Clans' elite Chinese of George Town, who remain influential in the economic and social life Penang until today. Therefore, despite a rather long historical presence, the status of the Clan Jetties had long been rather marginal and obscure, eclipsed by George Town's other more central places and personalities.

Their marginality, I argue, is also reflected in cartography. Here, I do not simply mean their apparently marginal location on the map on per se. Instead, Clan Jetties was very much peripheral to, if not entirely absent from, George Town's prior cartographic imagination. Their marginal status is can be seen from their sheer absence from all of conservation maps and plans for George Town. In the past maps and plans presented thus far, never once was Clan Jetties mentioned as an area worth of conservation. In the first conservation plan in 1987, the *Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town, Penang*, the

²⁹ Planning Permission No. MPPP/OSC/PP3293/14

area was not recognized as, or in, one of the six *Conservation Zones*. Worse yet, at the risk of a cartographic overreading, they were quite literally erased from the map. The map depicts the area as a clean edge in contradistinction to its actual pointy protrusions (figure 1). Similarly, in the subsequent planning efforts, the jetties were never an object of intervention.³⁰ They were certainly not part of the *Historical and Cultural Enclave* of the more illustrious Aceh and Armenian Streets. They were not studied as the pilot inventory that took stock of George Town's existing buildings of historical value. In the hierarchy of architectural value, the wooden stilt houses were deemed less significant than the brick ornate shophouses, the building prototype of port-city George Town. In fact, one of the jetties was demolished to make way for modernization projects as early as in 2006 (Bideau and Kilani, 2009).

Therefore, the status of Clan Jetties as a heritage site is a recent invention. When the planners of George Town finalized the Unesco nomination dossier, the boundary of the 'buffer zone' was extended into the ocean, thus encompassing everything in between it. The rationale was to prevent ungainly development which might block the vista of the waterfront (Jenkins, 2009). By consequence, the Clan Jetties were automatically embraced within the contour. They are a cartographic happenstance that happens to be located within the new cartography of signification. Moreover, the historical presence of Clan Jetties conveniently falls into the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) that testify to George Town's long-standing multiculturalism.³¹ In other words, the Jetties help validate and strengthen George Town's claims of cultural diversity of a historical port city.

Once part of the George Town World Heritage Site, Clan Jetties has received numerous planning efforts and attention. Upon the success of George Town's nomination and its later inscription as a WHS, celebrations were held throughout the town, including ones at the Clan Jetties. The Chief Minister of Penang State Lim Guan Eng gave a speech on the significance and historical value of the jetties, celebrating in particular the 'uniqueness' of the settlement. More importantly, I want to highlight that the Jetties became an objection of planning intervention in its own right. On the Special Area Plan (SAP) (see Chapter 4) - the authoritative masterplan - Clan Jetties are recognized as one cluster in the 'Socio-Cultural Topography' that

³⁰ It is important to note that Clan Jetties was mentioned in the 1992 tourism taskforce report. However, here, the taskforce's main attempt was to diversify Penang's tourism 'products'. The jetties were included as part of the 'Waterfront historic area', dominated by the architecture of Penang's early financial district, such as banks, godowns, and other commercial institutions.

³¹ For a site to be proposed as a Unesco World Heritage Site it must testify to the Unesco's 'Outstanding and Universal Values' (OUVs).

makes up George Town's heritage. First, they enjoy their own 'zone', being designated as a Jetty Zone (figure 9). In this, the SAP recognizes the Jetties as 'an established residential cluster', where 'the land use should remain as primarily residential and allow for tourism oriented activities' (SAP, 2013, p. c2-8). Second, since it is located snugly within the Core Zone, the wooden stilt houses of the Jetties are automatically listed as 'Category II' heritage buildings that warrant protection. Its exact form - the protrusion into the water - shall be 'preserved as part of the OUVs' (SAP, 2013, p. c5-19). Third, a series of planning interventions are proposed for the Jetties. These include a sea view vista management, future potential green space, waterfront promenade, among others (figure 10).

Further, in the subsequent urban design masterplan³² (figure 10), an annex of the SAP, Clan Jetties receives further urban design thought. Here, the Jetties are regarded as a 'priority area' and a 'unique waterfront setting' that thus warrants an urban design intervention to further enhance them (SAP Annexure B, 2014, B-20). The conceptual masterplan identifies all of the structures, categorizing them into 'traditional structures', 'other structures', and 'heritage trees'. It goes on to provide a set of general recommendations 'aimed at generating employment and raising living standards in the area'. For example, the planners proposed (1) sewage and infrastructure upgrading; (2) housing rehabilitation; (3) creation of a community and exhibition center, among many others (SAP Annexure B, 2014, B-20). From a rather marginal position to both the map and the government's conservation imagination, the Clan Jetties now emerge at the centerpiece.

6. CONCLUSION

Historic George Town has been subject to various cartographic imaginations. Produced by state and non-state actors alike, the various plans suggest that the malleable contour in which the site is differently recognized and partitioned. I traced and deconstructed the contour by locating multiple forms, and thus multiple recognitions of what historic George Town should constitute. The shift is reflected in the multiple names given to this space: *inner-city area*, *urban sectors*, *historical enclave*, *cultural enclave*, among others. I suggest that the shifting contour of historic George Town over the past decades is not an academic quest to locate the precise boundary of George Town's historical settlements per se. Rather, it is a governmental exercise to delimit a

³² The masterplan is called *Annexure B: Planning and Design Guide for Public Realm Management*. While the SAP can be seen as a management plan for heritage and conservation, the Annexure B is one for urban design.

proper field of intervention. The proper field of intervention is contingent not on historical evidence (i.e. the merits of historical significance) alone, but on a very human choice revolving around needs, political decisions, funding, and pragmatism. More importantly, the present form of the historic city is a cartographic convenience. To be sure, it is centered on the island's oldest settlements. But its eventual form, so crisply articulated, is a governmental category. Further, cartographic convenience ends up producing a new cartography of signification. Cartographic convenience is a happenstance in which an area may or may not be considered part of the whole, due to its location on the map. As shown through the contrasting cases of Seven Streets Precinct and Clan Jetties, artificial as they are, these boundaries proceed to dictate what is to include or exclude, what is to be preserved or redeveloped.

I suggest that a contour like that of George Town World Heritage Site deserves critical deconstruction not because the thing is deconstructible, but because it is undecidable - a term I borrow from political theorist Chantal Mouffe. To Mouffe (2000), deconstruction is not about dialectical negation, but rather about undecidability. Reworking Derrida's 'constitutive outside', Mouffe suggests that the 'constitutive outside' is not a content that can be negated by another. It is worth quoting her at length here:

'In order to be a true outside, the outside has to be incommensurable with the inside, and at the same time, the condition of its emergence of the latter. This is only possible if what is 'outside' is not simply the outside of a concrete content but something which puts into question 'concreteness' as such.... a content which, by showing the radical undecidability of the tension its constitution, makes its very positivity a function of the symbol of something exceeding it...the 'them' is not the constitutive opposite of a concrete 'us', but the symbol of what makes *any* 'us' impossible'. (Mouffe, 2000, p. 12).

Roy³³ (2015) helpfully uses the 'constitutive outside' to point to the undecidability of the 'urban', suggesting its ever-incompleteness. In the same spirit, the 'constitutive outside' in my case is something that exceeds the 'World Heritage Site', something that is the 'them' of the 'us' of the World Heritage Site, but also something that makes impossible the recognition of such heritage site. Following Roy, I argue that the preceding multiple versions of the site should not be treated as the dead archives of unrealized dreams. Instead, they should prompt us to think about contour as an incomplete and contingent process as well as an undecidable category (Roy, 2015, p. 10). When it translates to a field of planning intervention, contour should more

³³ In her case, Roy invokes Mouffe's notion of undecidability to critique the notion of 'planetary urbanization', the conception of the urban with no outside.

profitably be viewed as contingent and not permanent. While the solid line seeks to suggest otherwise, it is deceptive because its totality is overdetermined and thus cannot be received as given. Instead, boundary is undecidable.

TABLE

No	Name	Year	Boundary	Plan
1	Central Area	1973	Not specified	The Interim Zoning Plan
2	Historical and cultural enclave	1987	Tentatively suggestive; the area bounded by Lebuah Farquhar, Lebuah Leith, Lebuah Muntri, Lorong Love, Lebuah Chulia, Lebuah Pitt, Lebuah Melayu, and Lebuah Pantai'	Penang Structure Plan
3	Conservation areas	1987	The aforementioned Historical and Cultural Enclave, plus 'the areas broadly bounded by Pengkalan Weld, Gat Lebuah China, Lebuah Pantai, Lebuah Aceh, Lebuah Chulia, Lorong Love, Lebuah Muntri and Lebuah Light, and the area bounded by Jalan Magazine, Jalan Brick Kiln and Jalan C.Y. Choy. Areas of pleasant residential environment and old grand mansions, such as those along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, Jalan Utama and Jalan Macalister'	Penang Structure Plan
4	Conservation Zones 1-5	1987	Conservation Zones 1-5	Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town, Penang
5	Inner-city urban sectors	1990	Urban sectors 1-7	George Town Inner City Area: Urban Sectors
6	Historical and cultural enclave	1992	Aceh and Armenian Streets	Case study of Lebuah Aceh - Lebuah Armenian Area, George Town, Penang - Planning for Conservation of Historical and Cultural Enclave.
7	Aceh Street, Armenian Street, Kapitan Keling Street Historic Enclave	1997	Aceh Street, Armenian Street, and Kapitan Keling Road	Aceh Street, Armenian Street, Kapitan Keling Street Historic Enclave Action Plan

Table 3.1: summary of different manifestations of the contour of historic George Town

FIGURES



Figure 3.1: map of five conservation zones, according to the Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town, Penang (source: MPPP, 1987).

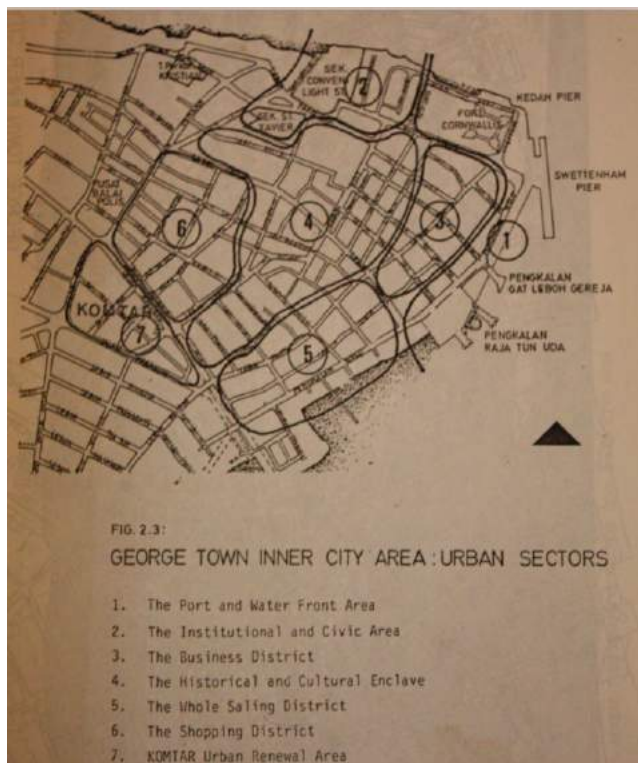


Figure 3.2: 1990 map: *George Town Inner City Area: Urban Sectors* (source: MPPP, 1990)

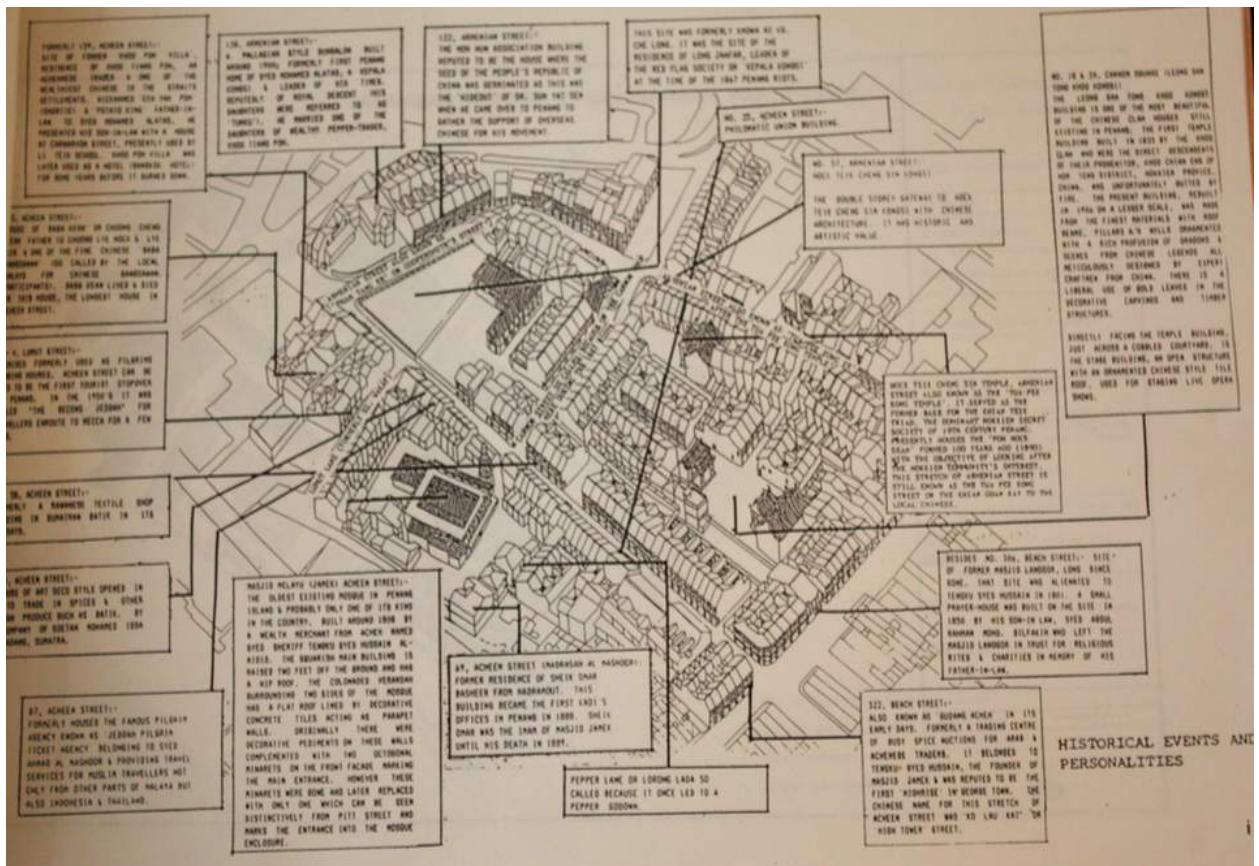


Figure 3.3: Lebuh Aceh-Lebuh Armenian Historical Enclave (source: MPPP, 1992)

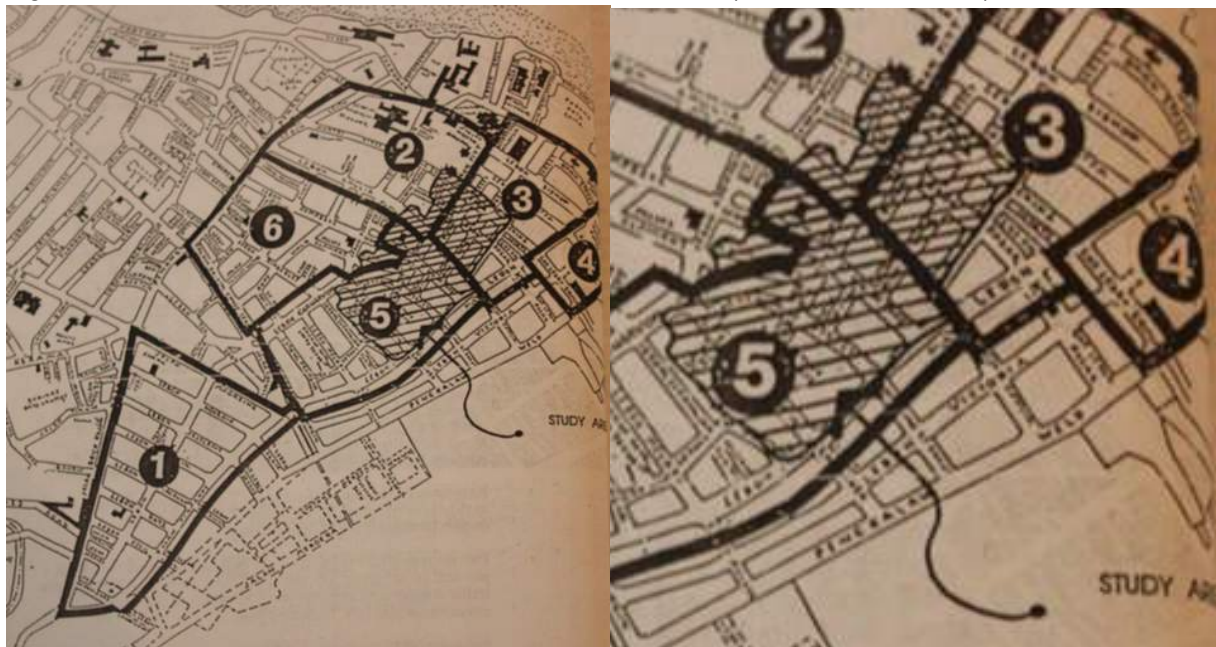


Figure 3.4: Aceh Street, Armenian Street, Kapitan Keling Street Historic Enclave Action Plan

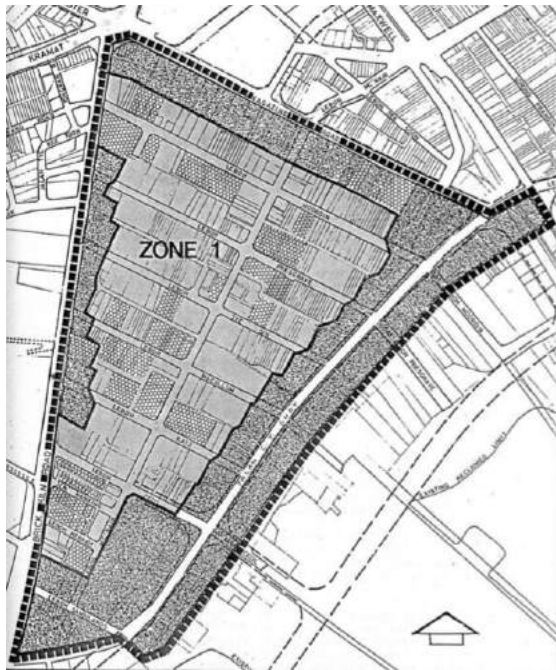


Figure 3.5: Seven Streets Precinct the 1987 *Design Guidelines*



Figure 3.6: Seven Streets Precinct today

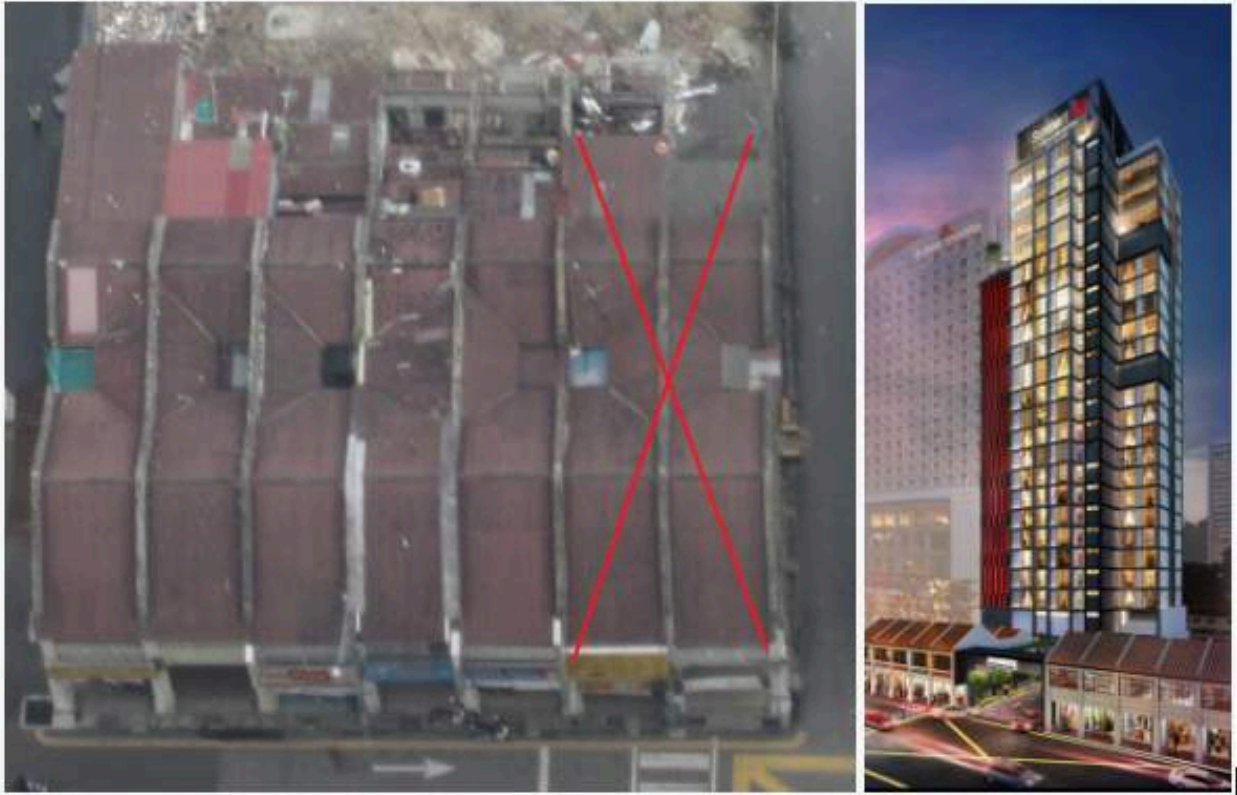


Figure 3.7: buildings outside the George Town World Heritage Site (source: Summit 191 Project)



Figure 3.8: old photo of Clan Jetties, George Town, Penang (source: SAP)

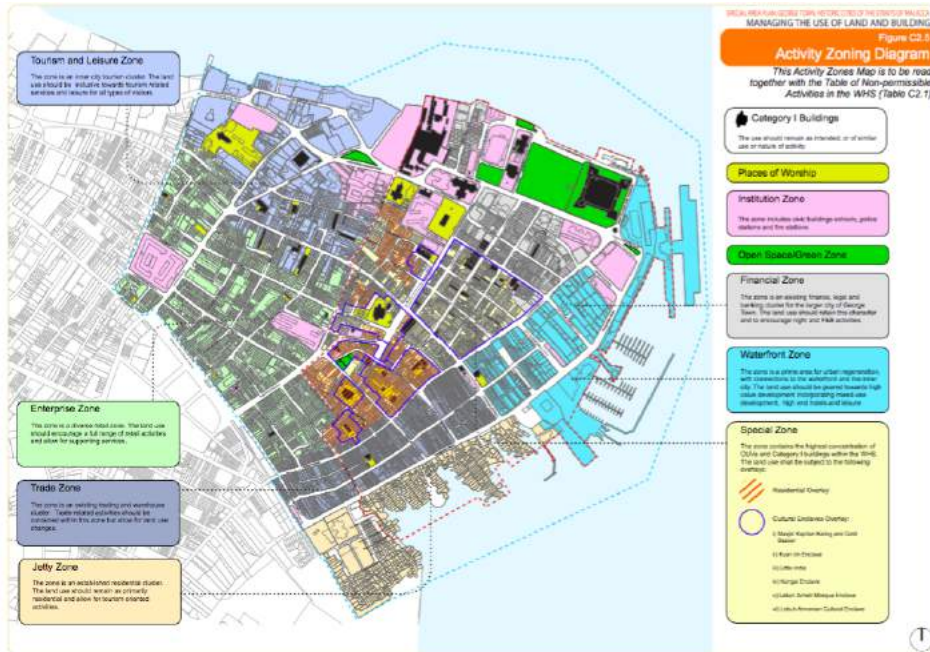


Figure 3.9: the 'cluster zones' of George Town World Heritage Site (source: SAP)



Figure 3.10: examples of planning intervention for Clan Jetties

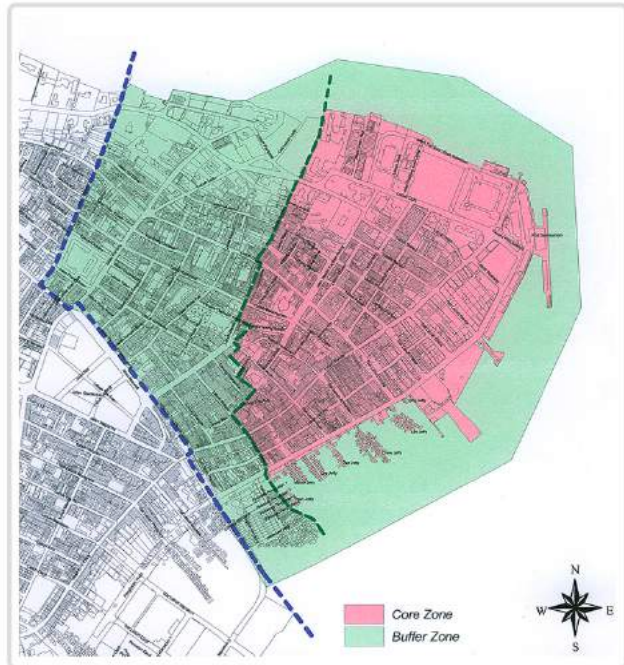


Figure 3.11: the present boundary of George Town World Heritage Site (source: SAP)

Chapter 4

CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION

It is rare that a government office can attract tourists. But in George Town, GTWHI (George Town World Heritage Incorporated) office is a tourist attraction in its own right (figure 24). Located on Aceh Street, in the tourist core, GTWHI is a state agency established as a site manager of the George Town World Heritage Site. Housed in a gleaming white building, it prominently displays a map of George Town World Heritage Site at its door. The map shows different 'zones' of the city: the Tourism & Leisure Zone, the Waterfront Zone, and the Enterprise Zone, and so on. Inside, the visitor is greeted with museum-like atmosphere. Exhibition panels provide introduction of the site. Models of shophouses, George Town's local architectural typology, explain the chronology, style, and materials. Beautiful brochures are provided, introducing many themes of George Town, from food to year-long festivals. A tiny section is devoted for souvenirs, where the visitor can purchase key chains, postcards, notebooks, and coffee mugs with 'street scenes of George Town' printed on them. Across the street, the so-called Interpretive Centre shows a 3D model of the city that casts a broad vantage point.

In many ways, GTWHI's curated inside reflects the Penang government's approach to George Town itself. While the previous chapter chronicled the shifting contours and multiple manifestation of 'historic George Town', this chapter zooms inside the now stable George Town World Heritage Site, investigating how the *contents* of the World Heritage Site are articulated. This chapter consists of six parts. In Part Two, I introduce George Town's thorny planning terrains, where plans are constantly delayed if not shelved. The context does not bode well for a World Heritage Site that requires extra stringent measures. In particular, as a Unesco requirement, the Penang government was obligated to prepare Special Area Plan (SAP), the authoritative masterplan for the management of the World Heritage Site. Despite its start in 2011, the SAP was not formally gazetted until 2016. I briefly outline the SAP's contents,

shedding light on its ambition and thus hinting at imminent omission. For a town that is not known for strong planning action, the SAP is ambitiously broad, specifying everything from landuse to building roof tiles. In essence, the SAP prescribes the contents of the World Heritage Site. Parts Three, Four, and Five show the everyday experience of the SAP, showing how three contents are articulated and contested: hotels, home, and the Ideal Shophouse (figure 25).

Part Three investigates the government's attempt to control the spreading of hotels in the World Heritage Site. I first show a shift in the government's attitude towards hotels/tourism, from welcoming enthusiasm in the 1980s to today's guarded wariness. In the SAP, the government tries to control the hotels by *containing* them within zones. Particularly, it targets one hotel type: the shophouse-turned-hotel. In a bid to legalize all the undocumented hotels, the government also encouraged the businesses to obtain full license, applying for a landuse change from 'residential' to 'commercial'. Here, I show the limits of the governmental program as it conflicts with George Town's original built form and street pattern, in which operating a legal hotel is nearly impossible in the first place.

Part Four shows the government's plan to retain residential population in the rapidly gentrifying historic core. Gentrification is an acknowledged concern. The government hopes to reverse the trend by introducing a 'Residential Overlay' - a zoning layer that seeks to protect the remaining pockets of residences in inner George Town. However, I show a series of examples in which people are evicted from the so-called Overlay. Landuse change from 'residential' to 'commercial' is actively sanctioned by the same authority who purports to retain residences. Part Five discusses the design politics of George Town's local architecture: the shophouse. Constituting 70% of the buildings in the World Heritage Site, the shophouse is an architecture form that gives George Town a distinctive character. Lining the street front and forming a block, the shophouse is, historically, a *shop* on the ground floor and a *house* in the upper floor. It is a mode of mixed-use living before the term 'mixed use' gained traction in contemporary urban design. Again, a plethora of programs are devised to preserve this building type. In what I call the Ideal Shophouse, these programs project a certain image of the Shophouse and its desirable character in terms of styles, material, and construction methods. However, the purist approach to the Ideal shophouses neglects other pragmatic concerns, opening a range of contentions among Penang actors. Lastly in Part Six, I reflect on the moral ambiguities of historic preservation. I think through the (misconstrued) debate between purism and pragmatism, arguing for a more generous understanding of architecture and expertise.

2.1 The City without a Plan

The first test came in November 2008, just a few months after the fresh inscription of George Town as a World Heritage Site in July. It was found out that four high-rise hotels were under construction in the heritage zone. Their heights exceeded the maximum height of 18 meters, thus violating the World Heritage Committee's guidelines.³⁴ The projects were approved under the previous government, well before the Unesco inscription. However, at that time, there was a concern that the 'improper developments' may result in a delisting of George Town from the Unesco inscription. Therefore, the attitude was tense, and the public was up in arms against the case. This was the first test of Penang's handling of international standards, and thus a matter of pride, national and local, for both Malaysia and Penang. Perhaps more importantly, it was the first test for the newly elected state government, an opposition-party government, to prove themselves against the benchmark of their predecessor. As a move to assuage the public, the Chief Minister reassured that "George Town belongs to the people and the country. Thus, we have to protect, preserve and promote the existing heritage sites. The [World Heritage Committee] guidelines are there to be followed," (*The Star*, November 11, 2008).³⁵ In July 2009, Penang government officials³⁶ hand-delivered a three-page letter to the Unesco's 33rd Annual Review in Seville, Spain. The letter outlined ten measures that the Penang government would adopt in order to preserve its heritage (*The Star*, July 2, 2009). Much to the government's relief, the Unesco took George Town off its List of World Heritage in Danger. According to the Chief Minister, the Unesco officials 'were happy with the progress made by the new state government' and 'congratulated the new state government on its efforts and commitment' (*The Star*, July 4, 2009).

While the decision boosted the morale of George Town heritage advocates, it bothered the developers. They were told, quite suddenly, that their projects, which had all been approved, were now 'jeopardising George Town's heritage status, because their heights were over the

³⁴ the four hotels were Royale Bintang hotel, Rice Miller Hotel, Low Yat Group Hotel, Eastern & Oriental hotel, the first two in the 'core' and the latter two in 'buffer' zone.

³⁵ The developers made a complaint in a statement. They stated that the 'application for [Unesco] listing was made without any public participation...and no public forum as to the meaning and consequences of a successful listing... The dossier and the management plan submitted to Unesco by the heritage constants remain privileged and confidential documents'. Rice Miller hotel, for example, said that their project was presented to the State Planning and Tourism Committees, and was received and endorsed by the previous state government. (Source: *The Star*, November 22, 2008, accessed on July 2, 2015 <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2008/11/22/heritage-rules-for-new-projects/>)

³⁶ George Town World Heritage Office head Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) secretary Patahiyah Ismail

prescribed limit (*Business Times*, September 9, 2009). For example, the Eastern & Oriental Hotel project obtained planning permission back in 1996. The Boustead and the AGB Group received endorsement from the MPPP for their projects in 2007. Lastly, the Low Yat Group's project was approved in late June 2008, less than two weeks before George Town's inscription. Following the new guidelines, the Eastern & Oriental Hotel scaled down its proposed 28-floor annex to 15 floors. The Royale Bintang Hotel was instructed to redesign their facade in order to 'harmonise with the surrounding' (*The Star*, June 6, 2009). Located right in the heritage zone, the Rice Miller hotel had to scale down from 11 to 5 floors, thus losing '50 percent of our net sellable space' (*Business Time*, September 9, 2009).

One year after the listing, the fanfare died down. The potential delisting of George Town was no longer a realistic concern. Much to the heritage advocates' disappointment, George Town saw rampant building alterations, often without the authority's permission. Janet Pillai, the leader of the (now defunct) Cultural Heritage Advisory Group (CHAT), a loose coalition of several Penang NGOs, attributed it to a 'lack of political will' on the part of the government. She argued that the situation had been highlighted to the government who was not willing to take action (*The Star*, December 31, 2009). Similarly, the then president of Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) Khoo Salma Nasution added that the issue of the lack of enforcement was a 'long-standing one', which now required renewed attention given George Town's status as a World Heritage Site (*The Star*, January 2, 2010). In response to the public call, and in the absence of a plan, the Penang Government struggled to come up a set of interim measures.

To this end, in January 2010, Chow Kon Yeow, the Chairman of the Local Government Committee, the government promised a multi-pronged approach (table 1) (*The Edge*, January 12, 2010). These included an impressive list of measures for heritage management, such as the completion of the long-delayed Local Plan, the required Special Area Plan (SAP) for George Town World Heritage Site, the statewide State Heritage Enactment, an 'enforcement taskforce', and a general improvement in the planning/building permit process in order to facilitate renovation/restoration works. In particular, for the 'enforcement taskforce', the MPPP council would form, according to Chow, a special enforcement unit. The taskforce would have the duty to monitor renovations and repairs of buildings in the World Heritage Site (*The Star*, January 13, 2010). The then council secretary Patahiyah Ismail was quoted as saying the taskforce consisted of six to eight trained officers 'to be on duty solely in the heritage zone'. In addition,

the Council enlisted more building inspectors and their assistants for the purpose of inspection and enforcement.

However, none of the aforementioned measures have amounted to much. Since its Unesco inscription in 2008, George Town has struggled in large measure with implementing its vision as a World Heritage Site. For example, the enforcement taskforce has been dormant. As I will detail in the next section, unauthorized works abound in recent years. However, even in 2010, when the taskforce had freshly been formed, little action was taken. Critics highlighted the MPPP's failure to enforce regulations. For example, one case involved an unauthorized, yet massive alteration of a Chinese shophouse within the heritage site. It involved a demolition of the facade, windows, and the front portico. The NGOs alerted the case to the MPPP multiple times. However, 'nothing is done'. The Council sent 'stop-work notices but doing little else. It's all cosmetic', said Janet Pillai of CHAT (*The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2010).

However, the case above is only the tip of the iceberg. It foreshadowed a larger issue to come: the lack of a plan. In particular, the section below highlights the much anticipated Special Area Plan (SAP). Unesco requires that, for a given listed property, the state party prepare a Conservation Management Plan. In the case of George Town, the SAP is one such document required by the Unesco. As an authoritative handbook, the SAP is the masterplan that sets out the vision, principles, and detailed regulations regarding the development within George Town. However, as I will show below, the vision for George Town is an ambitious one. The grand vision does not match with the unequipped bureaucracy. Such mismatch results in an improvisational maneuver at best, or a sheer lack of action at worst.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) the completion of Penang draft local plan(2) the SAP for George Town(3) State Heritage Enactment (passed by the State Legislative Assembly in 2011!)(4) MPPP enforcement taskforce(5) Streamline the building and planning processes(6) awareness/educational approach and homeowner's manual |
|--|

Table 4.1: list of measures proposed in January 2010.

2.2 Special Area Plan (SAP): plan, ambition, bureaucratic struggle

On the outside, the Special Area Plan (SAP) does not look different from other modern masterplans (figure 1). A hefty, 393-page document, the SAP is a professionally prepared urban plan. It contains well-organized, color-themed sections. It is supplemented with beautiful photographs, maps, diagrams, and tables. The text is crisp and readable. It is intended for both professionals and laypeople alike. The document was prepared by AJM Planning and Design Group, a Kuala Lumpur-based planning consultancy and funded by the Federal Government of Malaysia. Although the final product was assembled by the commissioned private firm, the drafting process heavily involved the input of local scholars and practitioners, such as Khoo Salma (writer and historian), Dr. Gwynn Jenkins (architectural researcher), Tan Yeow Wooi (heritage architect), among others. In fact, the drafting process boasts a participatory approach. It involved the views of the federal, state, and local governments, civil societies, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. Multiple public consultations were held (SAP, p. A1-4). The SAP is a masterplan required by the Unesco after the World Heritage Committee in its 32rd annual session in Quebec City, Canada inscribed George Town (along with Melaka) as a World Heritage Site.³⁷ The purpose of the plan is as follows:

The management plan shall serve to guide the promotion of conservation, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction in the WHS [World Heritage Site]. Its broad objective is to facilitate the proper management of the WHS including the use and development of all buildings and lands and measures that would enhance the integration of the physical environment with the sociocultural and economic well-being of its people, and the demands of growth. (SAP, p. A1-2)

Clearly from the start, the project was ambitious and the goal noble. Further, the planners propose fitting mechanisms to match. The aforementioned purpose breaks into 14 clear objectives, ranging from formulate zoning guidelines to suggest financial incentives, from review the site's historical significance to draft a traffic management plan. More importantly, they provide concrete steps. The document consists of four color-themed parts (table 2). Part A is an overview of the plan and the site's history, significance, and challenges. Part B provides a detailed management strategy. It highlights actions to be taken. It singles out actors and their specific roles. It outlines tools, financial and legal, that the government has at their disposal to realize the vision. Part C is a zoning guideline. The planners recognize George Town's landuse

³⁷ The Conservation Management Plan falls under the general requirements of the World Heritage Committee on conservation management. The Special Area Plans on the other hand, are intended to ensure that the guidelines and recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan are implemented under the Malaysian law (SAP, p. A1-1)

profile. They identify different activity zones and propose an appropriate zoning guide. Part D shifts to the building conservation. It surveys the architectural styles of George Town. More importantly, it launches into building conservation practices. It provides encyclopedic knowledge on the building's anatomy, from rear extension to roof tiles and signage. The intended 'user' of the plan is clear: the authorities and building owners. It is for them to 'refer and to use in carrying out its implementation and to ensure that the guidelines are adhered' (SAP, p. A1-5)

Part	Components
(A) Background information	A1 Introduction A2 Description of the property A3 History A4 Significance A5 Strength, opportunities, challenges, and threats
(B) Vision and management strategies	B1 Vision and conservation principles B2 Management strategies B3 Management mechanisms B4 Incentives
(C) Development guide	C1 Introduction C2 Landuse zones C3 Building categories, types, styles C4 Vistas, enclaves and streetscapes C5 Public realm C6 Circulation and access C7 Infrastructure
(D) Guidelines for buildings	D1 Introduction D2 Types of permit D3 Conservation practice D4 Category I buildings D5 Category II buildings D6 Infill and replacement D7 Signage and lighting
Annexure A	Heritage building typologies of George Town
Annexure B	Planning and Design Guide for Public Realm

Table 4.2: summary of the George Town Special Area Plan Draft (2013).

Ambitiously impressive as it is, the SAP remains on the shelf. Since its final production in 2011, the State Government of Penang has repeatedly delayed the gazettal of the SAP. The drafting process began as early as in 2010. Once finished and submitted to the Unesco, the draft was exhibited for public viewing from April 11 to May 9, 2011. The document was later adopted by the State Planning Committee in 2013 (MacDonalds, 2015). However, in a press report in July

2013, the government revealed a Malay translation was needed (*Free Malaysia Today*, December 18, 2015). 'I have to show respect to the national language," Lim said, "I don't understand why they are taking so long," he said. 'Like it or not, the SAP is funded by the federal government. We got to let them do it.'" (*The Daily Express*, October 15, 2014). The government's claim that the SAP needed a Malay translation does not match with the reality. In fact, there has been a Malay-language copy of the early drafts of the SAP. The Malay-language drafts were used alongside the English-language version during the revising phase.³⁸

The second cause of the delay was the government's decision to add another component to the SAP. The decision was announced in November, 2014.³⁹ The component was called, in full, the 'Planning And Design Guide For Public Realm As An Addendum To The Draft Special Area Plan Of The George Town Unesco World Heritage Site'.⁴⁰ Known in short as 'Annexure B', the document is an urban design proposal on four areas of intervention in George Town.⁴¹ In essence, it proposes a waterfront promenade, pedestrian walkways, and other urban design improvements. The Annexure B, the government argues, 'was prepared to complement the Special Area Plan (SAP) by providing a framework that combines conservation and development.'⁴² Publicity programs were held in various locations across George Town to publicize the document. The public was invited to submit feedback between February and March 2015. The decision to include the Annexure B in the gazettal of the SAP was curious. The Annexure B is a design proposal, not a legal document. Many viewed the decision as the government's way to buy time. In passing, just under thirty comments were submitted (interview, April 1st, 2015).⁴³

With the two events, the Malay-language translation and the Annexure B inclusion, the target was to gazette the SAP by December 2015, 'approaching five years from its first public viewing' (MacDonalds, 2015), or at most January 2016 (interview, July 24, 2015)⁴⁴ However, as the year 2015 drew to a close, the gazettal did not happen. The delay caused discontent among concerned citizens, heritage activists, and the opposition party. For example, Ooi Zhi Yi, a secretary of Gerakan Party's youth wing, questioned the unusually long period of translation,

³⁸ During my archival search at the Penang Heritage Trust's library between 2015 and 2016, I found multiple copies of Malay-language SAP draft.

³⁹ Media Statement by the Chief Minister February 2, 2015

⁴⁰ The document is a result of the collaboration between the Penang State Planning Committee, MPPP, GTWHI, Think City, and with an assistance from the Aga Khan Trust.

⁴¹ The four areas are: A. The North Seafront; B. The East Seafront - Port Area; C. The Clan Jetties; D. Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling

⁴² GTWHI's introduction on Annexure B (source: GTWHI website)

⁴³ Interview with PHT program officer, April 1, 2015

⁴⁴ Interview with the MBPP Planning Department Director, July 24, 2015.

quipping 'what's happened to...[the] CAT slogan of competency, accountability and transparency' (*Free Malaysia Today*, December 18, 2015). Similarly, another member Dave Tang Ching Sern claimed that he had received a document containing the Malay translation of the SAP. 'We are baffled as to why the George Town City SAP has yet to be gazetted since the Malay language translation on this document is already done' (*Free Malaysia Today*, January 2, 2015). They viewed with suspicion the hidden motive behind the repeated delay.

In fact, Penang is notorious for their slow, bureaucratic planning system. The delayed gazettal of the SAP simply reflects the larger pattern. For instance, Penang Institute, the state-owned think tank, reported that the Penang Structure Plan (the statewide general plan), which was supposed to take effect in 2005, was not gazetted until 2007⁴⁵. Its review took place in 2012, and finalized in 2016 - a process that will have taken almost four years (MacDonalds, 2015). In October 2014, in response to the public concern over the unimplemented Structure Plan, the Chief Minister cited the delayed SAP as the main cause of the non-implementation of the reviewed and updated Structural Plan and local council plans (*Free Malaysia Today*, January 2, 2016). Since the SAP is considered to be a detailed, impactful document, its delay worsens the timely implementation of the other local plans. For example, the Local Plan (for the rest of Penang Island) 'has been put on hold since 2008, pending a review of the SAPs (MacDonalds, 2015).⁴⁶ Without an official plan in place, the Penang government is forced to act in an ad hoc fashion.

In the absence of the SAP, there is no development guidelines to speak of. There is no legal basis on which the planners can base their planning discretion. Despite its professed commitment to heritage conservation in early 2010, the Penang Government once again finds itself in a conundrum. In 2014, four years after he announced the multi-pronged approach (see above), Chow later admitted that 'we do not have any clear guidelines as the guidelines given to developers were on a case by case basis' (*The Malay Mail*, July 25, 2014). Once again, he promised to standardize clear heritage guidelines as 'we don't want others to accuse us of rejecting an application because we don't like their face or approving other application because we like their faces' (ibid). On a separate occasion, the Chief Minister similarly reaffirmed the

⁴⁵ The Penang State Structure Plan 2020 was gazetted on June 28th, 2007.

⁴⁶ Currently, the State of Penang is preparing three SAPs (Special Area Plans) for George Town World Heritage Site, Penang Hill, and Penang Botanical Garden, respectively. The Penang Local Plan has been put in hold, despite having already been presented to the State Planning Committee in January 2010 (*The Edge*, January 12, 2012).

government's capacity. In responding to the public concern over Penang's rapid development, Lim Guan Eng defended the Island's frantic pace of development, as it is needed for 'a larger population' (*The Daily Express*, October 15, 2014). Yet, in a word of appeasement, he ensured that the government had mechanisms for approving the 'right projects'. According to Lim, the government has introduced a 'check-box system', where the developer is required to fulfill a list of requirements before the project gets approval. The system 'has improved transparency and accountability' (ibid).

Most recently, amidst the mounting criticisms over the ungazetted SAP, Chow Kon Yeow instructed the City Council to refer to the draft SAP from now on when it evaluates planning applications (*The Malaysian Insider*, March 13, 2015). This particular move was in response to rampant illegal renovation/restoration works in George Town World Heritage Site. Many of the works (see the next section) depart markedly from the official vision. 'While we wait to the plan to be gazetted', Chow stated at press conference on March 12, 2015, the City Council 'will refer to the guidelines in the plan in the interim' (ibid). That is, when processing planning applications, the City Council is instructed to refer to the SAP as an extra layer on top of its other preexisting guidelines, e.g. zoning. Importantly, Chow made one bold claim: 'if the SAP says the area where you want to convert your property into a hotel is not the zone of such businesses, your application will be rejected' (ibid). This remark directly addressed the potential investors, implicitly encouraging them to first consult the SAP before proceeding with their investment ideas.

In this introductory section, I chronicled the early days of George Town as a recent entry in the prestigious list of Unesco World Heritage Sites. Since George Town was Malaysia's first *cultural* heritage property⁴⁷, it is certainly a novice in the world of heritage management. To be sure, historic preservation is not a new policy terrain in Penang. In fact, as early as in the 1970s, the Penang government had toyed with the idea of heritage. They drew up plans and outlined boundaries (see Chapter 3). However, those were shelved, unrealized visions. By contrast, the Unesco inscription sanctions another kind of obligation. As I hope to have shown, the journey began with the delayed gazettelement of an important masterplan, the SAP. In turn, its absence forced the government to produce contingent, and often unenforced guidelines. In the successful intervention of the four high-rise hotels in 2008, where the guidelines were invoked,

⁴⁷ Malaysia made its first appearance in the global heritage scene in 2000, when two of its parks - Gunung Mulu National Park and Kinabalu Park - were listed as natural World Heritage Sites.

the motive was to hold on to the freshly granted Unesco designation. For the rest of the cases, enforcement was absent altogether. Instead, the government relied on ad-hoc measures at best, and words of appeasement at worst. It is important to highlight the two modes (and moods) of heritage management. For the latter, unfortunately, has become the order of the day. As Robyn Eckhardt of *The Wall Street Journal* noted in the early years of George Town, the city 'suffers from a lack of experienced conservation management and weak enforcement of preservation rules' (*The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2010). In the next section, I flesh out the government's multiple struggles as they try to deliver on the promises. In particular, my intention is to contrast George Town's vision and its underprepared planning intervention. To ground my analysis, I attend the government's attempt to control three things within the World Heritage Site: (1) hotels, (2) homes, and (3) the Ideal Shophouse

3. CONTAINING HOTELS

In this section, I investigate the government's struggle to control the hotels within George Town World Heritage Site. Hotels are not foreign to George Town. As a former port city, George Town was a crossroads for sojourners, traders, and pilgrims of the Indian Ocean. In fact, the city proudly boasts its old-time hotels as its invaluable 'intangible heritage' (see next chapter). Yet, while the old inns and lodges are celebrated, the new types are viewed with vigilance. Since the 2008 Unesco inscription, George Town saw a proliferation of hotels in its tourist-filled inner city. In particular, one specific type is viewed as problematic: the budget hotel. Unlike the budget hotels in other tourist cities, the ones in George Town are small. Often, room capacity ranges between four and twenty. The size is constrained by the architecture in which they are housed: the two- to three-story shophouse. Instead of being built anew, the budget hotel is a converted building that appropriates the built form of the past. While sporting a century-old exterior, the budget hotel is otherwise a new content as the old content is hollowed out. This section has three parts. First, I first trace the government's shifting attitude towards toward hotels and tourism over the past few decades, from promotion to caution. Second, I introduce zoning, the instrument with which the government seeks to exert control over hotels. Zoning is a major component of the SAP, a document that sets vision for George Town World Heritage Site. Here, I dissect both the philosophy of zoning and its techniques of 'containing' the hotels. Third, I unravel the government's struggle as they tried to legalize the hotel in order to support the official vision of George Town as a historic city.

3.1 Shifting attitudes towards the hotel

The Penang government's attitude towards tourism has shifted significantly from enthusiasm to wariness. What was once an 'opportunity' is now viewed as a 'threat'. In the late eighties, the state sought to revitalize its declining economy after it had lost the free-port status a decade earlier. In preparing for the state's first masterplan, *the Penang Island Structure Plan 1987*, the government identified tourism as one of the fifteen Planning Objectives (MPPP, 1987). In particular, one consensus was to diversify the tourist attractions. At that point, Penang had long been Malaysia's major tourist destination, popular for its beaches and tropical island scenery. However, the inner city of George Town, which had been left to decline, was now viewed as untapped tourism potential. In a move from natural tourism to cultural tourism, the government deemed that George Town could offer as tourist attractions a cohesive townscape, religious sites, and street cuisine. As I argued in the last chapter, historic preservation and tourism were tied. The purpose of the former was to promote the latter. The government saw an opportunity to promote George Town as a 'historical and cultural enclave' in order to 'increase the dwindling number of tourists to Penang' (MPPP, 1987a). The enclave was viewed as a 'medieval township' to be 'capitalis[ed] into a tourist attraction', with 'adaptive reuse' of the existing building stock. There should also be, the government proposed, a 'Tourism Information Center' and rickshaw rides (MPPP, 1987b).

The early 1990s saw the government's most conscious effort at promoting tourism in George Town. In particular, a language of unabashed commodification was salient. In 1992, a tourism taskforce was formed as part of the 'State Tourism Product Planning', with tourism consultant Robert Stiles brought in the same year to give advice (MPPPb, 1992). Back then, the tourism policy rhetoric was saturated with marketing language. Places were seen as 'tourist products'. Hotels were called 'heritage hotels' that may lure 'travel writers'. Marketing materials were proposed to 'package' and promote 'themed development'. In particular, shophouses were earmarked for adaptive reuse with 'compatible tourist-related activities and industries (pp. 6-18). Aceh and Armenian Streets, the 'medieval' core of George Town, was identified as 'a major tourist area' (MPPP, 1991, p. 57). There was a rising call for the shophouses there to accommodate both 'old and contemporary functions', where interior alterations 'may be permitted subject to approval' (MPPP, 1991). These shophouses, the government proposed, may turn into hotel and tourist facilities. In all, there was a commitment 'to provide a complete experience for tourists'. The following quotes illuminate the almost desperate tourism policy, and a fervent aspiration, at that time:

'There are many heritage sites in Penang which can be developed into 'tourist products' (sic)...George Town can be marketed as a historic city destination. It qualifies by having the largest and most intact pool of historic architecture in the region, with living traditions and festivals. The historic roovescape and streetscape are strong images which can be projected in the marketing material...Tourists and especially travel writers like to try out a new heritage hotel. If good signage, displays and printed sources of information on the heritage attractions are provided, travel writers are usually eager to write them up.' (MPPP, 1991, p. 6)

'The city [George Town] will have a reputation like Bali, Venice, and Paris, Nice, Monaco, Barcelona...Tourists will come for the romance which is embodied in our beautifully decorated historic buildings, and which will be fully revealed with widespread restoration works' (MPPP, 1991, p.8)

Today, the government takes an opposite stance. Ironically, most of the calls above have been answered. Aceh and Armenian Streets are filled with tourists. The streets are lined with hotels, cafes, and souvenir stores, George Town has been revitalized and, indeed, given life to. However, whose 'life' is at stake? Little could have George Town forefathers foreseen that the hoped-for 'adaptive reuse' would take the inner city by storm. In face of the mushrooming of hotels, the government's stance towards hotels is now ambivalent, a guarded welcome at best, and a wariness at worst. Such ambivalence is reflected in the drafting of the Special Area Plan (SAP) for George Town. On the one hand, hotels are applauded as a sign of a 'thriving local economy'. The 'reuse of heritage buildings' creates local jobs. The government has a clear sense of where the hotels are concentrated and what clientele they attract. They distinguish between a 'High End Hotel Cluster' for '3-5 star hotels and boutique hotels' and a 'Budget Hotel Cluster' for more humble lodgings (SAP, 2013, p.C2-4) (figure 2). For example, the 'Waterfront Zone' (see below), currently underutilized, is now proposed for 'high value development incorporating mixed-use development, high end hotels and leisure' (Ibid).

In the same breath, however, hotels are viewed with caution. The planners explicitly acknowledge that the impact of hotels is not always positive and not always welcome by the local community 'who may be uprooted'. With this in mind, hotel operators are identified as one group of important stakeholders for a successful implementation of the SAP. More importantly, the planners propose clear actions to avoid the 'overwhelming effects of gentrification and touristifications' (table 3), e.g. hotel inventory and guidelines. Also, a small 'heritage charge' of RM3-5 (US\$ 0.75-1.25) is to be imposed on hotel guests per person per night. The charge will go toward a heritage trust fund (p. B4-17). Most importantly, the SAP proposes the most

important instrument in regulating the hotels: mapmaking and zoning. The following section first dissects the zoning regime, its instruments, intentions, and philosophies. Then, it engages with the politics that necessarily accompanies any attempt to zone.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Initiate inventory of hotels(2) Development hotel guidelines(3) Monitor and enforce hotel regulations(4) Impose heritage charge |
|--|

Table 4.3: proposed measures against hotel-led gentrification (source: SAP)

3.2 Zoning for hotels

The SAP proposes one important map: the Activity Zones Map (figure 3). Once the SAP is gazetted, the map will serve as the ultimate zoning map for George Town World Heritage Site. Despite recognizing George Town as a mixed-use city, the planners nonetheless identify a predominant use of each 'zone'. They divide the city into nine 'cluster zones' (figure 3, table 4), namely (1) Institution Zone (2) Open Space (3) Financial Zone (4) Waterfront Zone (5) Tourism and Leisure Zone (6) Enterprise Zone (7) Trade Zone (8) Jetty Zone, and (9) Special Zone. The color-coded division is based on a given zone's distinct characteristic.

I want to briefly engage in a philosophical discussion of zoning, because this will be important in understanding the kind of politics that zoning activates. In essence, the Activity Zones Map is a typical zoning map common in contemporary urban planning. Zoning is a generalized, regulatory document. It is regulatory in the sense that it has the force of law to regulate development. It is generalized in the sense that the regulation is applicable to every parcel with its boundary. I am interested in this generalization. Zoning is underwritten by the idea that we can identify a zone according to one coherent, predominant character. That is, we can identify a residential, a commercial, and a industrial zone, and so on. To be sure, zoning describes the distinctive use of those places. However, as much as descriptive, it is also prescriptive. For Zoning prescribes what goes where. Again, it is nothing new that zoning is an visionary exercise. After all, urban planning is a normative discipline and profession. Urban planners direct urban development. In the case of George Town, the vision of the zoning map is to curate the city into zones that support the idea of George Town as a World Heritage Site. To this end, the planners make visible the desired character of each cluster: the Trade Zone, the Waterfront Zone, the Tourism Zone, and so on. In fact, the idea of creating zones and clusters is not new to

George Town. The government has had a long fascination with delineating zones, clusters, enclaves, quarters, precincts, etc (see last chapter). The Activity Zones Map finds it many precedents in George Town's historical planning archives dating back to the eighties. For example, in 1992, a government committee proposed 'urban clusters', where 'the specific historic character of the area and its individual buildings have to be clearly understood and brought out to provide an appreciation of both past and present' (MPPP, 1992b, p. 18).

I take issue with zoning as a tool of abstraction, as an attempt to make clear the 'character'. As Leffers and Ballamingie (2013, p. 414) point out in the case of neoliberal growth promotion in Ottawa, Canada, the 'language of intensification compels entrepreneurial subjects to think about land more explicitly in terms of economic responsibility to optimise space'. One legitimate concern is that, in the current climate of neoliberal urban development, the Activity Zones Map favors neoliberal subjects. Its many 'cluster zones' (e.g. the Trade Zone, the Enterprise Zone, the Tourism Zone) play into the hands of investors, channelling their vision into sites of opportunity. My intention is not so much a critique of neoliberalism as a critique of mapmaking (although one can say that, here, the latter may be used in the service of the former). The 'Tourism and Leisure' zone, for example, prompts land to be seen as a prime canvas for hotel construction, when the zone in fact caters for a wider range of uses and users. While the concern may seem pedantic, a rather rarefied preoccupation among critical cartographers, it does speak to the inherent contradiction of monofunctional zoning. Zone is a homogenous space, while geography is a heterogeneous space (or 'striated' and 'smooth' space, respectively, to use the terms of Deleuze and Guattari (1980)).

In this scheme of zoning, the government seeks to control hotels by containing them in certain zones. The zone in which hotels are allowed are, first and foremost, the 'Tourism and Leisure' Zone, although they may also be permitted in the 'Waterfront' and 'Trade' Zones.⁴⁸ Of course, in reality, there exist hotels regardless of the zones. The GTWHI itself conducted a hotel inventory, which documents the location of hotels throughout the streets of George Town not exclusive to the 'Tourism and Leisure' Zone.⁴⁹ Therefore, zoning serves as an administrative container. The intention is to control the growth of hotels by containing them within certain designated zones.

⁴⁸ It is a curious choice to allow hotels in the 'Trade' Zone as opposed to, say, the 'Enterprise' Zone. The 'Trade' zone is a somewhat isolated part of the city. It is far from tourist facilities, e.g. eateries, bars, and cafe. In fact, the 'Trade' Zone itself is a rather optimistic, hopeful title. Today, the area is nothing more than down warehouses that die down after working hours.

⁴⁹ The inventory documents the names and locations of 155 hotels within George Town.

The rationale of the contain-to-control is clearly expressed: 'Boutique hotels are the fastest emerging activity in the WHS [World Heritage Site], and its growth may need to be *contained* within select zones as to not devalue the OUVs [Outstanding Universal Values] (SAP, 2013, p. C2-2, emphasis added). As Chow Kon Yeow cautioned, if a planning application is submitted for a hotel in a non-hotel zone, it will be rejected (*The Star*, July 6, 2016). Importantly, once the SAP is gazetted, 'budget hotels' will be disallowed altogether in the World Heritage Site. 'Budget hotels' are identified as one of the two 'non-permissible activities'.⁵⁰ Again, in reality, there have long existed many self-styled budget hotels in George Town, many of which were documented in the GTWHI directory. In short, there are other uses in what is designed as a 'hotel' zone. By the same token, there have very well been hotels in non-hotel zones. While it reflects a degree of reality (e.g. 'existing landuse'), zoning is also an artificiality. As I show below, it is precisely this mismatch, the contrived zone, that activates the politics of zoning. Even when the government attempts to channel development, neoliberal or otherwise, to a clearly defined location, such attempt is not always successful. The following section documents the government's struggle as they try to regulate the 'illegal' hotels. One type of hotel is singled out as problematic: the shophouse-turned-hotel (figure 4).

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|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Institution Zone(2) Open Space(3) Financial Zone(4) Waterfront Zone(5) Tourism and Leisure Zone(6) Enterprise Zone(7) Trade Zone(8) Jetty Zone(9) Special Zone |
|--|

Table 4.4: the 'cluster zones' of George Town World Heritage Site

3.3 Legalizing illegal hotels

In April 2014, the MPPP announced an 'unlicensed hotel cleansing program' (*The Rakyat Post*, April 7, 2014). The program was an attempt to 'legitimise' (sic) unlicensed hotels in the Penang Island in order to regulate the booming industry. The government reported a total of 138 unlicensed hotels in the Island, 69 of which were found in the George Town heritage zone. These 'illegal' hotels were viewed not only as a threat to the Unesco heritage status, but also to

⁵⁰ The other activity is swiftlet farming (SAP, 2013, p. B2-9). Importantly, the definition of 'budget' or 'boutique hotels' are not given in the SAP.

safety concerns (*The Malay Mail*, April 7 2014). The government demanded that all the unlicensed hotels submit an application by the end of September 2014. With much fanfare, the MPPP provided brief sessions to answer questions. They also provided a registration drive in April to encourage hotel operators to comply. In order to qualify for a license, the hotel operators must fulfill a number of requirements. First, they must have a planning approval. In many cases, the operator converts a residential building into a hotel. Such ‘conversion’ needs an appropriate planning approval. Second, the total cost of RM 100,000 (US\$ 24,800) is to be borne by the applicant.⁵¹ Third, the hotel must provide parking space commensurate to the hotel size, or alternatively pay a contribution of RM 25,000 (US\$ 6,200). A failure to obtain a license, the MPPP argued, would violate a number of by-laws. They recited in specific the Town & Country Planning Act, the Drainage & Street Act, and the License Act, and their respective penalty. However, the government did admit the challenge. The legalization became an ongoing process as ‘new [hotels] are being detected almost on a daily basis’ (ibid).

In September 2014, when the deadline came, the MPPP faced an underwhelming lack of cooperation. Since the program’s start in April, only a total of fourteen hotels had thus far been approved for license (*The Malay Mail*, September 30, 2014). The government found itself breaking its own deadline. Instead of taking legal action, they introduced a one-year temporary permit program. Here, the MPPP encouraged the hotel operators to apply for a ‘Temporary Operational License’ (TOL) by December 31, 2014. The one-year temporary permit would end in October 2015, or a thirteen-month extension from the last announced deadline. The temporary permit cost RM 1,200-2,400 - a much cheaper alternative to the full license of RM 100,000. Once again, the MPPP vehemently stressed that legal action would ensue come January 2015. Meanwhile, despite the legal consequences, unlicensed hotels kept opening doors. Towards the end of 2014, Penang found 194 unlicensed hotels in the state, 95 of which were in the George Town heritage site (table 5).

Date of report	Number of unlicensed hotels in Penang	In George Town Heritage Site
April 2014	138	69
September 2014	194	95
November 2015	211	n/a

⁵¹ The RM 100,000 includes the license fee and other consultancy fees incurred in the process of license application and building conversion.

Table 4.5: legalizing illegal hotels (2014-2015) (author's compilation)

Yet, in February 2015, after the January deadline, the TOL scheme was a disappointment. Only 69 out of the 95 unlicensed hotels in the George Town World Heritage Site had secured a temporary permit (*The Malay Mail*, February 27, 2015). The MPPP reinvented the categories and fee schemes. This was to ensure that all the existing unlicensed hotels obtain a TOL before the deadline of October 2015. The fees varied from RM 2,400 to RM 9,600 (US\$ 595 to US\$ 2,380). For the new hotels, the government argued that they were not eligible for the TOL and thus must apply for a full license. Those without licenses after October 2015, the government claimed, would be issued summons (*ibid*).

When October 2015 arrived, the government once again extended the TOL deadline. The MBPP embarked upon a new stocktaking survey to categorize the unlicensed hotels (*The Malay Daily*, November 2, 2015).⁵² They found that, while most of the unlicensed hotels had secured a temporary permit (NB: not a full license), several had not applied at all. Therefore, they now announced the extension of the temporary permit program by one more year (i.e. October 2016). The previously registered (yet unlicensed) hotels were now allowed to 'renew' their temporary permits. However, this time around, the MBPP took legal action by starting a 'crackdown' on illegal hotels. Instead of invoking the aforementioned by-laws for all the unlicensed hotels (i.e. the original intention), however, they targeted first the newly opened ones. The first crackdown took place on October 9, 2015. At a four-floor, 24-room budget hotel on Rangoon Road, a council demolition team tore down the wall that partitioned the room. They also confiscated other furniture items. The Building Department Director Yew Tung Seang explained that the hotel had applied for a repair permit, but instead did extensive alterations and partitioned new rooms. In another case, the council team dismantled the hotel's signboard and wooden partitions. Yew was quoted as saying that the illegal hotel operators 'must stop having this provincial mentality of doing business' (*The Star*, October 10, 2015). By the end of October 2015, the MBPP had closed down four such hotels, removing their signboards, tearing down walls, and confiscating items. Yet, the struggle continues, and the list expands. As of November 2015, the number of the unlicensed hotels shot up to 221, with new hotel openings in the midst of the crackdown. In a stark contrast, only three had been granted their full license. A local newspaper also reported that one of the hotels reopened mere days after the raid (*The Malaysian Insider*, October 9, 2015).

⁵² In October 2015, the government divided the unlicensed hotels into two categories: Category A for those listed on the government's registry, and Category B for the newly opened hotels.

Timeline
April 2014 - announced program
September 2014 - deadline not met
October 2014 - announced TOL
October 2015 - extended TOL - began raid

Table 4.6: timeline for the TOL program

From the hotel operators' perspective, the licensing program is both prohibitively expensive and unrealistic. First, the operators are deterred by the immense cost (of approximately RM100,000 or US\$ 26,800) and a long process. It can take up to three years to convert a premise from a 'residential' to a 'commercial' title. The tedious process involves not only the license application itself, but also prior consultation and planning approval for building conversion. The long, costly timeframe is not healthy for small entrepreneurs such as boutique hotels. Built in a two-story shophouse, a converted hotel can only accommodate so many rooms, often fewer than 20 rooms. Moreover, the rental rate is as cheap as US\$ 30 per night⁵³. Given an explosion of budget hotels in George Town in recent years, the hotels have to remain competitive. Therefore, due to a small number of rooms and cheap rentals, a given hotel's income cannot cope with the temporary permit fee, let alone the full license. Moreover, many of the operators do not own the properties, but rent from the landlords who do not have plans to contribute such money (*The Star*, June 4, 2015). In fact, as one informant argued, the expensive fee scheme favors big-money investors while stifling small ones. Second, some stipulations are unrealistic or impossible altogether. Take for example the parking requirement. In George Town, the budget hotels are often located on narrow streets, where parking is not available in the first place. In one case, an operator is required to supply eight parking lots for her small budget hotel (*ibid*). Alternatively, the operators can opt to pay a 'parking contribution' of RM 25,000 (US\$6,160), further accruing to the total operation cost. According to Chow Kon Yeow, the 'parking contribution' will contribute to the construction of municipal parking structures in the Island (*The Malay Mail*, November 4, 2015).

However, beyond the cost, I suggest that two deeper problems need further investigation: prohibitive bureaucracy and strained infrastructure. Let me take the two in turn. First, despite a plan to legitimize the unlicensed hotel, Penang is notorious for its obstructive planning

⁵³ Observation from my fieldwork between 2014 and 2016.

bureaucracy. In an open letter, one 'Frustrated Owner' describes his attempt at obtaining municipal license for his heritage buildings as 'exasperating' (*The Star*, May 20, 2016)⁵⁴. He rented out one of his units to a budget hotel operator. Upon hearing the news on the hotel licensing program, he contacted various units within the MBPP in a wish to convert the title from 'residential' to 'commercial'. However, he describes his experience dealing with the City Council as a case of 'passing the buck' as he kept being told to call the other unit for clarification. Similarly, due to the opaque guidelines, the private consultancy could not guarantee a successful conversion of his title. In such policy opacity, he questioned the government's slogan of CAT (Competency, Accountability, and Transparency). In fact, such prohibitive bureaucracy is a historical condition well-documented of Penang (see Khoo, 2012). Another informant recounted her experience running a budget hotel in the past five years. She said 'change of use' is more difficult than we imagine. There was 'no cohesive proper guideline to follow', she said, adding that she sought to apply for a license 'since day zero. Unfortunately, the departments dragged us for ages and still no progress...' More importantly, she received contradictory information from the departments (i.e. the Fire Department and Planning Department) (see more on pages).⁵⁵

The second problem, a historical one, is the strained infrastructure. Here, I want to draw attention to an unfortunate intersection between law and built form. It is true the inner city of George Town has become a tourist city that needs to accommodate hotels. However, the landuse 'change' came about with much struggle. The city was built upon a specific built form: building type and street pattern (figure 5). First, George Town's ubiquitous building type is the shophouse (see more Jenkins, 2009; Tan, 2015). Built in a row, the shophouses line the city's street blocks. It is named as such because it functions as a 'shop' on the ground floor and a 'house', a residential space, on the upper floor. It has a narrow width and a deep length. The narrow width offer ample opportunity to front the trading street. The deep length maximizes the lot space. Since it was built for residential purposes and small-scale trade, the nineteenth-century shophouse is ill-suited to accommodate today's resource-intensive functions.

In addition, George Town has an aging infrastructure, much of which has remained intact since colonial time. As Yeoh (2003) has documented in the case of colonial Singapore, even back

⁵⁴ The author's gender is not disclosed.

⁵⁵ Personal communication, October 10, 2015. In one case, the informant said she received contradictory advice regarding flooring material, which, while a fire retardant, is a threat to the heritage status.

then, Singapore's shophouses and infrastructure had trouble coping with overcrowding. In fact, in one of the earliest urban design proposals for George Town, Japanese planning consultant Toshio Nishiwaki (1987) noted sewage as a major infrastructure problem. Today, as more businesses move back into George Town, they put strain on the city's sewage. One informant who lives in Chulia Street, for example, noticed that the water pressure at her house in the hotels area has dropped in recent years (Interview, July 10 2015). In a recent conversion case in Chulia Street, the developer sought to convert a row of five shophouses into a 22-room hotel. Compared to other modern hotels, the 22-room capacity is not large by any measure. However, even so, the planning application was pending for months due to concern over public sewage.⁵⁶The main challenge was to connect to the sewer line that was at its full capacity. In this sense, while the City Council treats building conversion as a checklist, obtaining a 'planning approval' is not simply a paperwork process. Infrastructure is a historical condition. Its past function makes today's engineering intervention expensive and logically difficult. As Mark Lat, a heritage advocate, has argued, 'if we have trouble converting a house into a hotel, it is because the house is not meant to be a hotel in the first place' (Interview, July 10 2015).

Second, the street pattern is not amenable to parking. With its street grid laid out at the end of the eighteenth century, George Town is a pre-car city. Like many older cities, the streets here are narrow. It is tempting to conclude that the narrow streets make for insufficient parking space. Such argument is convincing, but can be rendered more nuanced. Again, Chulia Street is an illuminating case. Long known as a backpacker area of Penang, Chulia Street is dotted with budget hotels, offering cheap lodging for young travelers. In the forthcoming SAP, this area is zoned, quite rightly, as a 'Leisure and Tourism' zone. However, the hotels here are different in type. Such typological difference, I argue, has an implication for parking space. Chulia Street has two main hotel building typologies: shophouse hotels and standalone bungalows (figure 6). This differentiation is, too, a historical condition. Chulia Street used to be considered a 'suburb'⁵⁷ of George Town, lying west of its core district. Named after its early residents, the Chulia Indian muslim immigrants, it was a sparsely populated, rural area on swampy lands (see Khoo, 2014). The physical remnants can be seen in the area's many detached bungalows - a standalone structure within a compound. As George Town urbanized, Chulia Street was slowly swallowed

⁵⁶ Planning permission no. MPPP/OSC/PM2479/14

⁵⁷ I use the word 'suburb' strictly as a shorthand for an area that is not as urbanized and built up as the urban core. The word choice is convenient, but may be problematic. In his long observation of urbanization in Southeast Asia, geographer Terry McGee (1991) noted Southeast Asian urbanism is marked not by a smooth gradient of urbanization (i.e. varying degree, intensity, etc), but by an intermix of urban and rural elements.

into the city's urban fabric. Swampy lands were built up. Brick buildings replaced wooden fences. The resulting morphology is, then, a compound of bungalows surrounded on all sides by rows of shophouses. Today, the 'lucky' cases are those hotels from bungalows, thus endowed with 'parking space'. By contrast, the less fortunate are the shophouse hotels that line the narrow *lebu* and *lorong*, the streets and lanes. As Chow claimed, the requirement is 'not sector-specific. All commercial properties must create parking lots. Even churches and temples must comply. But hotels in the heritage zone feel the pinch because they usually cannot provide even one parking lot so they will have to pay a high contribution' (*The Star*, June 4, 2015). While the parking requirement claims to apply to all, its insensitivity to urban morphology ends up privileging one building type over another.

In summary, this section details the Penang government's struggle in managing 'illegal hotels'. Unauthorized modifications are viewed as a threat to both safety and heritage values. As I have shown, the concern was not new. Just a few months after the 2008 Unesco inscription, the government faced with the dilemma of four overheight hotels in the heritage site. That time, powered by fresh enthusiasm and looming delisting threat, they successfully managed with poise and commitment. The government managed to overturn the planning permission that had been granted. Today, where enthusiasm is not as fresh, and concern over delisting seems distant, they barely manage to keep in check current developments. Importantly, The foe is no longer the *height*. While height is visible, internal alteration is not. To control the illegal hotels, the government made several efforts. I discuss two such efforts: zoning and licensing. First, zoning exhibits an understandable ambivalence towards hotels. While viewing them as essential for a thriving economy, the government seeks to nonetheless 'contain' them in zones. Second, the ambitious licensing program is entangled with several problems. As new hotels are detected every day, the government finds their list expanding. They take stock, categorize, and recategorize them to make sense of their burgeoning, from a simple list of 'licensed' and 'unlicensed' to a more winding scheme of the 'temporary permit', the 'registered-but-unlicensed', the 'non-registered', and so on. Even so, the program, ever attuned to solve a problem, begets more problems. The licensing fee makes the temporary permit more attractive. The legal requirements of today contrast sharply with the built form of the past. While converting from a 'residential' to a 'commercial' title is conceived as a solution, the solution itself becomes the problem.

4. Zoning for homes

The two-story shophouse where I stayed during my fieldwork used to be a sundry shop. My landlord bought the Armenian Street shophouse in the early 2000s, well before the 2008 Unesco inscription. Back then, Armenian was a neighborly, residential street. Down the block, she recalled, there were a few family houses, sundry shops, and a bicycle repair store. A few years later, after renovation, she rented the ground floor on a two-year lease to Ms. Tan, who turned it into a souvenir shop. Every morning, I woke up to write in the quiet hours. A few motorbikes would pass down the street, breaking the silence. Before long, the bustle of tourists took over. They started strolling in by 9AM as I heard Ms. Tan welcome them to her store. They took pictures of the storefronts decked in faux old-world aesthetic. They posed against state-commissioned mural paintings. Within a few years, homes were replaced with stores. The sundry shops became coffee shops. Today, Armenian Street became a tourist destination in its own right. My landlord was a first-generation gentrifier of George Town.

Gentrification is an acknowledged concern in George Town. My interest is not in gentrification per se, but in the planning techniques with which the government puts in place to manage gentrification. In 2013, the Penang Government commissioned a census survey of George Town World Heritage Site. Titled *George Town World Heritage Site: Population and Land Use Change 2009-2013*, the study was prepared by Geografica, an Australian planning consultancy. It serves as a baseline survey to compare with the 2009 census. One important finding is that, between 2009 and 2013, George Town saw an interrelated change of population decline and economic restructuring. Household and business services were replaced by hospitality and tourism. In the 1980s, there were around 50,000 residents in George Town. In 2013, the number went down to 9,000 (GTWHI, 2013). The staggering statistics is not so much a new insight as a numerical confirmation.

In the wake of such confirmed threat, the government was alerted to action. Importantly, gentrification was taking over George Town at the same time as the preparation of the SAP. The masterplan drafters identify gentrification as one of the 'challenges' of George Town. The message is explicit: "Another threat is gentrification as building owners respond to new demands for their buildings to cater to tourism and other new needs...Gentrification is known to bring about a change that is alien to the living cultural landscape (SAP, 20130, p. A5-6, also p. A1-2). Given the awareness that gentrification is an 'interrelated' landuse change, the hotel sector is framed as a main driver, the alien change, behind gentrification. To this end, they

identify a series of 'strategies' and 'actions' to be taken.⁵⁸ Briefly, the actions are (1) initiate hotel inventory; (2) develop hotel development guidelines; (3) monitor and enforce the existing laws; and (4) encourage affordable conservation and housing (see table).⁵⁹ These proposed 'actions' are meant to, the SAP claims, monitor the impact of hotel growth and the 'limits of acceptable change', and thus avoid the 'overwhelming effects of gentrification and touristification and encourage the return of inner city communities.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Initiate inventory of hotels(2) Develop a detailed guide(3) Monitor and enforce current laws on all existing hotels(4) Encourage affordable conservation and compatible housing schemes |
|--|

Table 4.7: actions proposed to deal gentrification

4.1 'Residential Overlay'

The broad actions aside, one intervention of note is mapmaking. In a hope of revitalizing residential population, the SAP presents two important maps: residential distribution map and residential overlay map. In the former, the planners meticulously documented, plot by plot, the residential distribution of George Town (figure 7). They categorized the plots into three types: 100% commercial, mixed-use, and 100% residential. The map is a testament of George Town's past. While most of the housing stock is concentrated in the 'core', many residential buildings nonetheless punctuate the otherwise commercial landscape of the former port city. The second map is the 'residential overlay' - the subject of my discussion (figure 8). The 'residential overlay' is represented as thick, hatching orange lines to denote (hoped-for) residential areas. The hatching gesture, the planners hope, will be one important intervention against gentrification. The intention is to direct planning permission towards retaining, if not encouraging, the existing residential population. That is, cast an additional layer of consideration, the overlay will add sensitivity to zoning. In this sense, the first map is a description and the second is a prescription, or at least a vision. The planners outline three pockets of residential overlay⁶⁰ in the heart of historic George Town. These pockets are some of the last remaining residential neighborhoods in George Town. The overlay, the planners argue, suggests that:

⁵⁸ The SAP proposes 10 management strategies for George Town World Heritage Site. 'Gentrification' is clearly labelled under the land-use strategy.

⁵⁹ The first three actions are vested under the City Council (with GTWHI as a supporting unit).

⁶⁰ The three pockets are (1) Lorong Pasar, Lorong Muda, Lorong Chulia, Lebu Kiang, Lorong Stewart, Lorong Argue; (2) Lebu Aceh, Lebu Armenian, Lebu Cannon, Lebu Ah Quee, Lorong Lumut, Lorong Toh Aka, Lebu Carnavon, Lebu Pantai; (3) Lorong Seck Chuan and Lorong Cheapside.

‘the ‘dominant activity in these areas is Residential [sic], and thus shall remain so. Commercial activities within these neighborhoods shall enhance the cultural significance and OUVs [Outstanding Universal Values] of the site’ (SAP, 2013, p. C2-10).

Before discussing how (and whether) the overlay is put into action, it is important to discuss the formulation of the overlay itself. I argue that the overlay, in its present form, is well-intended, but ill-conceived. Let us recall that the overlay is, first and foremost, a map. Like most maps, it is a cartographic construction, a point of view rather than a fact. It persuades as much as it reflects. To be sure, the overlay correctly corresponds to the existing residential masses. However, it only highlights *contiguous* residential areas, and thus obscures others. Such representation may be misleading, for it conveys to the viewer that this is all there is. In reality, as in the residential distribution map (figure 7) shows, there are sporadic pockets of residences across the city. For example, mixed-use buildings are found in Lebu Cintra, Jalan Kuala Kangsar, and Kimberly. As I argued earlier in the case of hotel zoning, there might very well be, and indeed are, residences outside the ‘residential overlay’. Curiously, if the goal is to encourage residential population, a more generous residential overlay must be in place. At present, it is too conservatively drawn. Given that mapmaking is a dominant planning technique, it should not be dismissed as a fastidious concern, for it bears implications for planning professionals. Another concern is the thin legal provisions that accompany the overlay. Other than saying the residential areas ‘shall remain so’, the planners do not offer much else. Given that the ‘overlay’ is located squarely in George Town’s gentrifying core, development pressure is high. The overlay may quickly reduce to a wishful thinking, a curatorial gesture of hatching lines, toward retaining residential masses. Such curatorial gesture, as I show below, is too thin to realize the vision.

4.2 Evicted from home

On the morning of March 31, 2015, on the same day that I arrived in George Town for my fieldwork, a 95-year-old Madam See Thor was evicted from her home on Klang Street. Klang Street is a misnomer, for it is in fact a narrow, short alley lined on each side by dilapidated shophouses. Designated as a ‘residential overlay’, the unassuming Klang Street is surrounded tightly by the ‘Tourism and Leisure Zone’ of Chulia Street and Love Lane - two streets filled with cheap hotels and hostels. I did not get to meet Madam See Thor on that day, unfortunately. I only went to her house to find the locked door (figure 10). As I learned from her nextdoor neighbor, the owner of Madam See Thor’s house wanted the house back to turn it into a holiday

home. (In fact, when I went back again in July, the shophouse was being converted into a hotel). The neighbor herself is a hotel operator. A non-native of George Town, she moved into town and applied for a loan. She rented her two-story shophouse and converted it into a youth hostel. Hers was certainly not the first hotel in the area, but the first on that particular alley. Freshly painted lemon yellow, the hotel had opened for just under one month when I visited. Madam See Thor's house was yellow, too. But the paint was flaking and more dull. The neighbor described Madam See Thor as strong for her age. She would get up early, go to market, cook all day, and play *mahjong* with her friends in historic George Town in the afternoon. She had lived there for most of her life. According to one informant, she recalled hiding under the stairs when the Japanese troops did their regular patrols during the Second World War.⁶¹ The eviction meant that the life that she had known was ended. She moved to live with her son in his high-rise flat outside George Town. 'What can I do when the house isn't mine?', Madame See Thor told a local newspaper, 'The owner wants it back and all I can do is to give it back' (*The Malaysian Insider*, March 31, 2015).

Madam See's story is not an anecdote; it bespeaks a larger pattern. A short walk from Klang Street is Chulia Lane, also in the 'residential overlay'. From an urban design perspective, Chulia Lane affords an ideal townscape (Cullen, 1961). The narrow, winding alley juxtaposes shopfronts, thus forming an intriguing vista (figure). There are remnants of a residential neighborhood: newspaper stalls, eating houses, Chinese ritual merchandise stores (Chulia Lane is located behind a famous temple), clothes drying racks, and elderly residents. In the words of one informant, '...before all this UNESCO thingy, our family was one of the early residents there. [It] used to have *real* neighborhood there, children playing and running around' (emphasis in original). Unfortunately, the fine-grained block - what today's urban designer term 'human scale' - is a prime ingredient for gentrification. Over the years, the residential shophouses are converted, one by one, to cafe, hotels, and guesthouses. The last blow came in October 2015, when tenants of four shophouses received eviction notice. One of the evictees is a coffee stall owner who lived there for over 50 years.

Across from Chulia Lane is Cheapside Lane. Named after a street in London, Cheapside Lane is hidden from view, obscured by the bustle of Chulia Street and tourists strolling by. Down the lane lied six shophouses, where people lived and worked. For decades, Cheapside residents sold keys, padlocks, hardware, and metalwork items. The trades were a reminder, and a

⁶¹ Interview with an informant, May 11, 2016.

remainder, of George Town as an 'unapologetically working-class town' (Finchley, 2015). Selling keys did not generate a lot of income. But it was made possible by a very cheap monthly rent of RM400 (US\$100). In September 2015, an eviction letter arrived upon their doors. The owner wanted to sell the properties. The tenants not only lamented their loss of business, but also loss of homes where they had lived all their lives. One 70-year-old tenant recalled his memories as he and his childhood friends played on the street (*The Rakyat Post*, March 9, 2015). On March 10th, 2015, Khoo Salma, then president of Penang Heritage Trust, led a site visit to Cheapside on their eviction day. A local historian, Khoo briefed on the early-twentieth century history of Cheapside to a throng of press and concerned citizens. She reminded that Cheapside was one of the few remaining residential neighborhoods in George Town - the kind of people who won George Town a Unesco inscription in the first place. The eviction 'would threaten the character of the area' (PHT, 2015). Khoo urged the state government and the city council to take action to preserve George Town's residential population. Also shown during the site visit was a large printout of the 'residential overlay' map, indicating Cheapside in its boundary.

The 'Residential Overlay' is a bold vision. It covers not only the residential pockets near the tourist district of Chulia Street and Love Lane, but also what is zoned as 'Cultural Enclave Overlay' of Armenian and Aceh Streets (figure 9). Arguably, the two parallel streets are the biggest tourist attraction of George Town. They link multiple sites together, thus forming a tourist trail. In this sense, the Armenian-Aceh area overlaps two 'overlays', literally overlaying one upon another two markedly different functions of home and tourism. As I will show below, the tension between the two activated a distinct dilemma for planners. Khoo Kongsi is a case in point. The Chinese clan compound is close to my rental shophouse on Armenian Street. From my second-floor bedroom window, I could see Khoo Kong's elaborate roof in stark contrast to the otherwise low-rise terracotta roofscape. For overseas Chinese, a *kongsi* is a clan-based association and a large-scale family business. In the past, most of the clan members lived in the tight-knit urban compound, which mimicked the organization of a rural clan village (Khoo, 1993, p. 60) (figure 11). The Khoos are among the five most powerful clans in Penang (Wong, 2015). Their wealth is reflected in the architecture of their clan temple. Once a private site of ancestral worship, the temple today is a tourist attraction in its own right. It is often regarded as the grandest clan temple in Malaysia (Khoo, 1993, p. 59).

My present concern is not the temple, but the humble residential compound that surrounds the temple. Given the clan complex reflects the traditional physical organization, the surrounding shophouses acted as a fortress to the clan, affording a backdrop to the illustrious clan hall. At the beginning, these shophouses provided accommodation for the all the Khoos who worked and lived in the compound. Over the past decades, the richer members moved to the suburbs. For the poorer Khoos that remained, they continued to profit from cheap rentals. However, as the old generations passed away, the clan-based ties loosened. Among the younger Khoos, what was once a familial relationship quickly became a landlord-tenant one. As the anthropologist Gwynn Jenkins (2008) documented, Khoo Kongsí was one of the first gentrified sites in George Town. The eviction began as early as in 1992, well before the Unesco inscription. As I chronicled earlier, Penang in the nineties had a favorable attitude towards tourism (see pages). In the early 1990s, the State Executive Councilor for Tourism proposed that Khoo Kongsí trustees convert the shophouses into shops and boutique hotels. The process was gradual but constant. Long, bitter battles ensued, with negotiation, soft and confrontational from both sides. By 2000, most of the remaining Khoos had eventually been evicted (Jenkins, 2008, p. 173; p. 210). Today, the compound became a proper tourist attraction. It bears little resemblance to the close-tight village of yesteryear.

However, the transformation did not end in the early 2000s. As far municipal planning is concerned, the redevelopment streak is still ongoing up to today. The process, I argue, provides a closer view into how (and whether) the 'Residential Overlay' is put into action. Let us recall that Khoo Kongsí is located in an area that is designated as both 'Cultural' and 'Residential' overlays. Yet, the planning process suggested otherwise.⁶² Beginning in 2010, the Kongsí trustees have submitted several planning applications that would lead to the gradual transformation of the shophouses. First, in 2010, minor repair works began. In 2014, however, more extensive renovation took place, particularly for the internal layout. In particular, the trustees applied for a 'change of use'. Between 2015 and 2016, the development's commercial nature is made clear. New internal building plans were proposed. Importantly, the trustees applied for extensive change of use in several categories, from '*living*' and '*store*' to '*guestrooms*', '*guesthouses*', '*business*' and '*culture*', to name a few. Unlike 'residential' minor works, the project is earmarked as 'commercial'. Most recently, instead of themselves developing the properties, Khoo Kongsí trustees recently decided to rent out their properties.

⁶² Planning Reference Nos: MPPP/OSC/PM2347/14; MBPP/OSC/PP3805/15

Some 24 pre-war shophouses will be leased to Discovery Overland, a real estate agent, for 30 years. The long lease will amount to comprehensive commercial redevelopment.

The example of Khoo Kongsi generated a familiar albeit flawed debate on the 'pros and cons' of historic preservation (a topic that I will address at length in the last section). One architect who used to work on the earlier versions of the project in the 1990s argued for private redevelopment. The restoration, he argued, will 'bring back the glory of these houses'. He also suggested the commercial lease was a pragmatic decision for the trustees. In his experience, shophouse owners often did not have the financial means to properly restore their properties. Since the private developer is in charge of the restoration, the trustees do not bear costs, so the restoration is practically 'free'. The shophouses will be, he argued, 'restored and well-maintained', a difference from the past where they were falling apart due to lack of care. By contrast, another informant, a heritage-specialist tour guide, argued that some tenants did want to stay, because the then affordable rentals were within their means. She recounted an example of one male tenant, a recycler, who went to the trustees himself to make a plea. On the pragmatic concerns of finance, she cited multiple examples where Khoo Kongsi renovated their own properties (after evicting the tenants). In fact, Khoo Kongsi is 'one of the first organizations in Penang, amply endowed with rentable properties (Khoo, 1993, p. 61).

Another irony is Spices Hotel, a boutique hotel located on Lumut Lane, a few steps from the tourist area of Armenian and Aceh Streets. The eight-room hotel is housed in a group of carefully restored four shophouses. On November 4, 2015, Chow Kon Yeow came for inspection. Applauding the hotel operator, he claimed that the hotel was one of the few who are fully licensed. In the absence of parking space, they also dutifully paid a RM25,000 parking contribution. In fact, thanks to the careful restoration, the hotel project won in 2014 an 'Adaptive Reuse' award from PAM (Pertubuhan Akitik Malaysia), the Malaysian Institute of Architects. The project was praised for its respectful treatment of the structure. The facade was restored. The century-old Bhodi tree, which had grown into the party wall, was retained. The architectural achievements aside, the project raises a few issues for planning. First, the plot was zoned as 'residential' as early as in the 1996 zoning plan, still in effect today⁶³. Second, the Residential Distribution map (figure 7) indicates the plot as '100% residential'. Third and most importantly,

⁶³ The title is *Municipal Council of Penang Island Planning and Development Control Policy Plan 1996* (Pelan Dasar Perancangan Dan Kawalan Pemajuan Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang)

the plot lies in the 'residential overlay'.⁶⁴ I highlight this example because it previews a dilemma that I will address in the next section ('Design politics'). The project is lawful in the sense that it properly went through the state machinery (e.g. hotel licensing and planning application). Better yet, it became an architectural exemplar, a model for 'sensitive restoration'. Yet, it contradicts the planners' attempt at encouraging a residential population in George Town's rapidly commercialized historic core.

4.3 Overlay as a painting

I will address whether redevelopment necessarily equals restoration in the following section. For now, let us briefly evaluate whether the 'residential overlay' achieves its intention and, if not, what, then, we can make of the overlay. Let us recall that the state expressed quite early on their concern for gentrification. They were aware of the oversupply of hotels within George Town World Heritage Site, and their effects on residential population. Hotels are, indeed, viewed with guard. Therefore, wide-ranging mechanisms were proposed in the SAP, e.g. hotel inventory, hotel guidelines, and affordable conservation schemes. In particular, this section focused on one planning techniques: the 'Residential Overlay'. A truly progressive idea, the Overlay would add another layer of consideration, a sensitivity device, to help planners deliberate planning permission. Yet, the real-life examples contracted the intention. Many residents have been systematically uprooted from the residential-overlay pockets. Those that remain live with uncertainty. The intention to retain 'population' was upended. Buildings are converted from homes to hotels, replacing rooted population of families with transient population of tourists.

It is tempting to dismiss the population change as a generic gentrification, and conclude that they are a result of the market. However, I posit a different explanation. We should not dismiss the examples of Madame See, Cheapside Lane, Khoo Kongsi as an expression of laissez-faire market. The progress not only took place under the watchful eye of the state, but also was actively sanctioned by them. By authorizing the change of use from 'home' to guesthouses', by licensing a hotel in what is designated as a residential lot, the government themselves played an active role in contradicting their own vision. As a result, the 'Residential Overlay' amounts to little more than hatching lines. Perhaps, a lack of supporting mechanisms is the heart of the problem. Bold as it is, the planning technique is light in detail. The aforementioned examples expose two blind spots currently absent from the thinking of the Overlay. First, the 'Residential

⁶⁴ According to the project's website, the plots had long been left to decline after a fire. The previous owner was about to turn the properties into swiftlet farming - a lucrative alternative for shophouse owners in George Town in the nineties (<http://spiceshotel.com>, accessed on August 1, 2016).

Overlay' zone is juxtaposed next to the 'Tourism and Leisure' zone - two areas of different characters (e.g. Cheapside and Chulia Lanes). The skin-tight juxtaposition does not mix well. For development pressure of the latter can, and do, easily seep into the fabric of the latter. Worse yet, there is a case where two overlays, Residential and Cultural, overlap (e.g. Khoo Kongsi). The double overlay itself should reek of conflict. While the planners are encouraged to read George Town as rich 'layers' and 'topographies', some layers exert more pressure upon others. Second and perhaps more importantly, zoning is blind to land tenure. As a mercantile trading port, George Town has an entrenched landed elite (Wong, 2015), where the majority of land titles are leasehold, not freehold (GTWHI, 2015). In the modern land tenure regime, the will to reside does not belong to the residents, but to the landowners. 'What can I do when the house isn't mine', Madame See Thor's rhetorical question should prompt the planners to rethink the 'residential' in the 'Residential Overlay'.

A bold, progressive move, the 'Residential Overlay' calls for an even bolder enactment. Zoning can no longer be approached as day-to-day administrative, but as advocacy. Given the two salient conditions, the planners cannot afford to methodically administer planning permission on a business-as-usual basis. Rather, they have to actively advocate for what they themselves prescribe. Khoo Kongsi illustrates this point. Most of the tenants have moved out, and gentrification was almost complete by the early 2000s. Yet, as if in an effort to redeem the past, to inject life back to the clan compound, the area is still painted as a 'Residential Overlay'. Unfortunately, besides the boldly orange hatching lines, not much else is done. In this manner, the zoning map results in little more than a beautifully detailed drawing. One is left wondering whether 'Residential Overlay' is a sincere action or simply a gesture thereof.

5.1 Constructing the Ideal Shophouse

This section concerns the construction of the Ideal Shophouse as a prototypical architecture of George Town, Penang. Instead of being a strictly state-driven project, the Ideal Shophouse has entailed a collaborative nexus of state, quasi-state, and non-state actors, who came together produce the knowledge on this building typology. In George Town, heritage as a collective consciousness emerged the late 1990s and blossomed through the 2000s. Heritage promotion was driven not by the state, but by the then nascent local NGOs. Spearheaded by Penang educated middle-class, heritage promotion is a civil-society response to the post-2000 decline of inner George Town. It was also galvanized around the initial Unesco nomination. In fact, it was Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) who initiated the idea of nominating George Town as a World

Heritage Site. The official process was then taken up by the State Government and the Federal Government. The early days were marked by enthusiasm and collaboration. In addition to the well-established PHT, other local groups emerged (Jenkins, 2008; Khoo, 2012). For example, led by educated young professionals, Nanyan Folk Culture organized street festivals, exhibitions, and extravaganzas, to raise awareness among inner-city Chinese communities (Jenkins, 2008, p. 160). They provided a new mode of appreciating space by taking the people back to the streets of George Town. The street-based exhibition, as I will show, was a precursor for the yearly Heritage Celebrations (see next chapter). Arts-ED is an NGO that works on arts and heritage education among children and teenagers. These NGOs came together to form a loose coalition called CHAT (Khoo, 2012, p. 24). Today, the government still relies on local individuals and NGOs for their heritage promotion programs. In this manner, the civic groups were, and still are, the main producer of heritage knowledge in Penang.

However, I am interested in a shift from heritage as education to heritage as regulation. The government no longer employs heritage knowledge simply to 'raise awareness' (e.g. cultural show, performance, exhibition) - the subject of the next chapter. Instead, the government deploys the richly accumulated knowledge in regulating built environment. The Penang Shophouse Program is a case in point. The shophouse is a common building type in George Town. There are several thousands of such pre-war shophouses around the city, making them the largest building type. The government has recorded a total of 3771 shophouses, covering 76.54% of the World Heritage Site (SAP, 2013, p. C3-2). The low-rise shophouses were built in rows, lining the streets and encircling the blocks. The distinct, rhythmic pattern gives historic George Town a strong visual presence. Upon the 2008 Unesco inscription, the government and NGOs felt a need for some design guidelines to maintain such pattern. By then, the shophouse was a familiar typology for the government. Between the late 1980s and 1990s, several plans were drawn for shophouse preservation (see Chapter 3). In particular, the inventory project by GTZ, a German technical assistance, accounted for the vernacular built form. The effort later amounted to the 1987 Design Guidelines - the city's first and mostly neglected design guidelines. Around the time of the Unesco nomination, the shophouse knowledge was reinvigorated in large part by architectural researcher Gwynn Jenkins. As a submission requirement, the state party must submit a description of the site (i.e. the history, significance, architectural typologies). One of Jenkins' dissertation chapters found itself in the Unesco nomination dossier (Jenkins, 2008, p. 31). In particular, her contribution was the periodization of Penang shophouse architectural styles, where she traced the shophouses' early history, its styles, and materials. In parallel,

conservation architect Tan Yeow Wooi had long been interested in the Penang shophouse. In 2015, his extensive research resulted in a state-funded design manual (discussed later).

The state drew extensively upon the two figures and Penang's other heritage practitioners. Over the years, refinement led to a solidified understanding of Penang shophouses. Capitalizing on these local experts' vast knowledge, the state subsequently produced extensive shophouse intervention. In particular, it takes two forms: (1) Penang Shophouse Program⁶⁵ and (2) the SAP. The former is education, and the latter regulation. I briefly introduce the two in turn. First, the Penang Shophouse Program is, in essence, a range of educational materials (e.g. posters, handouts, digital slideshows) (figure 12). Carried out between 2010 and 2011, the project was a truly multi-party collaboration. It was made possible by two new government bodies established following the Unesco 2008 inscription: Think City and GTWHI. Think City, a federal-government funding body, funded the project. Arts-ED, along with Gwynn Jenkins and Tan Yeow Wooi, produced the contents. GTWHI managed the overall project and its subsequent dissemination. Second, these experts contributed heavily to the drafting of the SAP. Although the masterplan was outsourced to a Kuala Lumpur-based consultancy, local experts were consulted. In particular, Part D is a section devoted to shophouse design guidelines⁶⁶. It is an impressively detailed section. It introduces every aspect of the Penang Shophouse, from roof to signage, from how to properly restore the building to how to submit a planning permit. In sum, the two forms of shophouse knowledge - the Penang Shophouse Program and the SAP - reflect the need for both education and regulation. In recent years, the two-pronged principle increasingly characterizes George Town's heritage intervention.

I argue that the aforementioned programs, both education and regulation, are an attempt to reconstruct the *ideal* Penang Shophouse. The idealization sets a standard for preservation, restoration, and repair works. To illustrate, I examine in turn the contents of the Penang Shophouse Program; its accompanying discourse of *do's* and *don't's*; and its dissemination and audience. The Program's contents is a condensed version of Jenkins' and Tan's research. For circulation purposes, the vast corpus of shophouse knowledge (e.g. a dissertation chapter!) is reduced, understandably, to the formats of posters, handouts, and brochures (figure 13). The

⁶⁵ Penang Shophouse Program is my own shorthand that designates these educational materials created to promote and educate the public on Penang shophouses. takes various formats. Key among them are (1) a poster handout; (2) traditional building materials handouts; (3) online guide; and (4) slideshows

⁶⁶ Part D: Guidelines for the Conservation Areas and Heritage Buildings for George Town World Heritage Site

handy formats prove accessible and 'friendly' to the public. The main product is a foldable poster. A compact presentation, it seeks to introduce 'What is a shophouse?' to, ironically, those who have, for decades, already lived in one. The poster consists of several sections. First, the building's anatomy is introduced (figure 13b). As many as 40 odd features, from eave to gutter, are dissected in a diagram. Second, the poster displays the six building styles of Penang⁶⁷ (figure 12). They are arranged in chronological order, from 1790s to 1970s. The periodization reflects the building's stylistic evolution over time.

Third, buildings reflect history. The chronology of buildings is accompanied by a chronology of historical events. Historical narrative is provided in the form of cartoon to explain each of the styles (figure 12). For example, the first 'Early Penang style' reflects the simple material and construction techniques of the time. The second 'Southern Chinese' style acknowledges the craftsmanship of artisans from China. The elaborate, ornate third style was enabled by wealth from tin boom at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Art Deco and Early Modern Styles are local appropriations of Western modernist architecture. In other words, each of the six styles corresponds to a phase in Penang history. Space represents time, and a given style is an embodiment of its historical period. The tight, simplified storyline makes for an easy comprehension if not consensus. Fourth, the program introduces traditional materials and construction techniques - a subject I will address below. The materials include timber, clay, brick, lime plaster, terracotta roof tiles, and so on. Locally sourced, the materials reflect the tropical geography that surrounds Penang vernacular architecture. The materials are intended in particular for building contractors. Think City later funded the publication of handouts specifically for four traditional materials: Timber, Stone, Clay, and Lime⁶⁸ (figure 14).

The Ideal Penang Shophouse is supported by a particular discourse and *do's* and *don't's*. The discourse is presented through a comic strip that conveys, in a humorous way, what to do and not do with the shophouse (figure 13a). The scene of the comic is a typical family of inner George Town, consisting of parents, children, and guests. Titled 'How to safeguard the heritage values of your property', the comic strip features eight panels of common restoration mistakes. It uses a device contrast, where each panel illustrates each pair of do and don't. On the left, the 'owner of heritage shophouse' is pitted against the 'owner of modern shophouse' on the right.

⁶⁷ the six styles are Early Penang (1790s-1850s), Southern Chinese Eclectic (1840s-1910s), Early Straits Eclectic (1890s-1910s), Late Straits Eclectic (1910s-1940s), Art Deco (1930s-1960s), and Early Modern (1950s-1970s).

⁶⁸ The first round of George Town Grants Programme, 2011

For example, the first panel explains the use of the five-foot-way⁶⁹ and renounces its blockade - a trend in recent years. It argues that the arcaded walkway is a suitable, weather-responsive feature shielding the pedestrian from the rain. Second, the airwell is represented as a tropical ventilation method as it circulates air through the building, allowing clothes to dry. By contrast, covering the airwell makes the building hot and damp. Similarly, the lime-plaster wall allows for better evaporation, whereas cement does not. The comic also disapproves modern additions: air conditioning, roller-shutter door, and big signage. In this way, the cartoon illustrates the Ideal Shophouse and its Other, a chasm of good and bad. The polar opposites direct a way of seeing decorum and impropriety. In essence, the cartoon is a rhetorical device used to convince the viewer. It advances the argument that the original shophouse - the authentic, ideal shophouse - is an ingenious built form designed with local conditions in mind.

Interestingly, the *don't's* are not represented as a threat to heritage value, but to everyday practicality. They are portrayed not as ugly, but as cumbersome. Perhaps, this is a smart, intentional choice. George Town is a merchant city, and 'beauty' is rarely a concern among the traders (Interview with Arts-ED program officer)⁷⁰. The majority of the shophouses are, after all, shops. Therefore, instead of decrying the big shop sign as insensitive restoration, the cartoon argues instead it blocks fire exit. Instead of lamenting the bygone decorative timber double doors, it depicts the roller-shutter door as a burden. Instead of appealing to aesthetic enlightenment, the cartoon appeals to utility. It is 'a fun way of explaining the historical background...and the do's and don'ts of restoring and renovating a heritage structure. We wanted to produce materials that an average person could understand and enjoy reading', Chen Yoke Pin, Arts-ED program officer told a national newspaper in 2011 (*The Star*, April 9, 2011). In the words of the producers, 'traditional knowledge is wisdom' (GTWHI, 2011).

Eng Loh is a corner *kafeteria* popular among white-collar professionals in the heart of George Town (figure 23). In the bustle of lunchtime crowd, one may not notice a yellowing poster of 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' hanging on the wall. One block south of Eng Loh is a quieter Hock Leong Yen, also a corner *kopitiam*. On the wall, a similar poster was prominently displayed. The two are but a few examples of eating houses in George Town, where the poster was disseminated. In April 2011, Chow Kon Yeow, State Executive Chairman, officiated the

⁶⁹ An English translation from the Malay term *kaki lima*, the five-foot-way is a typical feature of shophouses in Malaysia and Singapore. The arcaded walkway connects the building fronts in the same block.

⁷⁰ Interview with Arts-ED program officer, July 9, 2015

launch of 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' posters. He paid symbolic visit to three *kopitiams* to hand-deliver the poster. A total of 450 posters and 25,000 leaflets were published and distributed to heritage property owners and the public (*The Star*, April 9, 2011). Accounting for George Town's predominantly Chinese demography, the materials were published in both English and Chinese. The program proved popular among the residents and the press. It enjoyed wide press coverage.⁷¹ The local business operators, particularly the *kopitiam* owners, appreciated the poster, as it helped them better understand the style of the very houses in which they had long lived. In particular, they enjoyed the poster's beautiful presentation and readily digestible information (Interview with Arts-ED program officer)⁷². The 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' poster circulated everywhere, from corner coffee shops to the 14th-floor MBPP offices.

The Ideal Penang Shophouse is enshrined inside the GTWHI office itself. Inaugurated in 2010, the organization's office is also housed in a beautifully restored shophouse. As the visitor enters the gleaming white building, he is greeted with the so-called Interpretive Center. Here, the permanent exhibition showcases the six shophouse styles in life-size detail. The physical models display real bricks, window panels, and timber slabs that correspond to each of the styles. These are real objects taken from real shophouses. Their tactility guides the viewer's perception, attuning his interpretation toward the correct image of the ideal Penang Shophouse.

5.2 Regulating the Ideal Shophouse

Let us recall the two-pronged approach: education and regulation. The Ideal Shophouse is not meant to simply raise awareness on George Town's vernacular architecture. For the planners, the figure of the Ideal Shophouse also regulates all other shophouses. It sets a standard for preservation, restoration, and repair works. Importantly, besides the average resident, the dissemination has expanded to one important industry: construction professionals. As the audience became more technical, the Penang Shophouse Program extended well beyond the 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' poster. The program now deepened from the entertaining cartoon to the more specialist brochures of Timber, Stone, Clay, and Lime - the four key construction materials of Penang shophouse. Today, Penang government bodies, GTWHI in particular, run multiple shophouse programs throughout the year. They give slideshow

⁷¹ The event was reported in several newspapers. For example, *China Press* (April 9, 2011) ran the headline of 'Introducing historical [shop]houses by pictures'. *Sin Chew Jit Poh* (Sin Chew Daily, April 9, 2011) published 'Assign old houses' poster and brochure to promote 'Authentic Penang'.

⁷² Interview with Arts-ED program officer, July 9, 2015

presentations to homeowners, building contractors, and public officials. Since 2010, they have run workshops of various topics (e.g. heritage significance, research and documentation, local guidelines, construction materials, etc) and at various levels (e.g. introduction, intermediate, and advanced). The efforts are channelled towards one common understanding (and appreciation) of the Ideal Penang Shophouse and its specificities. In particular, the detail is fully magnified in the SAP. As mentioned earlier, the SAP outlines at great length conservation practices of Penang shophouse. Intended to building owners and professionals, it provides an in-depth magnification of the 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' poster.

Most recently, Tan Yeow Wooi launched his new book *Penang Shophouses: A Handbook of Features and Materials* on July 28, 2015 (figure 15).⁷³ Funded by Think City, the book serves as a design manual for Penang shophouses. The book launch, which I had the pleasure to attend, saw many familiar faces. The entire heritage circle of Penang descended on the venue that balmy evening in July. State Executive Chairman Chow Kon Yeow gave an opening speech. Dr. Neil Khor, Think City's Chief Operating Officer, introduced the project. Gwynn Jenkins gave a warm presentation of the laborious process behind her colleague's book. A 'labor of love', she thought, was an understatement. Also present were local councillors, GTWHI manager, and PHT president. The night ended with a lecture by Tan Yeow Wooi himself. The atmosphere was filled with gratitude as the attendees were reminded, once again, of the difficult task of restoring a shophouse. I reenacted the scene in order to show that the Penang government was witness to the process. They have at their disposal various modes of intervention for various audiences: the poster for the average resident; the design manual for the building owner and contractors; the laws, by-laws, and legal guidelines for the municipal planners. The rich toolkits, it appears, would equip them well for the task of ensuring the Ideal Shophouse.

Now, I would like to draw attention from document to process. In addition to the rich toolkits, the government has set up new mechanisms in order to, in principle, realize the vision of the Ideal Shophouse. The first is the 'heritage clinic'. Upon the establishing of GTWHI in 2010 as a site manager of George Town World Heritage Site, one of its missions to provide conservation education to the residents. In particular, it is meant to impart the desirable conservation practices, the Ideal Shophouse, to the building owners. A 'heritage clinic' is set up to provide

⁷³ I cannot think of a more appropriate venue. The Star at Pitt Street Building is a restored multi-functional building that houses Think City's office and Areca Bookstore, a heritage-oriented publisher. The building is located in the historic heart of George Town, surrounded by Little India, the temple of Goddess of Mercy (*Kuan Yin Teng*), the Penang Chinese Town Hall.

free, optional consultation. The idea is to screen planning applications and to forestall inappropriate intervention. Second, the planning application goes through normal planning process at the MBPP. Depending the type of the planning application, it will be routed to the responsible internal units within the City Council, e.g. Building Department, Planning Department, Heritage Department, and so on. In particular, a Technical Review Panel (TRP) was established as a special arrangement. Its task is to vet planning applications that directly impact heritage value of George Town World Heritage Site. Any intervention that may detract from the Ideal Shophouse will, in theory, go through the TRP.

5.3 Financing the Ideal Shophouse

In his mid-fifties, Tan Yeow Wooi has dedicated most of his life to researching Penang shophouses. I paid visit to his office, certainly an Ideal Penang Shophouse, located on China Street (figure 16). *Lebuh Cina* was once the original Chinese settlement of Penang when Francis Light of the British East India Company founded the Island in the late eighteenth century. Today, China Street is no longer an exclusively Chinese enclave. And the Chinese have very well resettled elsewhere across the Island. But what has remained from Light's days are rows of shophouses that flank both sides of China Street. Tan's office is one of them. His shophouse sports a simple facade, a timber double door, and a Chinese wood-carved signboard. The upper floor has louver-shutter windows and glazed ceramic air-vents. The pale China-blue paint started to flake, revealing the lime plaster underneath. Inside, the airwell lets in air and light, illuminating the building. All the features bespeak the decorum of the Ideal Penang Shophouse. The shophouse looked nothing like this when he bought the house over a decade ago. Tan explained the meticulousness of restoring the shophouse. He replaced the shutter roller with a timber door, the glass windows from louvered-shutter windows. The successful redemption from modern additions to its original style makes No. 81 China Street one of the frequently cited exemplars *do's* and *don't's*. Redeeming a heavily altered building involved time and money. The Ideal Shophouse is, in truth, expensive.

Understanding financial burdens of heritage, the Government of Malaysia, through Khazanah Nasional⁷⁴, granted a start-up fund of RM 20 million (US\$ 4.98 million) for George Town World Heritage Site. In August 2009, Think City was established as a special purpose vehicle to manage the fund. On December 10, 2009, Think City launched George Town Grants

⁷⁴ Khazanah Nasional is the strategic investment arm of the Government of Malaysia founded in 1993 as a public company in charge of catalyzing various national initiatives.

Programme (GTGP) to 'kick start the urban rejuvenation of George Town'. With the slogan 'Rejuvenating the City Together', Think City stressed collaborative partnership that involved various stakeholders, capitalizing on George Town's preexisting civil-society base. The GTGP invited applications from any private individual and organization from within the World Heritage Site. As Malaysia's first ever public grants programme in urban regeneration, GTGP funded many types of regeneration projects: individual building conservation, research and documentation, public realm improvement. Aware of their limited budget, Think City prioritized projects that may serve as catalysts to inspire a following. In fact, 'catalytic' is one of the stated grant criteria. The rationale was to provide 'incentives to property owners to adopt best practices in heritage conservation and will provide part-funding of the restoration of buildings of special historic significance that results in a major public outcome' (*Think City media statement*, December 10, 2009).

Between 2010 and 2013, Think City ran five rounds of GTGP. At the conclusion of the fifth round in 2013, Think City had funded a total of 205 projects across George Town (Khazanah Nasional, 2013, p. 55).⁷⁵ In particular, Think City blazed a trail for the Ideal Penang Shophouse that I theorized earlier. Success stories abounded as many dilapidated shophouses saw a rejuvenation. The physical-conservation grant, which ranged from RM 21,500 to RM 243,200 (US\$ 5400 to US\$ 60,600), significantly helped cover the cost of renovation. In addition, the grantees benefited from a MPPP-led workshop to ensure compliance with building regulations (Think City media statement, April 21, 2010). Taken together, the GTGP made possible a 'correct' restoration of the shophouses, financing their ideal image. In particular, in the third round of GTGP, Think City selected four affordable-housing projects, hoping to popularize the concept. One example is the Hock Teik row, a row of ten rental shophouse on Armenian Street, the historic and tourist enclave of George Town.

Located directly behind Khoo Kongsu compound, the Hock Teik residents enjoyed a better luck than their neighbors (figure 17). Think City brought to the table the tenants and their landlord, the Hock Teik trustees. They also brought in Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, a Bangkok-based NGO, who contributed technical and financial assistance. Completed in October 2014, the project saw a beautification of the ten shophouses that had been once badly dilapidated.

⁷⁵ As mentioned, Think City funded indeed a staggering variety of projects: a street greening project on Carnarvon Street, 'Vision of Penang' (an archival collection of old George Town maps), a Planning and Design Guide for Public Realms, and many other talk series. Pertaining to my present interest in shophouse restoration, I focus on the physical conservation projects.

More importantly, thanks to Think City-led negotiation, the landlord promised a capped monthly rent at RM 400 (US\$ 100), much to the delights of tenants. To them, the grant scheme cemented a sense of security, deepening their tenancy on the street that saw rapid transformation since 2008. Today, the ten shophouses are restored to their true 'Southern Chinese Eclectic Style'. The houses are adorned with the proper grammar: the terracotta U-shaped roof tile, the wooden louvered-shutter window, and the ceramic air vent. Through the financial and technical assistance, the Ideal Shophouse was made possible. The success stories from George Town led Think City to replicate their model to the larger Malaysia. Within a few years, Think City has expanded to Butterworth, Johor, and the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Yet, the TGPG bore its own technopolitics, where planning techniques were, perhaps inadvertently, used to exclude. Below, I highlight on-the-ground realities that surround what is touted as success stories. While some saw their buildings restored to their ideal beauty, others could not access the grant to begin with. The application paperwork was viewed as exclusionary.⁷⁶ First, the application was written in English and Malay, the national language, not to mention the legalese nature of a contract. The language precluded many inner-city residents - the kind of residents who live in dilapidated shophouses that need restoration in the first place. The inner-city residents tend to be lower-income, older, ethnic Chinese, who were Chinese-educated or not educated at all. Second, the contents of the application itself was rather technical, if not academic. It demanded a series of components, including the project statement, scope of work and timeline, physical details, financial projections, cost breakdown, publicity plan, maintenance plan, and so on. Some questions, which pertain to heritage value, require an essay-like answer.⁷⁷ To be sure, the long-winding form is standard for most grant applications. However, I must stress that, for ordinary residents, the application required a degree of working knowledge with heritage and a familiarity with government bureaucracy. Third, an extra form 'Conservation Statement' was required for all physical-conservation applications. The Statement had to be 'prepared by an appropriately qualified and accredited professional adviser' (Think City media statement, 21 April 2010). The requirement added

⁷⁶ Interview, July 9, 2015

⁷⁷ Examples include: How will your project respect, retain or enhance the heritage merit of your building? Where your proposals conflict with heritage interest, outline any mitigating strategies you propose; How will you make sure that the benefits of your project are maintained after it is completed?; If you have a maintenance plan for your property, please send us a copy with your application; Does your project form part of a wider strategy for the regeneration or improvement of the local area and what will be the economic impact of your project in terms of jobs and investment? ; What opportunities will your project provide for training in or the development of specialist conservation skills at a professional or craft level, and what formal training will be provided before and during the building contract?;

another layer of difficulty to the ordinary residents, who would have to seek professional assistance. Fourth, the grant may only fund up to 80% of the total cost. The idea was to dispel the illusion of a free giveaway, encouraging instead a sense of ownership on the part of the applicant. However, for poorer residents, staking their own sum proved prohibitive. As a result, the grant applicants tended to be educated, well-to-do individuals who had, in the first place, the means to access the language, legal components, professional consultancy, and initial funds.⁷⁸ The aforementioned requirements are understandable and, in fact, indispensable. The checklist meant well in order to fulfill a proper administrative protocol (e.g. compliance with heritage value, local laws, tenancy agreements). However, the act of fulfilling the protocol itself is an exclusion. While the grant's philosophy pledged inclusiveness, being open to 'any individual or organization', its technicality ended up alienating many.

The TGPG took an unintended direction as 'rejuvenation' sparked gentrification. Let us recall that the program was devised in 2009 for a town that, despite international recognition, had long been in physical decline. Therefore, Think City's term *rejuvenation* rattled deep metaphorical resonance, for the term evoked old and young. Any attempt at injecting youth into the aging town was, then, deemed appropriate if not desperate. As mentioned above, the GTGP attracted a particular kind of applicants, the educated, well-to-do applicants, who in turn used to the restoration grants for a particular kind of business sector: tourism. While the TGPG funded many public monuments (e.g. Masjid Kapitan Keling, Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the greening of Carnavon Street), the private enterprises also reaped the benefits. Among the GTGP grantees were many many hoteliers, restaurateurs, and cafe owners (table 8). Again, at the beginning, they were actively welcome as George Town bathed in its first sign of rejuvenation. A few examples are illustrative. First, among the repeatedly cited achievements is Ren-i-Tang Hotel, regarded as the oldest Chinese medicinal hall of Southeast Asia. Today, the building became a boutique hotel that retains a small Chinese dispensary as a remembrance. The project was carried out by developers from Kuala Lumpur with a Think City grant of RM 82,800 (US\$ 20,570). The restoration began in 2009 and was done to 'heritage board requirements'. Non-Penang natives, the developers actively sought heritage advice from PHT, who, then, enthused to see a decaying building put to new use⁷⁹.

⁷⁸ Interview, July 9, 2015

⁷⁹ As outsiders from the capital, the investors contacted PHT to seek advice on restoration. <http://www.expatsgo.com/my/2014/01/29/ren-i-tang-a-new-heritage-inn-in-the-heart-of-george-town-penang/>

Many examples follow suit, where individuals applied for physical-conservation grants for their private enterprises. Second, 1881 Chong Tian Hotel is often dubbed as a model for 'adaptive reuse'. Founded in 1881, Chong Tian Hotel fell into disrepair before Seah Kok Heng of the Cheah Clan, one of the five major Chinese Clans of Penang, bought the property in 2010. At that point, Mr. Seah had acquired several other properties in the area⁸⁰. With a Think City grant of RM 191,809 (US\$ 48,000), Mr. Seah converted the termite-infested building to a popular, award-winning boutique hotel with a distinct 'Chinese' theme. Third, 23 Love Lane is blessed with in a unique setting at George Town's once urban-rural seam. Unlike most urban street-fronting shophouses, the hotel is built in a Chinese courtyard house - a deep-setback, detached building. Among its prominent feature is the Chinese gate entrance. The Think City grant helped restore the building back to its former beauty. Fourth, like Ren i Tang, No. 25 China Street is a favorite among Penang heritage advocates for its association with many historical figures. Having saved the three-unit shophouse from demolition, the owner, an artist-designer, applied for a grant to renovate the building's decorative frieze. Its history drew interest from visitors, and became a hotel called 'East Indies' in 2004. Fifth, Loke Thye Kee, touted as Penang's oldest restaurant, won a grant of RM136,000 (US\$33,700) to renovate the place.

Think City did foresee misuse of the grants, particularly in using the restored shophouse as a form of speculation.⁸¹ Therefore, they sought to prevent speculative investment by making the physical-conservation grant as 'repayable grant'. One condition is that, if the restored property is sold within ten years, the owner must repay the grant in full. If not, they may keep the money.⁸² The rationale is to persuade the grantee to retain the building. However, the condition that is meant to be stringent is in fact, generous. Let us recall that Penang's property market has wildly heated since the start of the GTGP in 2009. In a span of a few years, the prices of the shophouses have quadrupled. The going price of a shophouse in the Unesco site currently starts at RM 1.5 million (US\$ 373,000) and escalates beyond RM 10 million (US\$ 2.5 million)⁸³. By contrast, the GTGP grants ranged between RM 21,500 to RM 243,200 (US\$ 5400 to US\$ 60,600). Since the offer price outweighs the grant money by large measure, upon reselling the restored house, the grantee can repay the grant money without difficulty and still make a large profit. More importantly, well-endowed investors are willing to buy dilapidated, unrestored

⁸⁰ Seah Kok Heng, 1881 Chong Tian Hotel owner <http://www.indistay.com/magazine/scenes-interview-seah-kok-heng-owner-1881-chong-tian-hotel-penang/>

⁸¹ Dr. Neil Khor's, Think City Chief Operating Officer, interview in *Penang Monthly* (February 2016).

⁸² Source: Think City Grants Programme Application Guide

⁸³ Source: Penangproperty.com, accessed July 2, 2016.

buildings, let alone the poster-child ones that are correctly restored, in full legal compliance, and endorsed by a government body like Think City. One shophouse on Love Lane, the budget-hotel area, is boldly advertised as a '*run-down two-storey heritage house. Good for buyer who love to renovate at his own taste*'.⁸⁴ This property asks for RM 7.2 million (US\$ 1.8 million). Therefore, resale is an investment, not a hindrance. And repaying the grant is a profit, not a loss. Worse yet, should the grantee opt to repay the grant, the condition stipulates that no interest will be charged. In fact, this has taken place. No. 28 Kampung Malabar Lane successfully secured a GTGP grant of RM 22,018.25 (US\$ 5,500) to restore its roof and facade. Now, the building is put up for sale for RM 2.28 million (US\$ 567,000).⁸⁵ Ironically, in a hope of attracting applicants, Think City claimed that restoration can boost a 70% increase in property value (Khazanal Nasional, 2013, p. 55). The claim was not far wrong. In their own way, the Hock Teik row also profit from their restored facades. The shophouses that once engaged in family businesses and cottage industries, have become souvenir stores. Much to the frustration of the landlord who extend the monthly rent of RM400 (US\$100) to ten years, the tenants now, naturally, profit from their strategic location in the tourist area of Armenian Street.⁸⁶

Think City's TGPG ended in 2013 with much reflection on the programmers' part. Indeed, the program enjoyed a good success, delivering on its official mission to 'catalyze' or 'kick start urban rejuvenation' of George Town. But both 'success' and 'rejuvenation' need to be qualified in light of whose success and what kind of rejuvenation. It should be clear that those who profit from the TGPG are educated, well-to-do individuals who had access to social and cultural capital. The role of the restored boutiques in rejuvenating George Town should be viewed with dampened enthusiasm. Until 2008, aesthetic treatment of shophouses in George Town was rare. Any restoration was make-shift, responsive, and done for practical purposes. It often resulted in a range of architectural improprieties viewed by heritage advocates as the Blasphemous Shophouse in contradistinction to the Ideal Shophouse. Therefore, upon the arrival of respiration projects, by Think City or otherwise, beautification was indeed a welcome change. Many *do's* appeared on the streets the George Town, providing an antidote to the surrounding *dont's*. 'Adaptive reuse' was associated with innovation, not gentrification. Before long, restoration became too much of a good thing. Devised to be 'catalytic', the TGPG ended up catalyzing one particular sector: tourism. The program quickly found its lists of grantees

⁸⁴ Source: Penangproperty.com, accessed July 2, 2016

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Interview with Think City program officer

dominated by hotels, boutiques, and cafes, who creatively use the grants to, to use Think City's lingo, 'kick start' their businesses. To be sure, it is in their rational interest to capitalize on the opportunity. My point is that while the program sought to target 'rejuvenation', it failed to target those who cannot afford it, favoring instead those who have to means to pay for it in the first place. The laudable Hock Teik project was an exception in the sea of commercial interests. The program fulfilled its mission, helping to bring about the Ideal Penang Shophouse, but rejuvenation did take on a different, more somber meaning.

The private enterprises readily adopt the official restoration vocabulary, exploiting it to their marketing advantage. In their promotional materials, the boutiques do not shy away from adopting one of the six official styles to describe their buildings. Ren i Tang attribute their restored three-story hotel to the 'Early Straits Eclectic Style'. A boutique hotel on Love Lan, You Le Yuen means 'Teakwood paradise', boasting the traditional material used in the restoration. The building, too, lays a claim to 'Southern Chinese Eclectic Style'. Most, if not all, boast their prominent locations in the 'core' or 'buffer zone' of the 'UNESCO World Heritage Site'. A historical narrative of the restored building is provided to enhance the guest's appreciation. Chong Tian Hotel, for example, changed their name to 1881 Chong Tian Hotel, to emphasize the year in which it was built and to highlight the historical period in which Campbell Streets, its backdrop, began to develop as a Chinese trading district. The name of one hotel, 'Betel Nut Lodge', translates from the Malay name of 'Penang'. 'East Indies Mansion' is a clear nod at the East India Company, a royal charter seafaring company that pioneered imperial trade in the Straits of Malacca centuries ago. To be sure, the pattern is not limited to Think City grantees. Today, most hotel names in George Town recall an aestheticized past. In particular, the term 'heritage' is the most popular. Many recent boutique hotels put 'heritage' in their names. One old hotel on Kimberley Street, for example, changed its name from 'Asia Hotel' to 'Asia Heritage Hotel', with its old plastic sign still hanging on the door.

No.	Name	Location	Type
1	1881 Chong Tian	38 Pintal Tali Road	Boutique hotel
2	Ren i Tang	82A-C Penang Street	Boutique hotel
3	Betel Nut Lodge	100 Melayu Street	Boutique hotel
4	The Camera Museum	49 Muntri Street	Private museum

5	Couzi Couji	84 Church Street	Boutique hotel
6	Seven Terraces	Stewart Lane	Boutique hotel
7	East Indies	25 China Street	Boutique hotel
8	Loke Thye Lye	2A-C Burma Road	Boutique hotel, restaurant, cafe
9	23 Love Lane	23 Love Lane	Boutique hotel
10	100 Cintra Street	100 Cintra Street	Boutique hotel
11	Cintra Heritage House	3,5,7 Cintra Street	Boutique hotel
12	You Le Yuen	7 Love Lane	Boutique hotel
13	Edelweiss Café	38 Armenian Street	Restaurant and cafe
14	Route 9 and GohKaki	34, 36 Bishop Street	Restaurant, cafe, and private museum
15	Yong Yi Yuen	27 Melayu Street	Guesthouse

Table 4.8: examples of the GTGP grantees, 2011-2014

5.4 Design politics: material and expertise

When Mr. Tan and Dr. Jenkins put together the chart of the six building styles, they worried that it would cause monotony, fearing that the official typologies would stir thoughtless repetition without much individuality⁸⁷. That George Town would ‘look the same’, it turned out, was an unrealized concern. The styles, as I will show, are not adhered to, much less replicated. Think City’s successful projects are exceptions, not the rule, representing but a tiny fraction of George Town’s building stock. The 200-odd catalytic projects pale in comparison to the mass of 3,771 buildings in varying degrees of disrepair. In what follows, I show the limits to the government’s desire to curate the contents of George Town World Heritage Site. The desire to recreate the Ideal Shophouse ran into dilemmas as the residents reject to comply with the vision. I discuss three axes of politics in which Desire is met with Resistance: material, expertise, and surveillance.

Restoring the Ideal Shophouse is expensive. Unlike Think City’s projects, the overwhelming majority of shophouses do not have the financial benefits of grants, and the knowledge benefits of correct restoration. In fact, such concern was raised back in 1990s, when historic

⁸⁷ Interview with Mr. Tan Yeow Wooi

preservation took hold in George Town. In a case-study seminar on Aceh and Armenian Streets in 1991, the MPPP expressed that old buildings are 'expensive to maintain', citing high costs of material and craftsmanship (MPPP, 1991). If restoration was already costly then, it is even more expensive now. Lawrence Lim, a past chairman of Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) pointed that the cost of restoring 'heritage properties' had gone up 40% since 2008, the year in which George Town was inscribed as a World Heritage Site (*The Star*, April 20, 2016). Now, it costs between RM 150,000 and RM 500,000 (US\$ 37,000 and US\$ 124,000). Restoring the roof alone can cost RM 50,000 (US\$ 12,400), whereas Penang's household median income in 2014 was RM 55,000.⁸⁸ An conservation architect with deep local experience, Mr. Tan gave a higher estimate, quoting a cost from RM 300,000 to RM 800,000 (US\$ 74,300 to US\$ 198,000), suggesting it is nearly impossible to properly restore the building on a tight budget.

Material

One particular construction material, lime, prompted a contention between decorous restoration and everyday practicality, between the Ideal Shophouse and its Other. One of the four traditional materials of shophouses, lime was considered a common material before the invention of cement. It was used in various parts of the shophouse: as lime mortar between bricks, lime plaster as brick cover, and lime wash as paint. It also was used extensively across the six official styles, from the Early Penang (1790s-1850s) to Early Modern (1950s-1970s), spanning a few centuries. In tropical climate, lime provides advantages. Given that George Town was built on swampy lands, lime allows natural ground moisture to move up the wall and evaporate through the lime plaster, keeping the rooms cool. By contrast, if the wall is blocked by tiles, cement, or modern paint, the moisture cannot escape, thus depositing salt and damaging the wooden structure (GTWHI, 2010). In Dr. Jenkins' vivid analogy, cementing a building in the tropics is like 'sitting in a plastic bag in the sun'.

As a state agency tasked to raise awareness, GTWHI actively promotes traditional building materials to be used in construction and renovation. As captured in 'Authentic Penang Shophouse' poster, the lime-plastered wall figures prominently among the *do's* and *don't's*. In one panel, a man is depicted as thanking a woman for her advice on using lime plaster (figure 13a). A more serious intervention came in 2011, when GTWHI published a Heritage Building Materials brochure series (with a grant from Think City) (figure 14). The brochure series introduced the four key construction materials - Timber, Stone, Clay, Lime - and their history, method, and

⁸⁸ Department of Statistics Malaysia

application. Further, GTWHI uses the idea of workshop to illustrate the essence of the brochures. Since its founding in 2010, GTWHI has frequently run workshops to popularize the four construction materials (table 9). Acknowledging conservation was still as ‘fledging field’ in Malaysia, GTWHI uses the workshops as a way to impart knowledge to a wider audience, from building contractors to university students. Often, the workshop brings in heritage experts, local and overseas, with considerable knowledge on traditional materials. The workshop on lime alone has been organized three times, making it the most frequent workshop. Each workshop consists of lectures, fieldworks, and practice sessions, where ‘participants [are] guided through the do’s and don’t’s of lime mortar application for heritage buildings’ (sic).⁸⁹

No	Workshop title	Date
1	Conservation Workshop for Contractors: Intermediate	April 2012
2	Conservation Workshop	August 2012
3	Skills Development Programme: Lime	November 2013 February 2014 January 2015
4	Lime and Wood in Malaysian Heritage Buildings (public talk)	March 2014
5	Heritage Building Materials Workshop (lime)	June 2014
6	Skills Development Programme: Timber	August 2014
7	Heritage & Conservation Workshop: Intermediate Level	September 2014 June 2015
8	Heritage & Conservation Workshop: Advanced	August 2015

Table 4.9: examples of GTWHI’s material-related workshops

However, the workshop’s attempt to impart knowledge has limits. While the workshops have drawn interested participants, they also imposed barriers. First, for logistic reasons, the workshops were able to accommodate between 20 to 40 participants, amounting to a narrow dissemination. Second, the workshops were structured in such a way that the introductory-level workshop was a prerequisite of the higher-level ones. The structure ruled out in effect many potential participants. The introductory-level introduced the history, significance, and values of heritage conservation. By contrast, the advanced workshops provide practical lessons on

⁸⁹ Source: GTWHI workshops, gtwhi.com.my, accessed July 2, 2016.

building restoration - a topic that is more professionally relevant to the practitioners. Third, given the academic nature of the workshops and their presenters, the language of instruction was English. In reality, the everyday builders are Malays, Indonesians, and foreign workers from South Asia.⁹⁰

The workshops' internal shortcomings aside, a larger issue is the declining popularity of lime itself. To facilitate the use of traditional materials, GTWHI provides a directory of craftsmen and suppliers to help source the right materials and the 'right expertise', for 'with the right knowledge and right resources, comes in the right people for the job' (GTWHI, 2011). However, the fact that GTWHI managed to locate only a small number of lime suppliers should speak to its increasingly rare supplies. Among the eight suppliers listed, only three are located within George Town.⁹¹ Ironically, one of the three was closed down and replaced by a hotel. The rest of the suppliers are in mainland Penang, or even in other Malaysian states (e.g. Perak). Mr. Tan Yeow Wooi, undoubtedly a lime advocate, sources his supplies from Butterworth in Mainland Penang, and from towns in other states, such as Ipoh and Taiping (interview, June 24, 2014)⁹². In fact, in many of its lime workshops, GTWHI brought in Barry Tan, an expert from Kuala Lumpur, the capital, since major lime suppliers are now there.⁹³ Even so, according to Mark Lay, store-bought lime is inferior to slaking your own lime rock, for you can adjust the consistency to need. A heritage advocate, Lay took up lessons and produced lime supplies. He commented that, today, there are not only very few suppliers, but also very few users.

Perhaps, it is easy to understand why. Working with lime is a laborious process, particularly in face of today's alternatives (figure 18). The process involves multiple steps, from sourcing limestones, to burning to produce quicklime, and adding water to produce slaked lime.⁹⁴ The process also entails a longer timeframe as the slaked lime needs to rest 14 days to produce lime putty - a cream cheese-like consistency to be used as lime mortar, lime plaster, or lime wash. These materials, in turn, involve their own mixing techniques and a host of other

⁹⁰ The workshop fees ranged between RM 60 to RM 300 (US\$ 15 to US\$ 75). The fee of the intermediate-level workshop, where participants get to practice, is RM 270.

⁹¹ The directory list eight lime suppliers located in George Town, Penang Island (in Ayer Itam), Mainland Penang (in Butterworth and Bukit Mertajam), and other Malaysian states (Perak and Kuala Lumpur).

⁹² Interview with Tan Yeow Wooi, June 24, 2014

⁹³ The country's major lime distributors, Westox and CAO, are located in the Selangor areas.

⁹⁴ The process involves multiple steps: 1) source limestone, 2) burn 800 degrees to 'quick lime' (CaO) 3) add water to produce 'slaked lime' (Ca(OH)₂) 4) rest 14 days to produce lime putty 5) 'lime putty' is used as lime mortar (between bricks), lime plaster (covering bricks), and lime wash (coloring the wall). The lime putty absorbs CO₂ from the air as it hardens and becomes CaCO₃.

ingredients.⁹⁵ This is not to mention the different consistencies, layers, and application techniques that different parts of the building require. Similarly, lime is not always compatible with other modern building materials.⁹⁶ Most importantly, once applied, lime takes weeks to dry and finally set. The slow-drying lime is not compatible with modern construction that prizes a timely project completion. Given lime's intricacies, the techniques are lost on today's generations of local contractors, builders, and architects who are not formally trained in the method. Following the two conditions of material complexities and lack of apprentice, lime has become a less popular option.

In George Town today, lime has lost to its Other: cement. In a rapidly transforming city, bags of cement at construction sites are an everyday sight. A modern, more versatile material, Portland cement has extensively been used in the construction and restoration of buildings across the city and, in fact, the world. Ironically, cement is used in projects that are considered 'exemplars'. For example, No. 43 Church Street, a Think City grantee, used cement as part of their facade reconstruction. More recently, in 2015 Sinkeh Hotel on Malay Street won an award from Malaysian Institutes of Architects (PAM) in the 'Alteration Category'. The shophouse was altered from a warehouse to a boutique hotel. The irony is that it also altered the original material from lime to cement. The example of the Sinkeh Hotel activates debate on what counts as 'original'. Once an ordinary shophouse - a shop and house - the building was repurposed into a warehouse as early as in the sixties. In the process, the lime-plastered floor was replaced with cement concrete. The question, then, is whether the builders should use lime or cement in restoring the building. One informant argued that cement is acceptable if not desirable, for cement is the building's immediate past. By contrast, another highlighted that lime was the original material, thus the original past. In fact, the SAP encourages a 'reversing of past misinterpretations' (SAP, 2013, Section D3.4). However, the debate on originality is not my concern. Rather, my concern is the fact that the project was approved by the state despite its own professed preference for lime (see below). The two examples are but a few examples. Apart from the exemplary, cement is an ordinary reality. According to one informant, building contractors were told to add a small amount of lime putty to the cement mix 'to keep the heritage crowd happy' (Interview, July 9, 2015).

⁹⁵ Lime paint is produced by mixing lime putty, water, and color pigment. Lime plaster is produced by mixing lime putty, sand, brick dust.

⁹⁶ Contemporary floor tiles, for example, do not bind well with lime plaster and lime mortar. Fired at high temperature, the floor tiles are not as porous as older versions fired at lower temperature.

Like lime, timber also activates its own technopolitics of material. GTWHI encourages the use of timber in various building parts, inside and outside, and ornamental and structural: roof, floor, partitions, frames, doors, window shutters, and staircase. The wooden shutter window repels heat, while the modern glass window seals it in. The guideline suggests that '[f]or timber repair work in heritage buildings, we should match the original size and species...' (GTWHI, 2011). In the past, timber was used across the six official buildings styles, even in the Early Modern style (1950s-1970s). At present, however, timber is an increasingly rare material. You Le Yuen, a boutique hotel, in a case in point. Meaning 'teakwood paradise', the hotel wants to be true to the building's former glory, salvaging the building from its once rampant disrepair. In tropical climate, termites abound and timber rots fast in an unoccupied building. A Think City grantee in 2011, the owner took three years to restore the derelict house. To replace the floor and staircase, the owner sourced timber from various antique stores, not from Penang proper, but from around Malaysia (*The Malay Mail*, April 13, 2014). Like lime, timber is no longer in abundance.

However, unlike lime, timber also activates one particular point of contention: safety. The use of timber is against Malaysia's Uniform Building By-Law (1984) and its Amendments (2007). Written at a time when practicality and safety took precedence over heritage value, the law frowns upon timber. Instead, it stipulates fire-resistant or fire-retardant materials. The unreconciled conflict is captured in an excellent essay by Kamarul Syahril and Lilawati (2004). Most historic buildings, the authors argue, were built with materials that fall far below today's requirements. Proposed material alterations must conform to the by-law in light of fire protection/prevention. This hinders, in effect, the use of timber in buildings. As the authors succinctly put it, the 'primary concern [of the 1984 By-Law] is, quite rightly, the safeguarding of life rather than the safeguarding the contents of the building. Historic buildings require wider priorities' (Kamarul Syahril and Lilawati (2004). Importantly, the conflict is not limited to the high-order laws; it trickles down to operation-level bureaucracy. While the Fire Department, locally called 'Bomba', encourages cement-coated floor, the Heritage Department discourages it. Hoping to convert her property, one informant witnessed the conflict being reenacted in real life as she received contradicting advice from the two departments.⁹⁷ The contradiction, still unreconciled, exposes a conflict of rationalities, between aesthetic and safety.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Personal communication, August 2, 2015

⁹⁸ The SAP offers several fire-protective layers for timber flooring (SAP, 2013, Section D3.6).

Expertise?

The experience of George Town qualifies the notion of 'expertise' and the 'expert' in the built environment. First, the government themselves is not experts, borrowing instead knowledge from other actors. Second, these actors themselves admit to experimenting with expertise, refining knowledge as they proceed. Third, much as expertise is hard forged, it is always respected by those in charge. Let me take the three issues in turn. First is a lack of expertise among the government officials. Ironically, as a state agency that provides conservation advice, GTWHI only has one architect. The situation is similar at the MBPP, the city council. On the 11th floor of KOMTAR, the ambition of the Heritage Department (*Jabatan Warisan*) exceeds their small office size. Tucked in one corner, the department was recently established in 2011. They were upgraded from 'Heritage Unit' (*Unit Warisan*) within the Town Planning Department (*Jabatan Perancangan*). Today, the department has ten officers, only one of whom, Lee Tit Kun, is a heritage architect. This contrasts with the neighboring Town Planning Department that has over 40 urban planning officers. The Heritage Department has young, inexperienced personnel. During one of my interviews with the vice-director, Mr. Mohd Razif, he invited other younger officials to join and observe. Mr. Razif himself is not a conservation architect, but an engineer. As I mentioned at the beginning, heritage knowledge in Penang was and still is produced by non-state actors (e.g. commissioned private consultancies, academic researchers, and NGOs). It is these outside experts that helped produce planning guidelines.

Even so, heritage knowledge is in a nascent state. The 'outside experts' themselves admit to the incipient nature of their work. Rather than confirmed and finite, Penang's heritage expertise is akin to a work in progress, where new insights emerge to refine older ones. The official six building styles, the 'Authentic Penang' shophouse, are a good example. In assembling the official typologies, the authors acknowledge incomplete knowledge, arguing that the styles are representative, not definitive. In fact, in the early-day Unesco nomination dossier, the building styles were different in two ways: name and period. First, the earliest style was identified as simply 'Early Shophouse' style, a rather generic placeholder. The second style was called an 'Transitional Style', a term that the authors borrowed *ad interim* from the shophouse typologies of Singapore, a country with greater heritage experience (interview with Tan Yeow Wooi). As more insights emerged from research, the authors later changed the names to 'Early Penang' and 'Southern Chinese Eclectic' respectively. The nominal revision conveys a more ascertained sense of architectural provenance, and thus a 'more Penang' architectural history. Second, the

dates shifted, too. The earlier version attributed each style to a rough periodical bracket. By contrast, the present version corrected the bracket somewhat, adding and subtracting decades.

The shifts must not be seen as minor; they suggest a more refined understanding on the authors' part. Further, the authors later admit various 'sub-styles' within the dominant styles (figure 19). The 'Southern Chinese' style is differentiated into 'Simple' and 'High', the 'Straits' style into 'Straits Classical and Straits Baroque', and the 'Art Deco' style into 'Straits-Art Deco' and 'Art Deco Modern'. Unlike the simplified 'Authentic Penang' poster (figure 12), the typological refinement renders the architecture not as a smooth chronological progression, but as a metamorphosis, where the undercurrents wax and wane, and cross-fertilize -- a dynamism more true to the built environment it seeks to represent. In the authors' own words, the *'research on the style of the shophouses is continuing. Any theorization is contingent upon the level of understanding at a particular moment.'* This mode of emerging expertise also pertains to other building types. For example, the humble godown (further discussed below) once evaded the interest of architectural historians. Previously regarded as insignificant, the built form is now valorized as a legacy of the port city. Recent knowledge informs that the godowns were probably the first buildings along the coastline, appearing a 1881 drawing and a 1887 cadastral map of Penang. 'Once a neglected building form, it is now becoming more appreciated as current research is revealing buildings and techniques of great interest.' Again, as revealed by the authors, 'this research will still continue' (SAP, 2013, Annexure A).

Second, at a fundamental level, George Town's heritage has always been a history of foreign expertise, where architectural expertise was imported rather than homegrown. After all, the city itself was built as an immigrant city. The shophouse epitomizes, and later eulogizes, foreign influences and foreign skills. As a great example, the change from the 'Transitional' Style to 'Southern Chinese' Style recognizes the role of Chinese artisans imported from China's southern provinces. Similarly, the 'Eclecticism' pay tributes to the cosmopolitan influences that came together in shaping the shophouse, from early Chinese and Indian workers to later European influences in ornament and technology. Eclecticism is not simply a description, but also an instrument. The state employed the 'multicultural townscape' as a currency in its Unesco nomination dossier, mobilizing George Town as an exceptional site worthy of recognition as a World Heritage Site. In particular, the state claims, George Town fits many of

Unesco's criteria of ten 'Outstanding Universal Values', particularly Criteria II and IV.⁹⁹ The cosmopolitan architecture is used as a testament to bolster this claim. As the following quote illuminate, the shophouses:

"...include the carved wood panels and fascia boards of the indigenous and Indo Malay, the elaborate and superstitious images of the Chinese, the arches of Mogul India, the neo classical elements of British architecture of the Georgian and Regency periods and the modernism of art deco and modern architecture. Roof shapes and gable ends were also ornamented according to the tradition and culture of building ownership. Over the decades, the development of these shophouses in term of their design and styles have evolved from simple plan with plain facade introduced by the Dutch to more elaborate facades that features the Malay, the Chinese and the European motifs..."

source: George Town Special Area Plan, page A4-23

Eclecticism, I argue, presents a tough act for today's generations to follow. While such architectural cosmopolitanism and eclecticism is glowingly enshrined in official narrative, the same eclecticism bespeaks the equally complicated reality of restoration. Let us recall that the earliest shophouses, the 'Early Penang' style, were built as early as in 1790s. Although the government's preservation interest emerged in the 1970s, a strong commitment did not arise until the 2008 Unesco inscription. The 200-year gap saw a loss of the forefathers of skills: the artisans, builders, and workmen proficiently trained in traditional methods. In face of such proficiency deficit, foreign expertise is, once again, (re)imported. As Jenkins (2008) documented, Penang's early restoration projects imported artisans from China. Khoo Kongsi clan temple is an example. For unknown reasons, these artisans 'declined to pass their skills onto their local subordinates. The result is a continual lack of skilled artisan labor in Penang and a perpetual need to import (Jenkins, 2008, p. 211). Today, in Penang and Malaysia, conservation architects are rare, let alone research-oriented ones (interview with Tan Yeow Wooi, June 24, 2014). The lacuna brings about an irony where non-locals are invited to teach local practitioners on local architectural knowledge. Today, GTWHI invites outside technicians to lead its workshops (discussed earlier). Barry Tan, a lime supplier, hails from the capital Kuala Lumpur. An Australian expert in conservation technique, Dr. Donald Ellsmore is a regular

⁹⁹ For a site to be nominated and inscribed as a World Heritage Site, it must justify how the site fits into one or more Outstanding Universal Values. Criterion II states "to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design". Criterion IV, "to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history'. See more at <http://whc.unesco.org/>

contributor. Most recently, the program brought in Dr. Kin Hong Ip, a sandstone conservator from Macau's Cultural Heritage Department. As Khoo Salma (2012; 2014), the former president of PHT, has stressed on several occasions, Penang needs to train its own future generations of builders.

The lack of local expertise presents as much trouble for architecture as it does urban planning. In addition to physical conservation, plan preparation (particularly preservation planning) has depended, since day one, on international bodies. Let me repeat that George Town's heritage has always been a history of foreign expertise. It goes without saying that Francis Light laid out the street grid of George Town in 1780s. In the modern era, international bodies have long been active in assisting the government in drawing up plans and proposals (see Chapter 3). GTZ, a German technical assistance, helped draft Penang's first inventory of significant buildings and its first design guidelines (MPPP, 1987; 1988). The documents set the framework for subsequent guidelines gazetted in 1997. The City of Yokohama, Japan, produced one of the first urban design masterplans for George Town (Nishiwaki, 1987). In addition to plan-making, international bodies have been involved in capacity-building among local staff. UN agencies were active in the early 1990s, organizing a range of workshops for local planners and site managers (MPPP, 1991; 1992). By way of reciting the archives of experts and plans, I hint at a schism between academic knowledge and practical intervention, a topic I now turn to.

The Heritage Management Plan (HMP) magnifies the tension between academic knowledge on the one hand, and practicality on the other. As a common practice among global heritage sites, a HMP is a site-specific, research-based management plan. The document explains 'why a place is significant and how its significance will be sustained. A detailed account, the HMP describes 'what is there, why it matters, what is happening to it'. Then, it offers management strategies for the site/building (SAP, 2013, Section D4.5). Realizing the task's complexity, GTWHI organized a series of workshops between 2012 and 2014, where the participants were taught how to prepare a HMP. The targeted audience was public planners and public-site managers in Penang. Again, Australian heritage experts were brought in under an cooperation between Think City and AusHeritage -- a network of Australian-government heritage agencies. In essence, the bilateral cooperation sought to encourage technical assistance and skill development among heritage stakeholders in Penang (Think City media statement, April 18, 2011). This led to intensive workshops, where the participants learned the complex task of

drafting a HMP¹⁰⁰. They were taught formal lessons, taken on a site visit, and divided into groups to develop a final report. The step-by-step preparation, GTWHI claimed, was a means to 'prevent ad hoc decisionmaking'. Later in 2012, the three-day workshop culminated in a HMP of Fort Cornwallis, an ancient fort in the northeastern tip of George Town.¹⁰¹ Written by 14 of the participants, one of them the director of the municipal Heritage Department herself, the document was possibly one of the first locally prepared HMPs. Intended to an exemplar, efforts went into perfecting the document, involving final editings and comments by many experienced individuals such as Gwynn Jenkins, Khoo Salma, and historian Marcus Langdon (GTWHI, 2012). Since then, the Fort Cornwallis has been enshrined as a publicly available sample HMP. Circulated as an exemplar, the HMP is meant to generate a loyal following for other sites.

However, the Fort Cornwallis HMP is rarely replicated elsewhere. Beyond the select exemplar, I am more interested in the majority's others, in other experiences that do not enjoy the same limelight, devotion, and efforts. For I think they better highlight the schism between purism and its other. The example of Victoria Street godown is illustrative.

The nineteenth-century godown on Victoria Street is a remnant of George Town's past free-port status (figure 20). A word of Malay origin, *gudang* means a large warehouse built for storage purposes. In its heyday at the turn of the nineteenth-century, George Town saw the eastern harborfront lined with many such godowns (figure 21). After the loss of the free-port status, the Victoria Street godown fell into disuse and disrepair, like much of George Town itself. For decades, it sat idle on public land. In 2003, heritage advocates Khoo Salma and Tan Yeow Wooi visited the decrepit site, lamenting its ignored history and urging the government to revive the structure. A revived Victoria Street godown, they suggested, would bolster George Town's Unesco nomination dossier, particularly its official narrative of Penang as a port city. 'Warehouses are important components of the port heritage', Khoo said. It can be put to new use by relocating illegal warehouse operations from elsewhere to here, Tan added (*The Star*, November 20, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ During the workshops, AusHeritage outlined four specific steps of HMP preparation: (1) investigate the evidence (historical, physical, and cultural), (2) assess the heritage significance, (3) consider related issues and possibilities, (4) development strategies

¹⁰¹ A star-shaped fort, Fort Cornwallis was constructed at the end of the 18th century by the British East India Company as a protective fortification of the Island.

Their call to action did not receive an answer until thirteen years later. In June 2016, Penang Development Corporation (PDC), on behalf of the state government, announced a *redevelopment and adaptive reuse* plan for the godown. The RM 10 million (US\$ 2.5 million) plan is part of the larger Creative Animation Triggers (CAT) scheme started in 2014 to turn Penang into a 'creative island' and George Town a 'creative city'. A homonymic acronym of the government's slogan of CAT ('Competency, Accountability, and Transparency'), the so-called Creative Animation Triggers is an initiative to help Penang 'escape the middle-income trap and become a high-income economy' (speech by Penang Chief Minister, May 6, 2014). In essence, the initiative seeks to attractive creative industries, e.g. media, fashion, design, technology. The Victoria Street godown was selected as one of the three pilot sites. The original idea was to convert the godown into working space. 'There is a need for more meeting rooms and spaces conducive for the creative industry, so this location, at the corner of Victoria Street and Acheh Street is suitable for this use', PDC general manager Datuk Seri Rosli Jaafar said at the press conference. However, the project came at a time when George Town's traditional traders were being evicted and displaced. Amidst public criticisms over a lack of action, the government decided to add a new component: cheap rentals for traditional traders. 'The state government's decision to rehabilitate [the godown] is testimony of its concerted effort to save traditional crafts and to preserve its existing living heritage', argued Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (press statement, June 6, 2016). To appease the public, Lim argued the repurposed godown, once complete, will have both traditional and modern elements. Following the original intention, the 100-year-old godown will be equipped with 'world class infrastructure but still maintaining their character and old world charms' (Invest Penang, press release, July 21, 2014). Importantly, the PDC claimed it had discussed the plan with GTWHI to ensure that the project followed appropriate heritage requirements.

While the news rejoiced the heritage advocates, the images shocked them (figure 22). The revealed plan depicted the godown as constructed with concrete cement, bright orange roof tiles, and with poor natural ventilation. The proposal bore no semblance to the original Heritage Management Plan (HMP) prepared for the site. As part of the Unesco requirements, a HMP must accompany any large-scale renovation project that may affect the integrity of the site. The document outlines the site's history, values, significance, and specific details. To ensure sensitive restoration, the document serves to guide the designer and builders during their intervention upon the site. One such HMP, in fact, had been prepared for the Victoria Street godown, meticulously documenting the building's specificities, from structure to material.

However, the proposal made no reference to the ‘character and old world charms’ that the government purported to preserve. Worse yet, while the government claimed to have consulted GTWHI, the ‘heritage requirements’ to which they alluded do not appear in the rendition. One heritage expert pointed out the challenge of incorporating a new concrete-and-steel element to the existing brick-and-lime mortar structure. The structural contrast is difficult to incorporate. The old natural ventilation is disrespected in favor of air-conditioning. Today, part of the project has begun with MPPP planning permission¹⁰².

6. CONCLUSION

Content and Discontent

This chapter investigates the Penang government’s attempt to curate the contents of George Town World Heritage Site. As I showed in the previous chapter, the contour, while distinct and stable, is fraught with contradictions, for the stable contour belies many instabilities. In similar manners, the contents - the inside of that contour - is equally unsettled. The government seeks to articulate the contents by carving them in the vision of a World Heritage Site. At the most fundamental level, there is a desire to put the content in a container. I explored three such contents and their respective containers: hotels, homes, and the Ideal Shophouse. I paid particular attention to the technique of containing, and to the politics that the technique opens up. First, the government seeks to control the burgeoning of illegal hotels in the World Heritage Site. Here, I situated this contemporary intervention in a longer historical context, noting the interesting shift in the government’s attitude towards hotels/tourism, from ample enthusiasm to guarded wariness. In particular, one new type of hotel is problematized: the shophouse-turned-boutique hotel. I chronicled the government’s short-term and long-term efforts to quarantine the such hotels from spreading. The short-term hotel licensing program sought to ‘legitimize’ the previously ‘illegal hotels’. The program set standards that contradicted the city’s historical architecture and urban form. The long-term zoning aimed at containing hotels within certain ‘zones’, such as ‘Tourism and Leisure’ zone. The effort has proven futile as the SAP gazettelement had repeatedly delayed.

Second, aware of George Town’s rapid population decline, the government wanted to retain and reintroduce a residential population within the historic core. Hotel and home engage in an almost zero-sum game. Their mutual exclusion takes place where the the former ousts the

¹⁰² Planning Permission: 11 May 2015

latter. To retain the population, the government introduced a 'Residential Overlay', an extra zoning layer that designate areas where 'the dominant activity in these areas is Residential, and thus shall remain so' (SAP, 2013, Section C2-10). Orange hatching lines were boldly slashed across the map. However, apart from the bold sentence and the bold act of painting, the government does not offer much else. Residents have been evicted from their homes in the Overlay. The eviction takes place not only under the state's watchful eye, but also by their full blessing as they permit a change of land use from 'home' to 'business'. The Residential Overlay, thus, ends up being a drawing. Designating the residential zones became a painterly act, not a plannerly one.

Third and lastly, I went at great lengths to discuss the Ideal Shophouse, a visionary prototype constructed (and reconstructed) to guide preservation and restoration. George Town is a city of shophouses, the architectural form that won George Town a Unesco inscription. However, these shophouses has fallen into disrepair. Much efforts went into reviving knowledge on the building type. First, through in-depth research, six official styles are articulated. Second, the styles are disseminated widely to both ordinary citizens and to professionals. A range of techniques, e.g. workshops, brochures, exhibitions, design guidelines, have been invented. I theorized that these techniques seek to direct a way of seeing the Ideal Shophouse. Once again, such idealization sets up a high standard. I explored two conditions that hinders the Ideal Shophouse project: material and expertise. The debate between lime and cement illuminates the core tension in historic preservation. While history-respecting and desirable for its scientific properties, lime has lost appeal to its increasingly popular rival, cement. Second, in addition to proper materials, restoration entails proper expertise. Like lime, expertise is rare in George Town. I recounted a series of expertise dilemmas, from the inadequate personnel to the difficult task of preparing a Heritage Management Plan. In doing so, I showed that the guideline's author and its regulator are not the same entity. That is, there exist two distinct, although often conflated, spheres of intervention: architectural knowledge and architectural guidelines. In the remainder of this chapter, I dwell on this latter point. For I think it gets at classic debates that intersect at least three related disciplines of historic preservation (professional), cultural geography, and heritage studies. First, I outline how Penang actors often frame restoration as a duel between the Ideal Shophouse and its Other, as *do's* and *don't's*, as proper and improper. Then, I propose the multiple in thinking about restoration/preservation. The multiple does not refer multiple styles or variants, but to the multiple forces that shape architecture in the first place.

Purism and Pragmatism

The politics of the Ideal Shophouse is a contention between purism and pragmatism. On the one hand, the purist perspective favors a truthful, correct restoration of the shophouse. It valorizes past built forms, techniques, and materials. The textbook-like academicism of purism resulted from in-depth historical research. Spanning over decade, the research uncovered the ideal styles, ideal materials, and ideal techniques in which the shophouse was once built. Idealization emerged from this process, in which ideal components are taken from various places to assemble in one place. In this sense, the Ideal Shophouse legitimizes its own vision, taking on its own life, a rather idealized life. Later, an idea becomes an ideal. Circulating as an authoritative truth, the Ideal Shophouse not only endorses its own life, but also regulates that of others. Here, I want to spotlight this important shift from architectural knowledge to architectural regulation. For this shift activates the contention between between purism and pragmatism. The figure of the Ideal Shophouse became the exemplar for the real-life shophouses. It became a mold, a standard, a benchmark against which the other shophouses are regulated. The ideal Shophouse is no longer the architectural historian's muse, but also the strict rubric under which the building must be intervened. The *do's-and-don't's* cartoon is not simply an illustration, but an ideal to strive towards. In short, the Ideal Shophouse becomes an official view that trumps other views.

Ironically, in the process of idealization, one basic fact elapsed. In painstakingly assembling its ideal beauty, ideal material, ideal craftsmanship, one easily forgets that this is simply an ideal image. The six official styles are simply prototypes, and the cartoon simply a cartoon, nothing more or less. As a corollary, there have existed an overwhelming majority of others that depart from the ideal vision. In its cycle life, the building is built, broken, repaired, touched up, and modified. Purism precludes this more dynamic and pragmatic view of building. Unlike the rather static image of purism, the everyday building entails pragmatic decisions such as, as I have shown, costs, material sources, and construction techniques. The lime-or-cement debate illustrates the pragmatic decision. While GTWHI portrays lime as a desirable, technically appropriate material, it does not acknowledge that lime is rare, costly, and time-consuming. While everyone can agree on lime's intrinsic desirability, the decision to use or not use lime rests not only on its internal qualities, but on a host of other considerations external to lime itself. Ironically, lime has not been used in the state-endorsed projects. Equally important is the problematic audience. While the state's programs target owners, designers, and the educated public, they do not target the *users* - the low-income tenants who occupy the majority of the

3771 shophouses across George Town. Cost and ownership represent but two pragmatic peripheries of beauty. Rarely discussed, they are rendered peripheral when, in fact, they are central to the act of restoration/preservation.

The state and its expertise

I revisit the role of the state and its expertise. The state finds itself caught between purism and pragmatism. On the one hand, they are a fervent proponent of the Ideal Shophouse, a pious apostle of purism. At least in their official representation, they pontificate truthful restoration. The 'state' in George Town is rarely monolithic, consisting various bodies of GTWHI, MBPP, Think City, among others. Yet they are committed to the same ideal. As I was at pains to show, the state bodies promoted the Ideal Shophouse in various ways, hoping to reproduce its image in the streets of George Town. They funded research. They financed restoration projects. They organized training workshops. They published posters, brochures, and handouts. Most importantly, they enshrined the Ideal Shophouse in their own laws. On the other hand, they are obligated to safeguard such laws, being held to the standards they set themselves. As I have shown, the state actors have barely met the standards. In both regulation (e.g. planning permission) and restoration (e.g. the Victoria Street godown), improprieties abound. The state has gone from being the master of the Ideal Shophouse to becoming its servant.

My intention here is expose the failure, but to explain it. That the state as a poor servant to historic preservation results from, I contend, the nature of its expertise. There is a gap between expertise as it exists and expertise that the task requires. Scott's (1998) theorizes expertise as a total, if not totalizing knowledge. Combined with despotism, the state's 'view from above' makes for a sweeping scheme of improvement irrespective of local detail and context. In Scott's formulation, the expert is omniscient, omnipotent, and ruthless. However, the experience of George Town shows that the expert barely knows it all, and expertise is far from ruthless. Expertise can very well be burgeoning and infantile, as the actors learn on the job, revisiting the archives and revising the past plans. Similarly, I am indebted to Mitchell's (2002) engagement with various of expert techniques. Mitchell outlines many such techniques as cadastral map, land survey, statistics, and other forms of foucauldian subjectification that renders person as subject, people as population. Importantly, he shows the politics that each of the 'reformatted knowledge' entails. His methodology inspired mine. However, I depart from Mitchell and

emphasize that those who devise the techniques and those who exercise them are not the same entity. In George Town, expertise is imposed upon the experts themselves. The Unesco requirements are imposed upon Malaysian state actors. The researcher's architectural knowledge is imposed upon the municipal planner's architectural guideline. From one actor the next – from the international to the domestic, from the academic to the professional – the imposed expertise takes on a new quality. Expertise is akin to experimentation; something is that more ongoing than finite. Expertise is not firm and confident, but nascent and unstable. No wonder that expertise, experience, and experiment share the same etymology. In French, *expérience* means both experience and experiment. In George Town, it does, too.

In revealing the stark conditions of prohibitive cost, contested ownership, and nascent expertise, I hope to broaden the restoration debate, which to date revolves around binaries. Penang actors frame the debate as *do's* and *don't's*, as decorum and impropriety. Framed in this way, restoration/preservation can take a moralistic tone where the Ideal Shophouse is idolized and its Other demonized. There is a danger in the battle. The binary debate tempts us to take side, siding with either the Ideal Shophouse or its Other, either championing purism or heroifying pragmatism. I do not condone 'improper' restoration. Quite the opposite, my point here is to deconstruct the 'proper' restoration, laying bare its romanticized life. At the same time, I highlight the multiple conditions in which a style is made. This reminds us of the primitive role of architecture in the first place, where architecture is negotiation, not theology. Its basic function is a negotiation between human and environment.

FIGURES

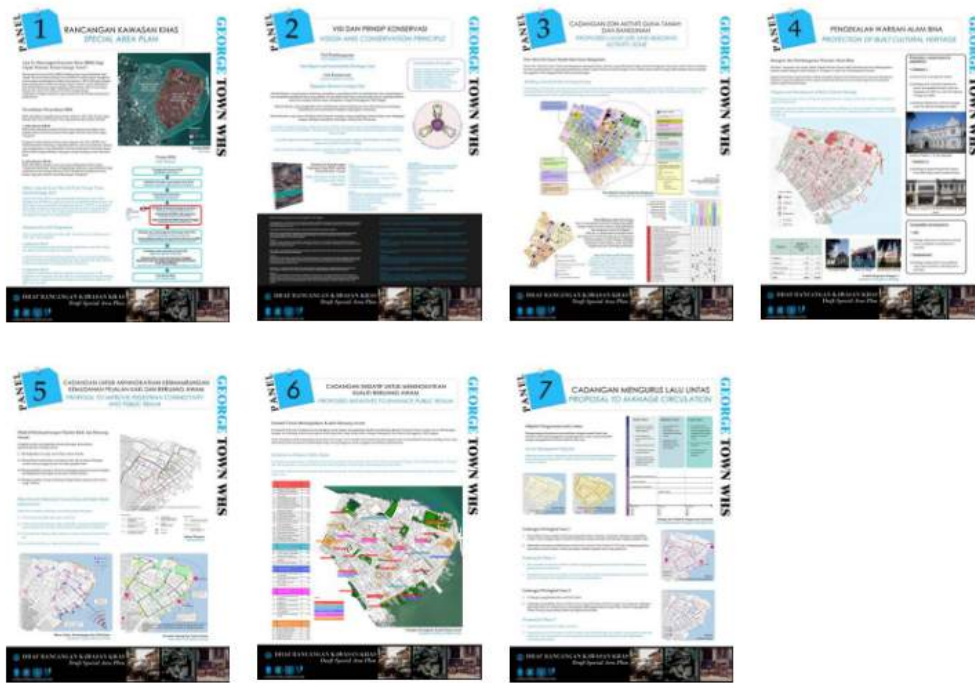


Figure 4.1: sample pages from George Town Special Area Plan (SAP)

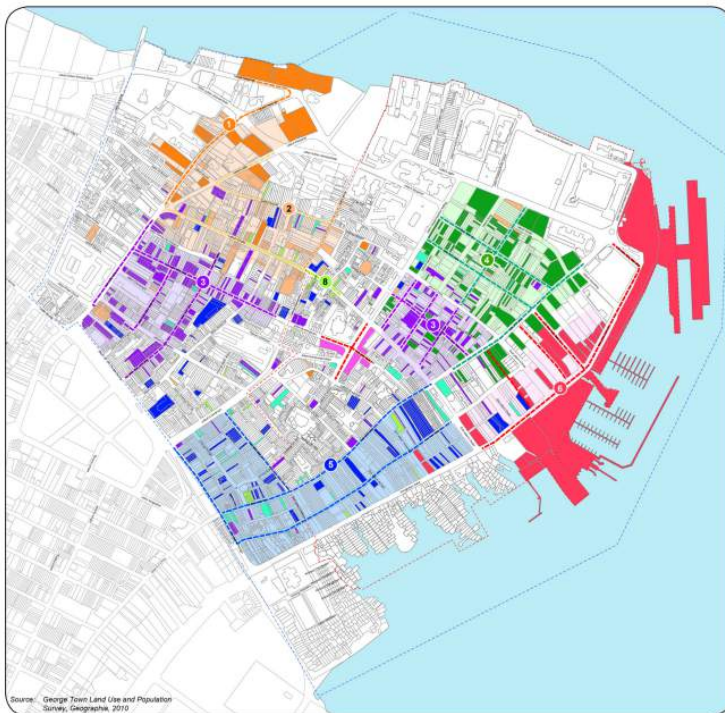


Figure 4.2: Hotel clusters highlighted in orange (source: SAP)

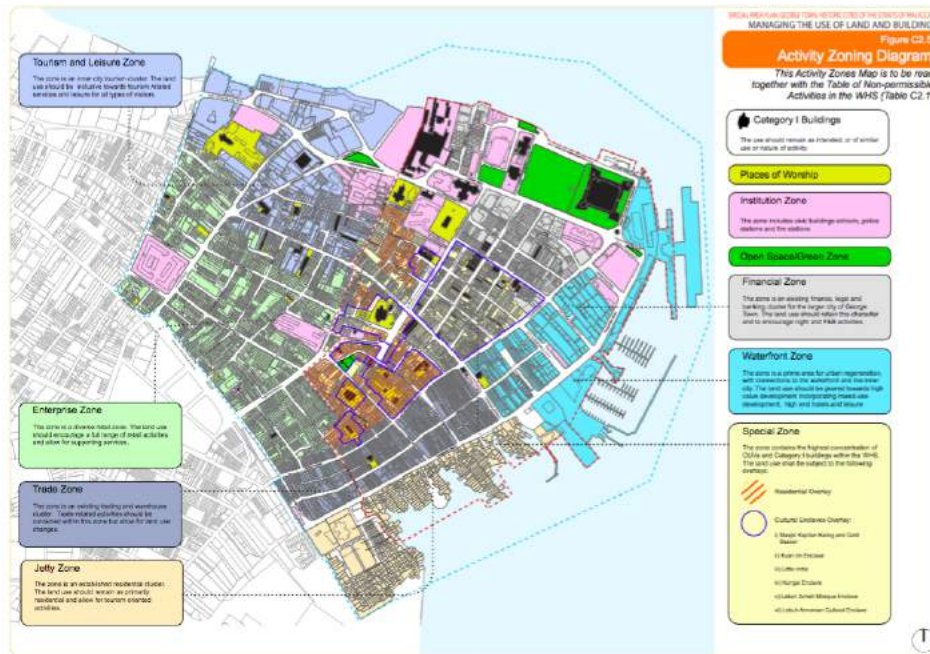


Figure 4.3: Activity Zones Map (source: SAP)



Figure 4.4: the shophouse-turned-hotel (author's photograph)



Figure 4.5: George Town urban morphology (source: SAP)



Figure 4.6: George Town bungalow, a standalone building type (source: SAP)

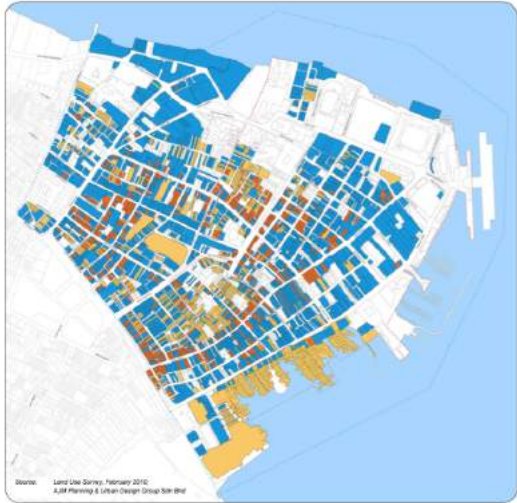


Figure 4.7: Residential distribution of George Town (source: SAP)



Figure 4.8 (left): Residential Overlay (source: SAP)



Figure 4.9 (right): Cultural Overlay (source: SAP)



Figure 4.10: No. 5 Klang Street (author's photograph)

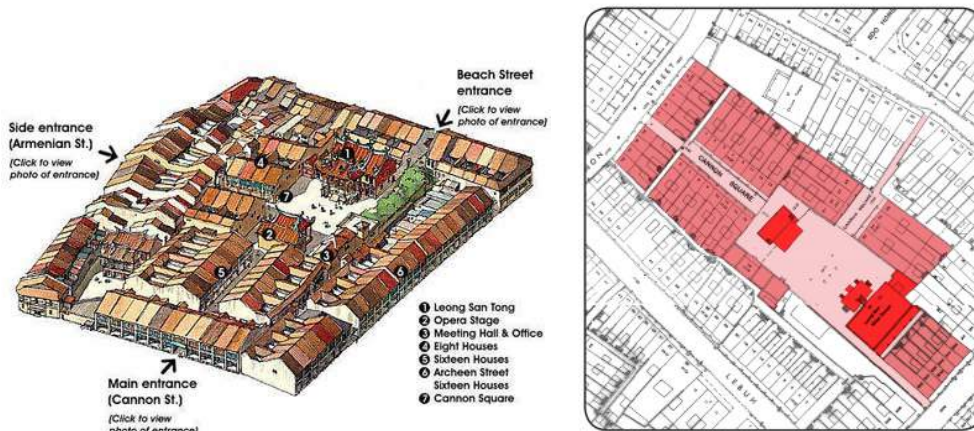


Figure 4.11: Khoo Kongsi compound (source: khookongsi.com)

History of Facades

Heritage Shophouse Styles

MELAKA & GEORGE TOWN
HISTORIC CITIES OF
THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

	1790s...	1840s...	1890s...	1910s...	1930s...	1950s...
History						
	"Early Penang" Style 1790s-1850s	"Southern Chinese" Eclectic Style 1840s-1910s	"Early Straits" Eclectic Style 1890s-1910s	"Late Straits" Eclectic Style 1910s-1930s	Art Deco Style 1930s-1960s	Early Modern Style 1950s-1970s
Heritage Shophouse Styles	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 stories (low) Simple facade 	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From simple to decorative facade Chinese influence: carved timber door, air vents, gable end, air-well etc. European and Indian influence: full width timber louvered shuttered windows & U/V-shaped terracotta roof tiles 	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 stories Chinese influence: carved timber door, air vents, gable end, air-well etc. European influence: full-length shuttered windows, geometric-patterned coloured clay floor tiles 	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 stories Chinese influence: carved timber door, air vents, gable end, air-well etc. European influence: full-length shuttered windows, projecting roof brackets, plaster relief, geometric-patterned floor tiles and dado panel tiles below windows 	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 stories European influence: Art-Deco facade with geometric design highlighting vertical and horizontal lines Shanghai plaster wall finishing Flagpole and relief writing on the wall Metal-framed glass windows 	<p>Physical Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 stories Simplification of form and design based on availability of new building materials and engineering developments Sunshade fins, metal-framed glass windows
	<p>Traditional Building Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber, clay bricks, lime, granite, U/V-shaped terracotta roof tiles, terracotta floor tiles (These materials are applicable to all six shophouse styles) 	<p>Traditional Building Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of tessellated encaustic clay floor tiles 	<p>Traditional Building Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of glass fanlights above window, encaustic cement floor tiles & majolica ceramic wall tiles 	<p>Traditional Building Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Marseille terracotta roof tiles, reinforced concrete, metal and glass 		

Produced & Designed by arts-ED Shophouse styles research: Tan Yow Woon and Dr Cynthia Jenkins Photography by Tan Yow Woon Illustration by Tang Yook Kiang

Figure 4.12: Penang Shophouse Styles (source: GTWHI)

Traditional Knowledge is Wisdom

Produced and Designed by arts-ED All rights reserved 2013

Conserve Your Built Heritage

Value Your Shophouse Style

Owner of Heritage Shophouse

Luckily I spent money to repair back. It has high heritage value now, and very beautiful.

Owner of Modern Shophouse

Aiya... I should not have taken the easy way, replacing the traditional feature with 'modern' industrial material.

Photos: Ian Yee/WireImage • Illustrations: Tang Kok Huan

Heritage Shophouse Features

MELAKA & GEORGE TOWN HISTORIC CITIES OF THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

Features of a Shophouse "Southern Chinese" Eclectic Style

- party wall
- roof ridge
- gable end
- terracotta U/V-shape tiles
- purlin
- batten
- ceiling
- column head
- roof beam under eave
- louvre shutters
- low wall
- under shutters
- brassmer beam
- ceramic air-vent
- column
- carved ventilated door
- terracotta tiles
- granite edge
- granite step
- open drain
- drain outlet

- lattice ventilation
- rear court
- toilet
- terrace
- timber floor boards
- wall cabinet
- stove
- room
- second hall/dining
- corridor
- stepped terracotta eaves
- room
- front hall
- five foot-way
- air-vent
- wooden screen/partition
- granite/brick steps
- wooden staircase
- granite paved air well
- internal drain
- timber joists

How to Safeguard the "Heritage Values" of Your Property:

- **Historical Style** Identify the historical period and style of your shophouse in order to recover the authentic features on the facade. (see inside page)
- **Architectural Form** Understand the division and use of space, the function of the five-foot way, airwell and back-balcony in relation to ventilation and *feng shui*.
- **Traditional Materials** Learn the scientific facts about traditional building materials (timber, stone, clay & lime) and why they suit the environment in George Town.
- **Traditional Building Knowledge** Get a trained conservator, contractor or worker who knows how to source for traditional materials and how to build using these materials.

Visit George Town World Heritage Inc. (GTWHI) before you plan repair or restoration work on your heritage building. For more info www.gtwhi.com.my | 04 261 6606

Figure 4.13a (top): the do's and don'ts of the shophouse
 Figure 4.13b (bottom): components of a shophouse

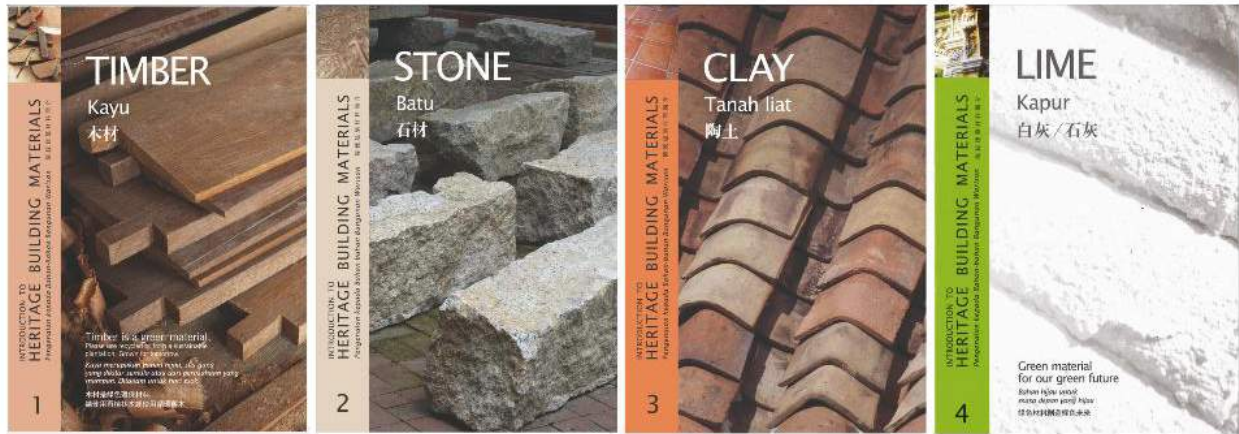


Figure 4.14: Timber, Stone, Clay, Lime: Traditional Construction Material brochure series (source: GTWHI)



Figure 4.15: the launch of Tan Yeow Wooi's book 'Penang Shophouses' (source: *The Star*).



Figure 4.16: No. 81 China Street, George Town, Penang (source: Arts-ED)



Figure 4.17: Hock Teik shophouses with KOMTAR in the background (author's photographs)

the lime cycle *kitaran kapur* 白灰的循環

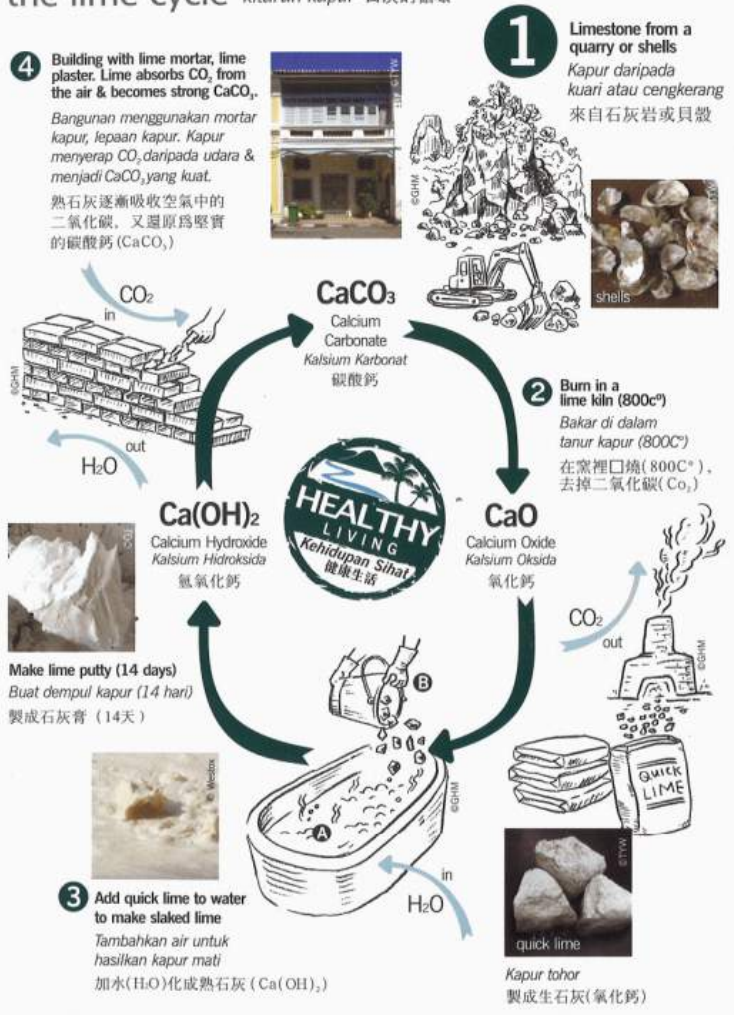


Figure 4.18: Lime process (source: GTWHI)

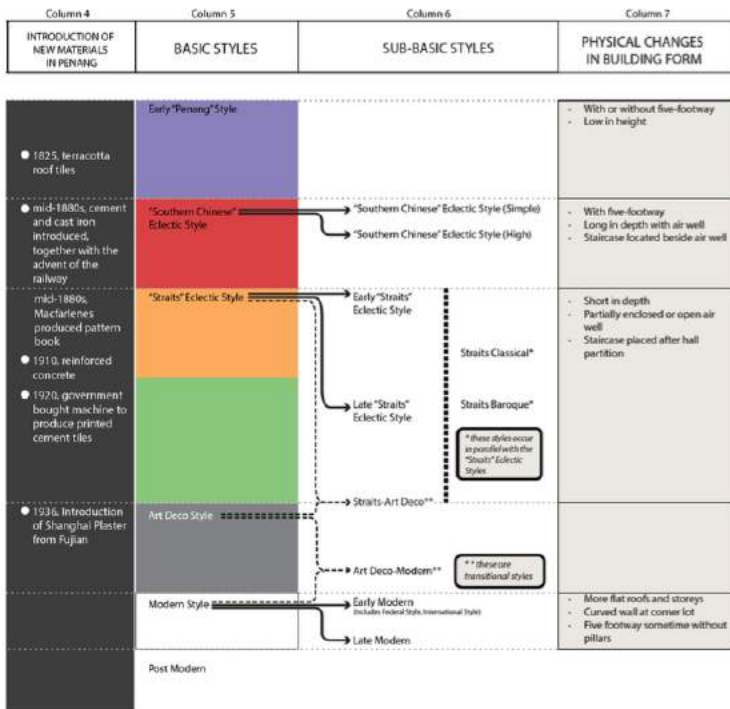


Figure 4.19: Refining the Shophouse typologies (source: SAP)



Figure 4.20 (left): Victoria Street Godown (source: Mark Lay)



Figure 4.21 (right): 1877 map (source: SAP)



Figure 4.22: MBPP press conference (source: MBPP Buletinmutiara)



Figure 4.23: Kafeteria Eng Loh (author's photograph)



Figure 4.24a: GTWHI office building (source: GTWHI)



Figure 4.24b: model of George Town World Heritage Site (source: GTWHI)



Figure 25: Penang shophouses (author's photographs)

Chapter5

SOUL

'After all, heritage, including intangible cultural heritage, is the soul of the city.'
- Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, November, 30 2015

INTRODUCTION

In November 2015, at an International Symposium on intangible cultural heritage, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng stated in his opening speech that 'after all, heritage including intangible cultural heritage, is the soul of the city'. The statement was to show the Penang Government's commitment in protecting various forms of heritage through various programs. In particular, George Town's 'intangible cultural heritage', e.g. traditions, customs, craftsmanship, and their human bearers, have received great attention. As evidence, he recited the list of such programs, from heritage directory to digital archives to annual celebrations. Yet, curiously, he ended his speech with a cryptic message: 'We protect heritage best by doing as little as possible.'

Heritage and historic preservation has been criticized for its heavy focus on buildings (see Chapter 8). As the main authority on heritage, Unesco, for example, has long privileged the studies of monuments, relics, and archaeological sites. In recent years, however, Unesco has increasingly recognized non-physical forms of heritage. In particular, its landmark 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was welcome by scholars and professionals alike for its more holistic view of heritage, particularly its human bearers. As a World Heritage Site, George Town embraces the approach. After all, the city was inscribed by the Unesco in recognition of its intangible cultural heritage. George Town fulfills the Criterion III of Unesco's Outstanding Universal Value: 'bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared'. Since its 2008 inscription, George Town has embarked upon fulfilled this mandate by trying to safeguard its soul.

This chapter discusses programs devised to safeguard George Town's intangible cultural heritage, or its soul. In particular, it sheds light on the role of GTWHI, a government agency founded as a custodian/manager of the World Heritage Site. In addition to providing advice on built-environment regulations (the subject of Chapter 4), GTWHI's other main role is to raise awareness. This chapter consists four parts. In Part Two, I introduce the much-praised Directory of Directory of Traditional Trades and Occupations, an inventory project conducted between 2011 and 2012 to document the traditional trades, craftspeople and cultural practitioners inner-city George Town. The first of its kind in Malaysia, the Directory categorizes the traditional trades and maps out their locations in George Town. Later, using the Directory as a database, GTWHI invented many awareness-raising programs, e.g. books, brochures, talk, and guided tours. The programs highlight one particular version of heritage: the rich, vibrant, and colorful heritage of George Town. I recount the experience of partaking in the Discovery Walk, a bimonthly guided tour that allows the participants to 'discover' the Heritage Traders through a narrated and programmed trail. I note the tactics through which the program sought to showcase the 'Sights and sounds of market activities. Colours of sarees, gold and gems. Tastes of *teh tarik*, *roti canai*, and samosa. Scents of spices, incense and fragrances'. Beyond the rich, colorful veneer, Part Three exposes a more somber version of heritage. I explain the ironies in which many of the Heritage Traders have been evicted. The eviction took place to full knowledge of, and permission by the state. In Part Four, the annual Heritage Site Celebrations took curatorial heritage to the next level. Each year, since 2008, GTWHI showcases a *theme* of George Town's heritage, e.g. rituals, crafts, foods, and games. I trace the evolution of the thematic Heritage Site Celebrations as they have evolved from 'performance' to 'participation', with the attendees shifting from passive onlookers to active participants. GTWHI has a clear rationale for such shift: to educate the public on the rapid disappearance of George Town's heritage and its bearers. I show the unfolding of pedagogical heritage, where GTWHI provided a tightly programmed series of events in a hope that the educated citizen will 'understand, value, and save' such heritage. Lastly, Part Five reflects and theorizes on the conception and mobilization of heritage. I explain how heritage is conceived as post political aesthetic and, later, mobilized as something that is strictly rich, vibrant, and colorful.

Capturing Soul

In 2011, Penang State Government funded a project to document George Town's traditional trades. Later known as *Revitalising Intangible Cultural Heritage* (RICH), the first phase aimed at

'identifying and documenting the traditional traders, craftspeople, and cultural practitioners in the Historic City of George Town'¹⁰³. Due to their limited staff and expertise, GTWHI enlisted the assistance of Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), a long-established heritage NGO. In July 2011, led by PHT councillor Lim Gaik Siang, the survey team took on the streets of George Town. Over one hundred surveyors were recruited to inventorize over five thousand houses, where they interviewed the house owners, traders, craftsmen and artists in the World Heritage Site (PHT, 2013, p. 28). The project was the first of its kind to be carried out in Malaysia.¹⁰⁴ In conducting the survey, the surveyors had a few sifting criteria. First, the trade must be founded in 1962 or earlier (that is, over fifty years old at the time of the 2011 survey). Second, the trade must be inherited from family. The purpose here was to trace the trade as an old inheritance. Third, the trade must fulfill one or more 'intangible cultural values'.¹⁰⁵ For each trade, the surveyors gathered its street name and house number, company name (English and Chinese), year founded, and a brief description.

The RICH project amounted to a *Traditional Trades and Occupations Directory*, an impressive, meticulously documented directory albeit not fully detailed (understandably so for a task of such proportion) (figure 1). The *Directory* is organized in alphabetical order in two ways, by trade and by street, and thus has a double purpose. The former shows the profusely rich variety of trades. The latter shows their spatial distribution and concentration across the streets of historic George Town (table 1). Much to the surveyor's delight, it was found that there existed as many as 63 categories of traditional trade scattering across 64 streets of historic George Town. A few examples are illustrative. The *Antique, Crafts and Souvenirs* shops sell 'Eastern curios' to itinerant travelers. The *Budget Hotels and Family-run Hotels* are reminiscent of the freeport days of George Town as a British entrepot. The largest category, *Coffee and Tea Shops* speak to the way of life of a once residential city. Serving tea, coffee, and simple menus, these shops also function as a neighborhood gathering place (GTWHIa, 2012, pp. 1-12). While some trades find their concentration a certain street, others do not. For example, clothes shops line Lebuhr Campbell and Jalan Penang. Budget hotels are concentrated along Lebuhr Chulia. By contrast, tea and coffee shops scatter around George Town (GTWHIb, 2012).

¹⁰³ Source: GTWHI website

¹⁰⁴ 2013 Urban Conservation Network in Asia and Its Future - Rapporteur Notes, page 4

¹⁰⁵ These values are: Rare in local context; Involves manual skill; Involves traditional handicraft; Associated with traditional customs; Associated with traditional observances or rituals; Associated with traditional festivals; Needs specific traditional tools; Needs specific raw materials; Supplies to specific market; others

No.	Types of traditional trades or occupations	Count
1	Antiques, crafts, and souvenirs	14
2	Bakery, biscuit and traditional cake shop	13
3	Barber and hair salon	11
4	<i>Bertam chik</i> , cane and rattan craft	5

Table 5.1: examples from the Traditional Trades and Occupations Directory

In addition, the surveyors also produced twenty ‘case studies’ - a more in-depth glimpse into twenty of the representative trades, e.g. the coffee roaster, the rattan weaver, the sundry grocer, the martial arts master, among others. In these cases, the familiar figures of George Town recount their heart-warming stories (figure 2). To ensure wide dissemination, GTWHI translated the booklet into three languages (English, Malay, and Chinese). A video project was made, also with subtitles in the three languages, to promote George Town’s trades and their disappearing bearers.

The RICH documentation and inventory project has a long shelf-life beyond the Directory itself. Indeed, the project serves a database, a fertile knowledge base, for GTWHI’s other curatorial programs in the years to come. As I will show, these programs become an interest in their own right, eclipsing the very souls they purport to preserve. So, since 2012, GTWHI has invented a range of programs to *promote* intangible cultural heritage. For example, the twenty-case study project deepened into a glossy coffee-table book titled ‘*Penang’s Living Legacy: Heritage Traders of George Town*’. RM40 apiece, the hardcover book showcases thirty-six traders (GTWHI, 2014). In addition, GTWHI produced a number of ‘Heritage Traders’ leaflets that correspond to each of the representative trades. The leaflets are deposited at the traders’ respective shops throughout George Town (figure 7).

In particular, I like to draw attention to one specific curatorial program: the walking trail (figure 3). Since the traditional trades are located in close proximity, they conveniently form a ‘trail’. Titled the ‘Traditional Trades Discovery Walk’, the walking trail is held every second saturday of the month, for a fee of RM20. Based on the RICH project, it is a program to help people ‘discover’ the traditional trades and the ‘Sights and sounds of market activities. Colours of sarees, gold and gems. Tastes of *teh tarik*, *roti canai*, and samosa. Scents of spices, incense and fragrances’ (GTWHI, n.d.). One saturday morning in July 2015, I joined a few other

participants on the Discovery Walk, none of whom were Penang locals. We met at GTWHI office, where the GTWHI-approved guide Kimberly provided a brief introduction. From there, we proceeded to each stop of the trail. The itinerary samples a few traders that represent the traditional trades of George Town. Throughout the trail, Kimberly would share anecdotes, historical and contemporary, associated with each of the trades. She carried with her a big album of images and maps, which she would draw out throughout the walk for our reference.

In the quiet hours of a Saturday morning, George Town was slowly waking up. Shops began to open their doors. First, in a short walk from GTWHI office, Kimberly took us to a Chinese signboard carver's, one of the few left in George Town (figures 3b, 7). She explained the significance of the signboard for Chinese retail, showing us the woodcarving knives (in U and V shapes) and gold leaves. When a Chinese trader wants to open a shop, she said, his friends would pool money to buy him a signboard as a gift. Then, we stopped at a curbside *teh tarik* stall. Literally meaning 'pulled tea', *teh tarik* involves the teamaker pouring in a pulling motion the tea from the kettle into a glass. The action aerates and thickens the frothy drink. Two of us asked to buy the drink. Acknowledging our presence as a 'tour group', he made it a point to emphasize the 'pulled' part in what had just been described to us as a pulled tea. Along the way, we also made a stop at a money changer, also listed as a traditional trader of George Town. There, as if in a familiarly repeated manner, a shop assistant casually handed to us a GTWHI-produced leaflet that explained the significance of money changing as a quintessential activity of a port city. Kimberly then took us to a perfumery and spice shops, where she encouraged us to smell (and consider buying) the Halal-certified scents and spices. We ended our trail at a beaded shoe store on Lebu Armenian. Here, Kimberly explained that once considered a luxury among the local Straits Chinese, the embroidered shoes became an endangered craft, for the item had gone out of vogue. We bid each other goodbye, with Kimberly hoping that we learned something from the Discovery Walk.

The Discovery Walk marks a shift in heritage promotion/education from the Directory as a document to the idea of a tour. Unlike the Directory and its associated publications, the walking trail provides a different tool of heritage enactment. It re-enacts heritage by animating it. The trail produces a range of sensory knowledge, e.g. the sights, sounds, colors, tastes, and scents, as advertised in the brochure. It provides sensory, life-like detail that is vivid and even tactile. In particular, through the sensory knowledge, the Discovery Walk reinforces the twofold official

narrative of George Town's multiculturalism and intangible heritage - the double plotline that Kimberley kept rehearsing throughout the walk.

In some way, the impression the Discovery Walk sought to impart matched my own first impression of George Town: the city of living trades. During a weekly graduate reading group on urban design at the University of Michigan, one fellow doctoral student posed one question: Is there a historic district that is not gentrified? The question struck me with deep resonance. I was in complete agreement with her that historic districts everywhere seem upkeep, curated, and beautiful. Old Kyoto, Seattle's Pike Market, Singapore's Chinatown. Contrary to their name, historic districts are youthful and always freshly painted. So, when I arrived in George Town for the first time for my preliminary fieldwork in July 2014, I was pleasantly surprised. On my first morning, as I left my hotel and walked along Chulia Street, I saw bodies and things that young people today would call 'real'. In the Chulia Street area, in the backpacker district of George Town, I saw ironsmiths, glass cutters, recycling shops. I saw cottage-industry shophouses punctuated by guesthouses and cafes. I saw the kind of things we do not normally associate with the beautiful historic district. George Town was full of elderly residents, crumbling walls, and flaking paints. The patina of age, I thought rather contentedly, was what won George Town as a World Heritage designation in 2008. Little did I know that this was about to change.

Irony

Since the 2008, in the year in which George Town was inscribed as World Heritage Site, the inner city has remarkably transformed - not always for better. The Heritage Traders that Kimberly lovingly introduced to us are increasingly disappearing. Ironically, the Chinese signboard cutter lost his complementary trader nextdoor, the Chinese seal engraver, who had long ago been 'priced out'. In a hope of establishing baseline findings, GTWHI commissioned a study on city's population and landuse change. The efforts amounted to *George Town World Heritage Site: Population and Land Use Change, 2009-2013* (GTWHI, 2015, see page). The report indicates two important trends: (1) population decline and (2) economic restructuring away from household and business services towards hospitality and tourism. However, what the report does not say is that much of the 'economic restructuring' is a euphemism for eviction. George Town has a high tenant-to-owner ratio. In recent years, long-term residents and tenants are evicted to make room for higher-return development. In the present writing, I am not interested in eviction as an urban phenomenon per se. Rather, I am interested in the irony in which many of the evictees are, in fact, listed as 'Heritage Traders' in the 2012 Traditional Trades

and Occupations Directory discussed above. Here I see a sharp contrast between the historical, artefactual knowledge produced out of the heritage trades and their endangered livelihood. While the former is prominently rendered, the latter is less so, if not absent altogether. While the beauties can be easily made visible, their livelihoods remain unaccounted for. As I will argue later, the contrast reveals the essence of the government's curatorial programs.

To illustrate, I briefly stage the contrast. While the 2012 Directory takes pride in Penang as 'a centre for the sales and repair of watches and clocks since the early twentieth century' (GTWHI, 2012, p. 45), the watch shop Lye Soon Seng is closing down following an overnight rental hike from RM1500 to RM7000 (US\$ 373 to 1740). Next door, the keys and locksmith Guat Huat is similarly 'priced out'. The two are, or were, listed as Heritage Traders. While the Directory claims that, as a predominantly Chinese city, George Town is known for 'a great number of Chinese shops selling joss-sticks, joss paper, brass urns and other prayer items [to] support religious worship' (ibid, p. 31). Yet, Kedai Gaharu Cheng Cheng Heong closed down in September 2015 following a rental increase to RM4000. Established in 1940, the Chinese ceremonial goods seller was listed as a Heritage Trader. While the Directory shows that, once considered a fashion center of Asia, George Town was once home to specialist fabric and leather tailors (ibid, p. 10). Yet, the leather shop-owner Kong Min received a notice to quit. He was given one month to vacate his business established in 1967. He, too, was a Heritage Trader. Two notes have to be mentioned. First, these are but a few examples of the thus far evicted Heritage Traders. Second and more importantly, I do not do justice to other evictees who are not Heritage Traders, but who nonetheless once made up what is known as George Town World Heritage Site.

My list keeps expanding (table 2). At the time of my writing (2016), I am fortunate, and perhaps unfortunate, enough to witness the contrast between the Directory's artefactual narrative and the everyday reality. But certainly, as a scholar, I am fortunate enough to be able to document both the making and unmaking of George Town's intangible cultural heritage. While the government is actively in charge of making heritage, they turn a blind eye to its unmaking. I made the list of the evicted Heritage Traders as the *counter list* to the official 2012 Directory. However, as my list grows longer, it quickly becomes a routine exercise as I found myself mechanically updating it, adding therein the evictees' names and dates. The names become factual items, or factoids, written down my list. In this very manner, I myself run the risk of replicating the list as a tool of visibility (Legg, 2005), not unlike the 2012 Directory. In an attempt to supplement detail and to

restore humanity that the list deserves, I share in some depth a few examples: Mr. Ong, Madam Lian, and Kong Thai Lai coffee shop.

On that same day in July 2014, an informant took me back to the same five-building block on Chulia Street, the same street whose ordinary pace of life I had naively painted in a romantic tableau earlier that morning (figure 4). There, I learned that the five tenants were being evicted on that very day. The landlord had long ago sold the properties to a new owner who, in turn, had a plan to redevelop the block to a boutique hotel. The owner gave the tenants a one-month notice to pack up whatever they had accumulated over several decades and leave. I want to draw to attention the fact that four of the five tenants were listed as traditional traders in the 2012 Traditional Trades and Occupation Directory: the Sky Hotel, the machine repair shop, Pentique Gallery, and the chemical supply store. I was introduced to Mr. Ong, the owner of the chemical supply store. In his nineties, Mr. Ong was incredibly sharp. In perfect English, he recounted his younger days when he had fought for the British Imperial Army. He fought the leave notice with the same tenacity, wishing to hold on to the trade he had inherited from his late father. Next door, I met with Madame Lian, the owner of a paper recycling shop. 'What to do?', a worried Madam Lian asked us. Her business was not listed in the 2012 Directory, so it was not considered 'heritage' by any measure. Perhaps, it did not even matter. She, too, had to pack up her stuff, leaving behind her decades-long business and also leaving behind one homeless man she had taken in to help run the shop in exchange for shelter and small moneys. Mentally handicapped, the man was not aware that homelessness was once again upon him. Before long, bemused by the presence of a foreigner (myself), Mr. Teh, the owner of the Sky Hotel, joined the conversation. He, too, was a heritage trader.

After the five tenants were evicted in October 2014, the block grew quiet. Chulia Street no longer saw locals picking up their chemical supplies at Mr. Ong's. Garbage collectors no longer came around to Madam Lian's shop, where they would peddle their 'catch of the day' collected from around George Town. The machine repairing shop stopped making loud noise. But soon after, a big yellow sign with 'FOR RENT' in loud red went up, with the phone number written underneath. The sign was put up on the upper floor of Madam Lian's lot, on what was once the room of the homeless man. As one of my informants put it, 'they evict old tenants and advertise for new tenants'. The block lied hollow and dormant for months. Today, Mr. Ong has a store outside of George Town. Madame Lian now runs a small grocery store, selling no longer used papers but fresh products. The location of the homeless man is unknown.

Finally, in March 2015, a construction sign was put up, showing Laurence Loh Arkitek as the design consultant for the project (figure 5). The project received a full 'PASS' permission from the MBPP.¹⁰⁶ The project is to become twenty-two-room boutique hotel, with eight rooms in Mr. Teh's Sky Hotel and fourteen rooms sprawling across the block. The planning applicant applied for rehabilitation works, alterations, additions, and for change of use from 'shop' to 'hotel'. There are several ironies associated with this Chulia Street block. First, the eviction of the Heritage Traders was fully endorsed by the state. Second, the principal of the architecture firm is Laurence Loh, Malaysia's forefront heritage advocate. Mr. Loh has a life-long career dedicated to heritage preservation. He was one of the first presidents of Penang Heritage Trust, a recent president of *Badan Warisan Malaysia* (Malaysia Heritage Trust), a university professor, and a designer in many award-winning heritage projects. Importantly, he was an early advocate for George Town to be nominated as a Unesco World Heritage Site. He served as a drafter of the nomination dossier (see Jenkins, 2008). Third, as an aside, Mr. Loh's late father was great friends with Mr. Ong. The second irony is far from being a conflict of interest, and the third seems like a personal anecdote. However, I want to shed light on the ethical contours of what is often passed as technical intervention, e.g. heritage preservation - a point that I will come back to.

Another evicted 'heritage trader' is Kong Thai Lai, an old coffee shop on Hutton Road. As mentioned earlier, *Coffee and Tea Shops* constitutes the largest category in the 2012 Traditional Trades and Occupations Directory. Locally known as *kopitiam* or *kedai kopi*, the coffee shop is a true neighborhood institution. The surveyors point out, quite rightly, that 'there used to be one or two coffee shops on every street, promoting neighborhood conviviality and social interaction' (GTWHI, 2012, p. 12). Kong Thai Lai is one such example. Housed in one shaplot, Kong Thai has a no-frills decor and a simple menu. They serve soft boiled eggs, coffee, tea, and toasts with butter and *kaya* (coconut custard) to local residents. In March 2016, an eviction letter caught the third-generation owner Mr. Tan Jeng Seow by surprise. He learned that, like everyone in that five-lot block, he had to move out by June 6th, 2016. In essence, the notice gave him three months to vacate the property he inherited from his grandfather who started the business in the year 1920. Mr. Tan attempted to negotiate the deal, appealing instead to vacate by the end of the year. It was difficult to relocate in three months when the family had occupied the property for almost one century. However, the negotiation was to no avail. The landlord

¹⁰⁶ Planning permission no. MPPP/OSC/PM2479/14

extended the deadline to September 2016. ‘... [the landlord] told me that the new building plan had been approved by the Penang Island City Council and that construction would start soon,’ Mr. Tan said to a local newspaper (*The Star*, May 13, 2016).

Mr. Tan was right. In fact, the plan was approved by the MBPP well before the eviction notice. The original owner sold the property to World Class Land, a Singapore-based company, who is on a frantic buying spree, acquiring to date over 200 units in George Town for commercial redevelopment. Records from the City Council show that World Class Land first submitted a planning application in December 2015. It was classified as a ‘regular project’.¹⁰⁷ In February, the developer submitted a building permit for ‘proposed amendments, additions, and restorations’.¹⁰⁸ The building permit was similarly approved. In reaction to the news, the opposition party Gerakan held a press conference to highlight the eviction of Kong Thai Lai. In particular, they noted the dramatic disappearance many of George Town’s 600 traditional trades (referring to the 2012 Directory). The party demanded that the Penang government reveal ‘how many of these traditional businesses, which are the intangible heritage of the city, have been forced to vacate and close down’ (*The Malay Mail Online*, April 12, 2016).

GTWHI reacted in defense to the media reports, offering their clarification (*Kwong Wah Daily*, April 20, 2016). In particular, they rebutted the figure of ‘600 heritage trades’. While pleased that the 2012 Directory had gained wide interest, they were concerned about a potential misreading. GTWHI argued that intangible cultural heritage ‘cannot be measured in terms of “units” of building’. Therefore, to say that George Town has 600 ‘units’ of intangible cultural heritage is misleading. Here, they stressed that the 2012 Directory does not have a statutory standing. Rather, its original purpose was about research documentation and dissemination of George Town’s intangible cultural heritage, boasting the Directory as the first systematic investigation of its kind. In their defense, GTWHI claimed that they had since done many follow-up projects, e.g. oral histories and image database of the heritage traders. At the press conference, GTWHI General Manager admitted to the challenge of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Different trades, she argues, have their different patterns. The fact that one traditional trade ‘decreases in number’, she emphasized, should not reflect the same reality across the board. Instead, a case-by-case examination, she added, is needed in order to address the ‘complexity’

¹⁰⁷ Planning Permission reference no. MBPP/OSC/PM2914/15-PS

¹⁰⁸ Planning Permission reference no. MBPP/OSC/PB8405/16; and Planning Permission reference no. MBPP/OSC/PB8412/16

and to find ‘appropriate solutions’ for each case. ‘If we want to pursue an in-depth examination’, [for example, on the challenges faced by each trade], ‘GTWHI is happy to provide assistance, cooperation, and follow-up study’. Since safeguarding intangible cultural heritage requires public support and awareness, ‘everyone needs to work together’, she reaffirmed. I interpret her statement as a cooling measure to dampen the public panic. In the next section, I show who constituted ‘everyone’.

In December 2015, against the backdrop of the evicted traders, GTWHI held a three-day conference called *International Symposium on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (figure 6). The title sounded apt and timely. The theme was ‘Innovative Practices, Sustainable Strategies, and Lessons Learnt’. The idea was to exchange experience and strengthen collaboration among practitioners, policymakers, researchers, activists, and communities in the Asian Pacific region. To this end, GTWHI brought together heritage experts from, to name a few, Malaysian Department of National Heritage, the Singapore National Heritage Board, the Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau, the Heritage City of Vigan in the Philippines, as well as scholars and researchers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia. As with other GTWHI events where visual material is key, the symposium’s logo is full of symbolism and meaning (figure 6). First, it is a design of a hand, with five fingers symbolizing each ‘domain’ of intangible cultural heritage (i.e. oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, knowledge, and craftsmanship). Second, the overlapping fingers mean that one domain can be found as part of another. Third, the image of the hand as a whole suggests the act of safeguarding to ensure the ‘vitality of intangible cultural heritage, including documentation, research, preservation, protection, enhancement, transmission’.

Indeed, the air was collegial, and the spirit collaborative. In his opening speech, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Guan welcome the foreign delegates, thanking them for their participation and encouraging to enjoy ‘the dynamic life and the diversity of cultural heritage of this city’, to observe ‘the languages we speak, the food we eat, the rites and rituals we practice, the way of life we live’. His speech was uncannily familiar, recalling the twofold official narrative of multiculturalism and intangible cultural heritage, not unlike Kimberly’s guided Discovery Walk. George Town’s intangible cultural heritage, Lim reasserted, ‘is diverse, dynamic, and organic.’ Then, he proceeded to recite GTWHI’s achievements. Like his other heritage-related speeches, the Chief Minister praised GTWHI for working relentlessly. In particular, he highlighted the 2012 Directory as the organization’s main achievement.

The unfolding of the three days saw keynote speeches, paper presentations, and roundtable discussions by the participants. The lessons shared were impressively broad, ranging from Singapore to Macau, from Taipei to Hong Kong. In the words of Penang Chief Minister, 'we need to look at the collaboration among actors and how to develop partnerships to sustain the value of intangible cultural heritage and its transmission...this can contribute to a better life for both present and future generations'. Similarly, GTWHI general manager said the symposium was aimed at strengthening the cooperation and collaboration between practitioners, policymakers, researchers, activists and communities in order to infuse sustainability into the intangible cultural heritage of respective sites (*The Star*, December 3, 2015). Most of the conversations took part inside a sea-fronting hotel, overlooking the bay of George Town. An exception was one afternoon of 'site visits', where the overseas participants ventured outside on a tour of George Town World Heritage Site.

However, I want to draw attention to another kind of 'exception', an exception to the otherwise collegial air of the symposium. The last day of the symposium was dedicated to 'roundtable discussions', where the participants were supposed to share their experience. The topics included 'Challenges and Limitations' and 'Sustainable Strategies and Practices'. Yet, the day was designated as, *verbatim*, a 'closed programme based on invitation', only reserved for 'invited speakers and stakeholders' (GTWHI, 2015). I ask: Who constitutes the 'stakeholders'? Against the backdrop of the evicted residents, the Penang Government and GTWHI have been under severe criticism for their inaction and their seeming impermeability. According to one of my informants, she was barred from the program that afternoon. A George Town resident, she is a tour guide with twenty-five years of experience, and the only Unesco-trained Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide in Penang, and one of the first in Malaysia. Perhaps, she said, the reason was she was part of a local heritage advocacy group that has been critical of GTWHI, an organization that has been viewed as insular and impermeable in recent years. She lamented the missed opportunity to spotlight the 'real' challenges, e.g. the evicted heritage traders that GTWHI often touts as the city's intangible cultural heritage. Instead, among the 'invited stakeholders' were a youth group from Masjid Kapitan Keling, who were rather marginal to the heritage-related controversies. In passing, another informant suggested that high registration fees (US\$ 120 for Malaysians and US\$ 360 for non-Malaysians) prohibited him, a local resident and a property owner, from attending. In designing the agendas and list of attendees, GTWHI had control over inclusion and exclusion, selecting who constituted the 'stakeholders' and

whose view on the ‘challenges and limitations’ got presented. The program did not involve the vocal critics and stakeholders who had indeed a direct stake, but those docile and disinterested at best, and uninterested at worst. On its last day, the symposium concluded with a tea break and final remarks by GTWHI themselves.

No.	Company name	Trade category	Year founded
1	Thean Seng Huat	<i>Bertam chik</i> , cane and rattan craft	1920
2	Guan Huat Lock & Keys Sdn Bhd	Keys and locksmith	1978
3	Kedai Jam Lye Soon Seng	Watch and clock shop	1986
4	Kong Thai Lai	Coffee shop	1920
5	Eden catering	Restaurants and eateries	1964
6	Kean Seng Co.	Hardware	1950
7	Tan Trading Company	Noodle	1932
8	Vincent Hairdressing Saloon	Barber and hair saloon	1960
9	Sky Hotel	Budget hotel, family-run hotel and lodge	1961
10	Broadway & Company	Metalwork and machining	1945
11	Pentique Gallery	Antiques, crafts, and souvenirs	1972
12	Liangtraco Sdn Bhd	Specialist supplier	1940
13	Kedai Gaharu Cheng Cheng Heong	Chinese religious goods	1940
14	Kong Min Company	Leather shop	1967
15	Keng Huat Company	General goods and household supplements	1930
16	Ai Goh Hotel	Budget hotel, family-run hotel and lodge	1920

17	Kim Yew Hardware	Hardware wholesale and retail	1930
18	Kedai Kopi Tong Hoe	Coffee and tea shop	-
19	Eng Heong Lan	Religious and ceremonial goods	1940
20	Cheah Siew Boo	Tailor shop	1950
21	Kedai runcit Sin Hock Beng	Sundry and grocery shop	1969

Table 5.2: list of the evicted Heritage Traders (inconclusive)

Celebrating Heritage

In 2015, July was a festive month for Penang for three reasons. First, like elsewhere in the world, July is a high-season month in the global tourism calendar. Tourists from near and far descended upon the Island to see its many attractions. Students from Western countries ‘drop by’ Penang as part of their Southeast Asia tours. Domestic Malaysians take a weekend trip to George Town to have a leisurely time. They visit the city’s temples. They enjoy their nationally famed street food. Second, in 2015, July straddled the auspicious month of Ramadan. For a muslim nation, this means holidays, festivities, and family unions as Malaysian muslims *balik kampung* or go home. Third and perhaps most importantly, July is the month that marks the inscription of George Town as a World Heritage Site. July gives Penangites many reasons to celebrate.

In this short section, I present an ethnographic observation of the 2015 George Town Heritage Site Celebrations. At the risk of appropriating a scholarly method in which I was not formally trained and thus failing to do it justice, I nonetheless found ethnography particularly alluring in July 2015. There, I took opportunistic advantage of my presence during the Celebrations and my participation in many of the activities. I attended the organized public talks. I participated in the cooking workshops, and I joined the heritage walking trails. I photographed the materials used to curate the events. However, my intention here is not to document the unfolding of the Celebrations, for I don’t think ethnographic description is an unreflexive report. Rather, I have one specific ethnographic muse: GTWHI. Through close description of the events, I attend to GTWHI’s rationale, tactics, materials and bodies, as they put together the Celebrations in the name of preserving George Town’s heritage. I pay attention to the why and the how, to the reasons why they organize the Celebrations and to the means of doing so.

The Heritage Site Celebrations is considered the highlight of George Town. An annual event, the Heritage Site Celebrations is held to celebrate the inscription of George Town as a Unesco World Heritage Site on July 7th, 2008. Since then, the Celebrations became an yearly affair as the Penang Government prepares a range of heritage-related festivities to raise awareness (figure 8). In fact, the 7th of July is declared a state-wide public holiday, so that the residents can participate in the events. In the first few years of the Heritage Site Celebrations, the events took the typical form of street festivals, traditional performances, and exhibitions. For example, the first celebrations initiated by the State Government took place on July 25th to 27th, 2008, one month after the listing. In 2009, the Celebrations was titled '1Heritage' as a clear nod to the larger national campaign of '1Malaysia' at the time.¹⁰⁹ In 2010, the first 'George Town Festival' (GTF) was born. Following the success of the preceding years, the State Government of Penang decided to support a larger festival of arts and cultures.¹¹⁰ Similarly, in 2011 and 2012, the Celebrations was titled 'Tapestry of Cultures' and 'Live Heritage', respectively. Here, the government enlisted the participation of community groups to showcase their respective 'cultural shows'.

Then, the year 2013 introduced a different format. The population context was instrumental to such shift. By 2013, George Town's inner city had 'revitalized'. Once a sleepy town, George Town finally regained its bustle. The town that had depopulated throughout the eighties and nineties was being repopulated, but with a different kind of population. Here, revitalization meant commercialization and gentrification. As I have documented in these pages, property owners began to convert their buildings into shops, hotels, cafes, and other tourist-friendly enterprises. By consequence, old tenants were evicted. At this point, George Town began to lose its old way of life that won it the Unesco designation in the first place. Against this backdrop, the 2013 Celebrations was more programmed towards raising awareness. That year, the title was 'Color-Culture-Tradition'. The title itself was not new. In fact, it is not particularly different from the precedent years that emphasized the rich, multicultural diversity of George Town. However, an emerging imperative among the organizers was to impart the idea of 'understand, value, and save'. At a given event during the Celebrations, a short synopsis was provided to help

¹⁰⁹ '1Malaysia' was initiated by Prime Minister Najib Razak. A controversial program, '1Malaysia' is intended to promote racial harmony and national unity in the Malaysian context of interethnic antagonism. In fact, I would argue that the representation of predominantly Chinese George Town as a multicultural heritage site is a similar attempt at forging the racial harmony discourse.

¹¹⁰ In recent years, GFT branched off from the Heritage Site Celebrations. It became an independent event in its own right. Distinct from the Heritage Site Celebrations in July, GFT now takes place in August. It builds on the celebratory atmosphere and promotes Penang's other artistic forms such as music, writing, and theatre

attendees understand and interpret the event in the light of its significance to George Town's livelihoods.

In the following year, the tactic of knowledge impartment was further developed for the 2014 Celebrations. With the title of 'Living Legacies', the highlight was traditional crafts and their quickly disappearing masters. Clearly, the theme was built upon the 2012 Directory of Traditional Trades as a knowledge base. George Town is well known for its artisan crafts e.g. rattan basket, beaded slippers, Chinese ritual items, to name a few. A conveniently tangible tool, crafts provided a concrete medium through which the participants could experience culture. In particular, introduced for the first time was the idea of 'workshops', where the participants got to learn techniques of different traditional crafts of Penang. For each craft, the Celebrations organizers identified a 'master', who was enlisted to train new 'apprentices' and 'volunteers'. The latter then ran the workshops, imparting the skills to interested attendees. In this sense, the attendees were no longer passive observers but active participants. They did not simply 'celebrate' but actively participate in heritage-making.

Eat RITE 2015

The year 2015 saw the seventh anniversary of George Town World Heritage Site, with a playful title of 'EAT RITE: Ritual Foods of George Town' (figure 9). Long before the Unesco status, Penang is well known for its food, so much so it is dubbed in popular parlance as the food capital of Malaysia.¹¹¹ In particular, the city of George Town gained wide recognition for its street food culture. A legacy of the vibrant nineteenth-century port, George Town's multicultural food recalls the once predominantly working-class city and a crossroads of immigrant cultures. However, instead of the city's popular dishes, the Celebrations of 2015 focused on 'ritual foods', i.e. foods prepared and consumed as part of a rite, ritual, or traditional ceremony of an ethnic community. Since George Town is a multi-ethnic town, it has a year-round series of event (table 4). As some of these rites are becoming rare, the associated food practices have disappeared, too. Therefore, the ritual foods play well into the idea of heritage as something to be passed on, as can be seen from the quote from GTWHI, the organizer:

With the theme of 'EAT RITE: Ritual Foods of George Town', this year's Heritage Celebrations puts the spotlight on our city's unique festive

¹¹¹ city promoters and international media, e.g. CNN, the *New York Times*, and *The Guardian*, often run features about food in Penang and particularly in George Town. Food is often a major highlight that attracts people to the island. See for example: <http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2012/jun/14/top-10-street-food-george-town-penang>
<http://travel.cnn.com/george-town-penang-asias-greatest-street-food-city-657636/>

heritage with a focus on the special foods made to celebrate our festivals and traditional ceremonies. More than just a source of nutrients, these foods are rich with significance and symbols that express the beliefs and hopes shared by the local communities.

(GTWHI, 2015, p. 3)

The unfolding of the four-day events provided ample opportunity for the attendee to experience the ritual foods of George Town. GTWHI organized a wide range of events. First, a 'community showcase' is where an ethnic community displays their 'sacred recipes'. Second, in 'festive food workshops', the organizers demonstrate how to make a simple ritual food. Then, the attendee has an opportunity to perform. Third, for a more in-depth experience, 'cooking classes' are offered for those who wish to try a more complex recipe. Fourth, food experts and historians are invited to give 'public talks' on each representative ethnic community of Penang, e.g. the Chinese, the Malays, and the Indians. Fifth, GTWHI runs 'join the table' home visits, where the attendee has an opportunity to attend a mock food-related ritual at the home of a community representative and enjoy a meal thereafter. These events are put together to ensure a wide variety of sensory experiences, and to impart food-related knowledge. In the words of the curators, 'when planning our programme, we prioritised activities that will help you appreciate the unique blend of faith, beliefs, and cultural diversity that makes George Town truly special. At the end of the day, we hope that you too will be able to **understand** and **value** our cultural heritage, and join us in our mission to help **save** it for the benefit of future generations. (GTWHI, 2015, p. 3, bold emphasis in original).

Workshop curation

The events are tightly programmed. While the attendee is allowed to freely roam the Celebrations that sprawl the streets of inner George Town, to actually participate in a given event entailed multiple steps. Take the festive food workshop as an example. First, the workshop staff briefed the attendee on the history and significance of the food. For example, *Ark O* is a classic Hainanese Chinese dish popular during Chinese New Year feasts. *Nyee*, glutinous rice balls, is served in a bowl to symbolize reunion. *Ang thoe kuih*, a peach-shaped rice cake, is an offering to ancestors and deities, because peaches symbolize longevity. Second, the staff introduced the attendee to the workshop station. Designated as a 'hands-on activity', the workshop took the format of a learning station. The station had a table display of ingredients, a panel indicating the duration, difficulty level, intended age, and a warning message on potential food allergies and cautions (e.g. hot oil) (figure 9). Third, the staff gave instructions on how to make the food. Before enjoying the finished product, the attendee is

guided through the progressive steps of the cooking instructions. At some stations, in order to appreciate the full process, the attendee is not allowed to skip the steps. I noticed a few tourists denied the final completion as they had not completed the prior steps. Lastly, the staff provided a handout that gave a synopsis of the ritual food (figure 9).

Visual presence was key to the 2015 Heritage Celebrations (figure 9). Visual presence refers to exhibition and promotion materials used to advertise the events during the Celebrations. These include banners, flags, displays, brochures, among others. The visual presence helped animate the Celebrations, vividly bringing the heritage-related activities to life. Although the idea was first introduced in 2013, the 2015 Celebrations took the visual presence to another level. The 2015 Celebrations coincided with (and in fact was popularized by) the rise of Internet social media. During the Celebrations, the streets of George Town were adorned with decorative panels. The attendees are encouraged to take a photograph or a 'selfie' with these decorative props, and 'share' it on Internet social-media platforms, e.g. Facebook and Instagram. For example, GTWHI installed life-sized cutouts outside their office. The cutouts were figures of the three identifiable Malaysian ethnicities (i.e. the Malays, Chinese, and Indians) depicted in cooking action or performing their respective food rituals. The figure of a Chinese man is depicted as holding rice dumpling *Bak Chang*, a Malay lady holding a tray of *Barmeah* stew, and so on. Another popular decorative panel was a sign saying 'I cooked this at Heritage Celebrations 2015' for the participants to take a photograph with. In additions, throughout the celebrations, GTWHI provided copious amounts, in various forms, of promotional materials, e.g. brochures, maps, leaflets, handouts, to educate the public on the ritual food heritage of Penang.

GTWHI's strong preoccupation with the pedagogical power of the annual Heritage Celebrations can be seen most revealingly in their evaluation of the event. On the last day of the Celebrations, in the sultry humidity of July in Penang, GTWHI volunteers patrol the streets of George Town, soliciting opinion from the attendees and inviting them to complete the evaluation form. In a standard questionnaire format, the respondent is asked to rate their impression on the Likert five-point rating scale (GTWHI, 2015). For the 2015 Celebrations, the key questions asked are reproduced below (table 3). Constituting the major portion of the evaluation, the three questions are illustrative of GTWHI's interest in the Heritage Celebrations as a pedagogy. Here, the purposes of the Celebrations boil down to three things: 1) improved knowledge on festive foods; 2) the attendee's ability to prepare the foods; and 3) her improved awareness on the different aspects on George Town's heritage.

1. How would you rate the activities in terms of improving your knowledge_about multicultural festive foods?¹¹²
2. How usefulness would you rate the activity in terms of improving your capacity in preparing festive foods?
3. The project purpose is to increase public awareness about the different aspects of George Town multicultural heritage. In your opinion, has the project purpose been achieved?¹¹³

Table 5.3: Questionnaire of the 2015 George Town Heritage Site Celebrations

Perhaps, the Chief Minister’s closing speech helped crystallize the key message that the organizers wanted to convey. On July 7th, 2015, the last day of the Celebrations, the Chief Minister of Penang gave a closing speech at the Town Hall as a gesture of concluding the event. His tone was upbeatly optimistic. He was thankful for the ‘traditional and ritual food that have been passed down through generations’, encouraging that ‘[a]s Penangites, we should feel proud and lucky as we live in a multicultural society of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Straits Chinese, and many others...[who] all celebrate together without distinction.’ Importantly, he put forth a call to action, calling on Penangites to preserve their ritual food as a form of intangible heritage. ‘The preservation of these foods’, he argued, ‘is essential as part of the conservation of our intangible heritage in order to ensure that they continue to be practiced for generations to come. He used the Heritage Celebrations as the government’s commitment in safeguarding heritage. The Chief Minister ended by pronouncing the event a ‘success’ and congratulating GTWHI for its role in ‘educating the public’.

Penang ethnic Community	Represented ritual foods
Hainanese Chinese	<i>Nong Yoke</i> (stewed pork belly) <i>Ark O</i> (braised yam and duck) <i>Yoke Tang</i> (savory sticky rice dumpling) <i>Ik Bwa</i> (glutinous rice sweets) <i>Art Bwa</i> (coconut desserts) <i>tnah kat lau</i> (three-cornered dumpling)
Straits Chinese	<i>Kari Kay</i> (chicken curry) <i>Ang Koo Kuih</i> (Red Tortoise cake) <i>Lam Mee</i> (noodle dish)

¹¹² For Questions 1 and 2, the five rating points are: *not at all helpful, slightly helpful, somewhat helpful, very helpful, and extremely helpful*

¹¹³ For Question 3, the five rating points are: *not achieved; limited achievement; partially achieved; largely achieved; and fully achieved*

Teochew Chinese	<i>Ang Thoe Kuih</i> (peach-shaped dumpling) Hooi Lye Nyee (Hooi Lye Family's rice cake)
Hakka Chinese	<i>Suan Pan Tsu</i> (kneaded mixture of yam and tapioca flour)
Indian Muslims	<i>Nombe Apom</i> (savory pancake served during Ramadan) Murukku (spicy deep-fried snacks)

Table 5.4: examples of ritual foods represented at 'Eat Rite'

Postpolitical heritage?

However, celebrating Penang's ritual foods is not without its issues. Although heritage food is seemingly a benign, apolitical topic, it is not postpolitical in multicultural Malaysia. Unlike the Chief Minister's rhetoric of 'celebration without distinction', heritage food, in fact, threw ethnic distinction into sharp relief. Food was divisive. During an interview, a GTWHI officer revealed that celebrating heritage food divided the attendees along ethnic lines. A Chinese Penangite, he pointed as an example, is not likely to appreciate an Indian ritual food to the same degree as an Indian. Worse yet, food is not only divisive along ethnic lines, but also along *sub*-ethnic lines. Hainanese Chinese ritual foods are different from those of the Teochew Chinese. By the same token, the ritual foods celebrated by the people of South-Indian Tamil descent may very well be foreign to the Malays, despite the two being Muslims. In other words, heritage food hurts the official narrative of multiculturalism. It makes visible the ethnic politics of a given Malaysian, laying bare his deep nesting of hyphenated ethnic identities: one is never simply a Malaysian, but a Hainanese-Chinese-Penangite-Malaysian. In this specific sense, heritage food reinforces Malaysia's simmering ethnic rift — a rather sensitive topic for a country trying in recent years to reconcile and redefine its relationship with multiculturalism.

In 2016, then, GTWHI moved away from the perceived divisiveness by introducing the idea of 'games' (figure 10). For the Heritage Site Celebrations of 2016, the official title is 'Mai Main: Traditional Sports & Games'. 'Mai Main' is a colloquial term that means 'come and play' or 'come join the fun'. The idea is to highlight the lively, entertaining aspect of heritage and to (re)introduce sports and games played by children in the inner city of George Town in the recent past. In light of George Town's rapid transformation, games are an apt theme for three reasons. First, according to the GTWHI officer I interviewed, games are 'something in common'. Shared across cultures, games are viewed as an antidote to division, for a certain culture cannot lay proprietary claim to games. In fact, games have a unifying effect as they encourage the coming together of communities. Second, games are tactile. They are directly appreciable, participatory,

and, in the words of the organizers, 'hands on'. Such facility advances the tactics of the preceding year's theme of heritage food. It deepens the evolution of Heritage Site Celebrations from simply 'performance' to 'participation', with the attendees shifting from passive onlookers to active participants. Third and perhaps most importantly, the idea of games plays well into GTWHI's larger mission to safeguard George Town's intangible cultural heritage. As many traditional trades of inner George Town are disappearing, games present an opportunity, for both the state and the residents, to revive the city's foregone practices. In short, games are a shared, hands-on, and educational fun.

The few months leading up to the Celebrations in July 2016 saw GTWHI officers occupy themselves with busy preparations. Hundreds of volunteers are recruited to workshops where they are introduced to the pre-selected games, many of which are foreign to them. As with the preceding-year heritage food, the 2016 Heritage Celebrations will feature a wide variety of participatory experiences. First, 'introductory classes' are offered on four sports (yoga, tai chi, Nillaikalakki Silambam, and Silat Kapi).¹¹⁴ It is important to note that while Silat Kapi is native to Penang, the rest are not. For example, yoga and tai chi originated from India and China respectively. Also, even though Silat Kapi finds its origin in Penang, it is a recent invention in 1991 before it gained appreciation elsewhere in Malaysia ¹¹⁵. Therefore, none of the four sports are cultural heritage of Penang in an official sense. Nonetheless, given their broad popularity, they will anchor the three-day event. More importantly, they conveniently represent the official narrative of multiculturalism of George Town, i.e. the Chinese, the Malays, and the Indians. On this point, the 2016 Heritage Celebrations is, in fact, not beyond division. It highlights a paradox of multiculturalism: unity is articulated through a composition of difference. The official narrative of multiculturalism is still key to heritage-making in the otherwise predominantly Chinese George Town.

Second, 'conversations' will take place. These are panel discussions featuring expert panelists on the topic. Here, they will introduce the background, history, and current state of promoting and safeguarding traditional sports and games in Penang. The panel conversations will prime the attendees for the third event, the 'Streetfest'. The highlight of the 2016 Heritage Site Celebrations that takes place on the last day, the 'Streetfest' will feature a variety of sports and

¹¹⁴ Tai chi is a traditional Chinese martial art, Nillaikalakki Silambam a South Indian martial art, and Silat Kapi a Penang-established martial art.

¹¹⁵ Source: GTWHI <http://heritagecelebrations.info/?p=1472> (access on June 19, 2016)

games. The activities are curated, as they are ‘carefully selected to suit the differences of physical fitness and age groups’. Throughout the streets of inner George Town, there will be ‘high-energy’ activities, e.g. martial arts and sports, and ‘low-energy’ activities, e.g. boardgames. Workshop facilitators will be there to ‘transmit knowledge as well as skills to the visitors’. In essence, the Celebrations promises to bring the attendees to:

‘... the nostalgic path of conventional amusements from the yesteryears. A dynamic experience awaits with plenty of hands-on activities and mind challenging sports and games that will keep visitors asking for more. Be enthralled by the variety of traditional sports and games presented exclusively by the local community, accompanied by informative displays which will shed some light for those uninformed.’

Perhaps, one vignette can best sum up the intention behind the year’s theme of games (figure 10). It was the official press conference, which took place on June 16, 2016 at the government complex ‘KOMTAR’, a high-rise, modernist tower overlooking George Town’s low-rise terracotta roofscape. There, at the 1960s-era building Penang’s Chief Minister delivered an opening remark. It was a rather general statement about the significance of George Town as a Unesco World Heritage Site, recognized for its Outstanding Universal Values. He highlighted how sports and games are one important manifestation of past heritage. He made a call to action to preserve and promote such heritage, encouraging the public to ‘remember that we need to understand our past so that we can be better connected to the present, so as to face the challenges of the future’. The Chief Minister’s statement paved way for a team of GTWHI officers who, sporting fuschia pink t-shirts that says ‘Mai Main’, provided a briefing of the Heritage Celebrations program. In particular, the message of GTWHI’s General Manager was illustrative. She mentioned that today ‘we spend a lot of time on our [computer] tablets...but less on through the interpersonal interactions. So, we hope that by introducing the *fun* of playing *with* people, we hope younger generations...will start to get back the feeling of inter-human connections again’ (emphasis original). Workshop facilitators, she adds, will be there to ‘introduce the history and memories’ associated with the sports and games. It is clear, then, that this year’s Heritage Celebrations is about the use of heritage to foster human connection. Unlike other forms of intangible heritage (say, poetry), sports and games provide a more convenient medium for such connection.

‘Understand, value, and save’: a hopeful pedagogy

This short section traces the evolution of the George Town Heritage Site Celebrations since its first inception in 2008. I highlight how the Celebrations has evolved from simply a cultural show to one with a social mission. To be sure, shows, performances, and festive entertainments are still a major part of the Celebrations. However, as the Heritage Site manager, the GTWHI wanted to send a more somber message. The greater imperative of the Celebrations in recent years has been put on safeguarding George Town’s intangible heritage. The surrounding context of ‘real’ George Town, I argue, is key to understanding such evolution. From a dying inner city, George Town has rapidly changed for better and for worse since its inscription as a World Heritage Site in 2008. For worse, forms of traditional trades and livelihood are disappearing (see above). The yearly Heritage Celebrations, it is hoped, may provide an opportunity to raise such awareness. The thematic year allows people to experience anew traditional heritage ‘themes’, e.g. crafts, foods, and games. The official mantra has been that, if people ‘understand’ heritage, they will then ‘value’ and then ‘save’ it.

It is at this specific point that heritage becomes pedagogical, if not didactic. As shown in these pages, to allow people to ‘understand’, pedagogical tactics have been enacted through ‘workshops’ and ‘hands-on activities’. It is worth reiterating the 2014 Celebrations to show such enactment. In that year, GTWHI invited some of the increasingly rare practitioners of traditional crafts to become ‘masters’. In turn, a handful of ‘apprentices’ are recruited to learn from the masters. Then, the apprentices will pass on the imparted skills to the volunteers who will then teach the basic skills to the Celebrations attendees. It is in this pedagogical sequence that GTWHI hopes to enact the ‘understand, value, and save’. With each passing year, the pedagogy has become more sophisticated as GTWHI enlists the help of other organizations, e.g. local NGOs and university academics. To this end, a team of curators and researchers is put together to organize the events. For example, Arts-ED, a Penang-based NGO for arts and cultural education, has been instrumental in the shaping of the events during the Celebrations.

However, one must critically interrogate the logic behind the understand-value-save pedagogy. I use the aforementioned questionnaire as a window - an embodiment of purpose - into GTWHI’s driving motive behind the yearly Heritage Celebrations. The questions merit further elaboration in this light. For all the three questions, GTWHI is interested in their role of an educator, evaluating to what extent their programs are ‘helpful’ in improving the participant’s heritage knowledge, understanding, and skills. What is at stake here is the view of heritage as something

that is passed on from one generation to the next. Heritage happens in a linear past-present-future temporality, where the people of the present learn the crafts of the past to pass on to the future generations. In this manner, GTWHI's pedagogical heritage recalls the primitive definition of heritage, i.e. heritage as *inheritance* (in contradistinction to cultural heritage, the subject of the present discussion). For example, a child inherits a property from their parents. However, and here is my argument, cultural heritage is different from familial heritage. Unlike the basic definition of heritage, cultural heritage may not be automatically bestowed upon, handed to, or passed on. The hoped-for link from 'understand' to 'value', much less to 'save', is not mechanically automatic, and is thus an untenable leap of faith. One critique of many heritage programs is that they tend to confuse 'valorization' with 'revitalization', placing too faith in the power of the former to foster the latter (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). George Town is no different. As revealed by the program manager, the attendees do appreciate and 'understand' heritage more. This is, he adds, the minimum requirement and expectation of the GTWHI. However, the impression, may last, say, one month. 'But after that...whether they want to "value" or even "save" or not', he was not so sure.

Conclusion: Heritage's low-hanging fruit

This chapter examines the various ways in which the government *operationalizes* intangible heritage. First, the Directory of Traditional Trades and Occupations marks the first attempt at inventorying George Town's traditional traders, artisans, and craftspeople. Second, on the basis of the Directory, GTWHI invents other spin-off programs, e.g. book publishing, brochures, and walking trails. Third, I highlighted the Annual Heritage Celebrations, a spotlight event that seeks to educate the attendees on a 'theme' of George Town's heritage. The programs animate heritage by re-enacting it in sensory detail. Perhaps, the programs are best summed up by the Chief Minister's welcoming remark at the December 2015 *International Symposium on Intangible Heritage*, organized by George Town. There, in front of international delegates and heritage experts, he praises GTWHI for 'working relentlessly in fulfilling its given mandate...to increase public awareness on our heritage legacy, as well as the value and significance of our culture and heritage to Penang, Malaysia, and all humanity.' He recites the list of achievements, namely Heritage Celebrations, Traditional Trades Discovery Walk, and the intangible cultural heritage inventories.

In fact, in my observation of the official speeches of the past few years, reciting GTWHI's achievements has become a common practice. The achievements have become a familiar 'list'

in itself. As documented earlier, the Chief Minister delivered the same message in his speech at the 2015 *Heritage Celebrations*. The same can be said for GTWHI's own corporate presentations (for example, at the 2013 *Urban Conservation Network in Asia*, GTWHI general manager recounted the same list). The list of achievements is often cited as a sign of GTWHI's commitment to safeguarding George Town's heritage. To be sure, since its inception in 2010, GTWHI has played an important role in promoting heritage. This chapter does not do justice to many other public programs organized by GTWHI. Of note are, first, the '*Vision of Penang*' archival project to collect and digitize archival sources (e.g. maps, postcards, plans, and images), and second, capacity-building workshops. Since 2010, GTWHI has run more than thirty workshops of diverse heritage topics (see the previous chapter), from 'Building Better Festivals' to 'Heritage Building Materials', from 'Oral History' to workshops for building contractors. In this sense, GTWHI is a producer of commendably rich heritage knowledge, so much so that the Chief Minister proclaimed the 2015 Heritage Celebrations to be a 'success'.

However, what constitutes 'success'? The produced knowledge on intangible heritage, or the livelihoods of the practitioners themselves? The instances of the evicted traders and stakeholders prompt us to rethink such claimed/proclaimed achievements. The former are evicted from their trades, and the latter from what was touted as a roundtable discussion for 'stakeholders'. It is important to state a few caveats. I introduced the stories of the evicted traders not to stage sensationalism, but to purposely state a theoretical argument. It is tempting to dismiss the evicted traders as two things: a lack of policy enforcement and gentrification. It is tempting to conclude that GTWHI only 'promotes' but fail to not 'safeguard' the so-called intangible heritage, thus fulfilling simply the first half of the job. However, what is at stake here is the notion of intangible heritage itself. Rather than dismiss the evictees as a symptom of 'policy failure' on the one hand, or the 'market' on the other, I shift to a more fundamental discussion of what the state construes as intangible heritage in the first place. In what follows I make two sequential arguments. First, what these heritage programs (e.g. Heritage Celebrations, the Trades Directory, walking trails) have in common is the production of heritage as archival, essentialized knowledge, whereby people are codified as 'heritage traders'. As I will show, this is a rather impoverished conception, which leads to my second point. Despite the impoverished conception, despite the poor understanding of its nature, intangible heritage gets displayed in a way that alienate its surrounding concerns. Heritage is circulated as 'rich, colorful, and vibrant' while its somber side is actively hidden from view. Heritage is rendered as an aesthetic, purified

from its other edges. In essence, my twofold argument here is: how heritage is conceived and how it is mobilized. Let me address the two in turn.

Conceiving heritage

Take as an example the 2012 inventory project of the Traditional Trades and Occupations Directory. In critical cartography, Harley (1989) makes a distinction between the 'internal' and 'external' powers of map: the power to produce and the power to deploy. The former is the power by which the mapmaker chooses which elements to portray and which to leave out. The power of selection and omission, of inclusion and exclusion, is the classic dialectic of mapmaking. The 'external' power is one in which the map *user* employs map to suit their specific ends, be they surveillance or exploitation. I think there is a useful parallel between the map and the inventory.

First, for the inventory's 'internal power', the surveyors render visible certain aspects of a particular 'traditional trade': historical value, age, and anecdotes. For example, the ubiquitous presence of *Coffee and tea shops* shows George Town as a 'living' city with neighborly conviviality. The *Religious and ceremonial goods* shops represent George Town as a multicultural, multi-faith city. The *Budget hotel, family-run hotel and lodge* items are relics of George Town as a trading port, an interchange between East and West. Similarly, the *Money changers* speak to the same history. As much as map depicts a certain theme, the inventory is, too, a rhetorical device. It conveys a certain point of view. It states a certain argument. The categories of the 'traditional trades and occupations' are not natural or 'innocent'. They are chosen to frame a certain narrative. It is the official narrative of George Town as a living, multicultural port city. In particular, the narrative conforms to the *Outstanding Universal Values* by which George Town was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2008.¹¹⁶ Let's recall that this official narrative of 'multicultural living heritage' has since 2008 become a master narrative that mobilizes heritage-making in George Town. In a similar way, these 'heritage traders', I argue, help personify this narrative.

As a cultural product, the inventory is not without its internal politics of selection. While this is not my main focus, it is important to briefly show a few considerations omitted from the inventory. Such omissions may be due to convenience or arbitrariness, but have material

¹¹⁶ Among the official justifications for the nomination of George Town as a World Heritage Site are (1) it is one of the most complete surviving historic cities in the Straits of Malacca with a multi-cultural living heritage, and (2) it is a living testimony to the multi-cultural heritage and traditions of Asia

implications. First, the minimum-age requirement of at least fifty (50) years is problematic. In many heritage inventory projects (see Schuster, 2003), an item automatically becomes 'heritage' once it reaches a certain age, say fifty (50) years old. In this manner, the inventory expands with time.

This is a generous mode of inventorying. George Town did the reverse, choosing instead a more conservative mode. It only took into account items that were fifty years old *at the time of* the survey (that is, the year 2011). Since 2011, there may very well have been a lot of traders who, unlisted in 2011, are today fifty years old. In this sense, the minimum age is a rather precarious criterion, for age shifts with time. Second, the inventory privileges formal trades. It leaves behind a wide range of mobile trades typical of Asian cities. In what today's scholars call 'informal economies', these include push-cart sellers, peddlers, hawkers, sidewalk vendors, curbside stalls, and so on. This omission, I argue, results from George Town's attempt to marry the 'intangible' to the 'tangible' (again yet another UNESCO spatial imaginary). While the dichotomy is subject to much criticism for its flimsy formulation (Kurin, 2003; Smith and Akagawa, 2008), 'tangible heritage' is often understood in George Town to be the 'body', e.g. buildings, sites, and structures. By contrast, 'intangible heritage' is the 'soul', e.g. traditional practices embodied in people such as those listed in the 2012 Directory: the traders, artisans, and craftspeople. These people, the official narrative goes, give soul to the buildings, breathing life into the otherwise tangible, concrete structure. In a stark contrast, the 'informal traders' are not housed. Nor are they domesticated to certain premises. They are mobile, ephemeral, and thus elusive to registry. Their ephemerality evades any state attempt to locate them in an inventory or otherwise. An impressive volume as it is, the 2012 Directory displays some things and overlooks others, activating its own politics of presence and absence, not unlike mapmaking.

Mobilizing heritage

The internal power of the 2012 Directory aside, I am more interested in its external power. That is, I want to interrogate the ways in which the Traditional Trades and Occupation Directory is mobilized, and the ends it is meant to serve. By attending to its intended purposes and actual mobilization, we can see that the 'external power' opens up a more important politics with graver material implications. To be sure, the twofold purpose of the Directory is to raise awareness and to inform planning action with view to protection (or 'safeguarding'). As expressed by GTWHI General Manager, the inventory project seeks to 'create more awareness on our intangible

heritage and the importance of protecting it' (*The Malay Online*, November 30, 2015). More importantly, its greater purpose is to, in GTWHI's own words, inform planning processes and revitalization programmes carried out to protect the site's cultural heritage and to ensure the community's well-being (GTWHI, 2012, p. 3). The inventory is 'one of the first steps required to plan measures for the safeguarding of ICH [intangible cultural heritage] and to ensure its sustainability for future generations' (GTWHI website).

However, upon its implementation, when the inventory as a heritage database gets mobilized, the 'safeguarding' part is out of view. In particular, I refute the rhetoric of 'living heritage' and 'wellbeing' that underpins the inventory (see below). While the Directory professes the need to recognize George Town's traditional traders as part of the city's 'living' heritage, planning action suggests otherwise. Little has been done to ensure their so-called 'wellbeing'. It is with great irony, then, that both the coffee shop Kong Thai Lai and Mr. Ong, both Heritage Traders, are evicted from their trades. Worse yet, I showed the shared fate of Mr. Ong and Madam Lian, the heritage and non-heritage traders, to specifically highlight the little difference that the 'heritage status' makes. In all these cases, the City Council approved the planning permission, thus underwriting the eviction.

In sum, the insights on the inventory's internal and external powers allow us to analyze a claim vis-a-vis its actual emplacement. The analysis reveals two issues at stake: (1) the production of intangible heritage as archival knowledge, and (2) its archival exploitation. The former may be understood as the role of the state in producing 'knowledge', and the latter as 'intervention' upon that knowledge. In governmentality studies, it is not always clear where one stops and the other begins, for knowledge is produced with intervention in mind. First, GTWHI produces intangible heritage as archival knowledge. They codify heritage in a way to convey its historical, archival significance. For example, the 2012 Directory characterizes people in terms of their trade name, trade category, and trade description. The people are inventoried, collected, and quantified into a list. Similarly, the 'case studies' are the subjectivation of the 'traditional traders' as archival knowledge. In this way, the traders become 'subjects' of heritage in the same way 'people' are converted into 'population' in the foucauldian sense, amenable to deployment.

In fact, the scholarly literature signals two warnings: list as a poor means and list as a myopic end. First, the intangible heritage inventory ironically 'tangibilizes' (Kurin, 2002) or 'artifactualizes' (Hafstein, 2008) intangible practices. To be sure, although the list is the most

'visible, least costly, and most conventional way to "do something" about neglected communities and traditions' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004), the 'visibility' itself is an issue. At best, the list is a rational way to identify intangible heritage. At worst, it misconceives culture as atomistic, itemized 'things' (Kurin, 2002, p. 71). The list decontextualizes their objects from their immediate surroundings. In turn, it recontextualizes them with reference to other things listed (Hafstein, 2008, p. 93). On the list, Mr. Ong is no longer Mr. Ong in his full self (i.e. a Chinese Malaysian man with a family, his own mentality, personal histories, troubling land lease, business hardships, etc), but Mr. Ong as a valued heritage trader on par with another heritage trader on that list. Second and more importantly, what is problematic here is the list becomes an end in itself. While the inventories/lists may have value for recognizing traditions, they will hardly save them (Kurin, 2003, p. 74). Worst yet, they divert resources and personnel from the (real) task of working with specific communities on actually safeguarding action (Kurin, 2003, pp. 72-74). Listing diverts the aim of the UNESCO Convention on intangible heritage as the listing objective becomes 'inscription rather than safeguarding' (Hafstein, 2008, p. 93). This particular point resonates with George Town. The government bodies speak highly of the inventory projects, past and future. They flaunt the projects as an achievement. The inventory is regularly cited as the state's commitment to heritage safeguarding, when in fact it is a presentation (see below).

Second, the produced knowledge lends itself to further exploitation. Atomized and essentialized as it is, the archival knowledge is not static. It does not sit on the shelf. Rather, it is used to assemble other state programs in what I call 'archival exploitation'. Such exploitation can be understood as the ways in which heritage as archival knowledge is mobilized towards other ends beyond the knowledge archive itself. That is, I have shown how the original knowledge can inspire other spin-off programs, stirring up many other interventions based upon heritage as a mobilizing imaginary. In George Town, the knowledge on 'intangible heritage' is reproduced in many manifestations. For example, the original inventory project led to a variety of programs: case-studies, books, leaflets, walking trails, workshops, and the annual Heritage Celebrations. What these programs have in common is the communication of a version of heritage: the tidbits of heritage, the bite-sized, digestible information about the 'rich, colorful, and vibrant' heritage.

At this point, it is important to highlight the unintended 'danger' of heritage inventory. Once made and circulated, lists and archives tend to take on a life of their own. They can be put to uses quite different from what the creators had in mind (Hafstein 2008, Schuster 2002). One long concern about the revival of traditions is that it may turn traditional practices towards tourist

and commercial endeavors (Kurin, 2004, p. 75). As Hafstein (2008, p. 105) sharply points out, 'even though [the inventory] is done with all good intentions, we are giving a shopping list for treasure hunters...We might end up with a free catalogue'. The inscriptive list attract the 'enlightened tourist', who makes their own use of these lists by 'checking them off their travel plans' and converting 'locations' into 'destination' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 151). The unintended danger applies to George Town. While the heritage programs (e.g. the Heritage Celebrations and the walking trails) are designed to raise 'awareness' among the locals, most of the attendees are, in fact, tourists and visitors. During my interviews, many informants questioned the role of GTWHI, asking not so tongue-in-cheek whether they are safeguardian of heritage, or the promoter of tourism. As a senior policymaker pointed out, 'sometimes we cannot tell GTWHI from Penang Global Tourism' (Penang's official tourism agency). Similarly, Khoo Salma, the former president of Penang Heritage Trust, remarked that 'promotion' is prioritized over 'protection' (PHT Newsletter, 2013). This remark importantly sums the two points about heritage inventory in particular, and heritage programs in general. First, the produced heritage knowledge becomes an end in itself. Second, it legitimizes unintended purposes, departing significantly from the original task of safeguarding.

The case of George Town revisits two classic dilemmas in historic preservation: 'building vs people' and 'elite vs vernacular' (figure 2.1). When preservation movement gained traction in the seventies and the eighties, there was a concern that we preserved the 'building' but not the 'people', preserving the shell and aesthetic, but not the people who give it meanings, new and old (see, for example, Jacobs, 1996). We preserve body, but not its soul. Similarly, historic preservation found its lineage in the discipline of Western architectural history, which has tended to prize grand monuments. Elite architecture takes precedence over more vernacular built forms. However, George Town upends both debates. If anything, George Town's intangible heritage programs explicitly seek to move our focus from the 'buildings of the elite' towards the 'life of vernacular people'. If anything, the recently invented notion of the 'intangible' itself is an attempt to shift from artefacts to people (UNESCO, 1989).¹¹⁷ Yet, this chapter shows that, even when we claim to preserve the people, we end up preserving instead their archival muses as we curate and parade them. The efforts amounted not to preservation, but presentation, not to heritage but heritage's low-hanging fruit. Maybe, this is what Lim Guan Eng meant when he said 'we protect heritage best by doing as little as possible.'

¹¹⁷ This is the rationale behind the UNESCO's adoption of the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore in 1989

FIGURES

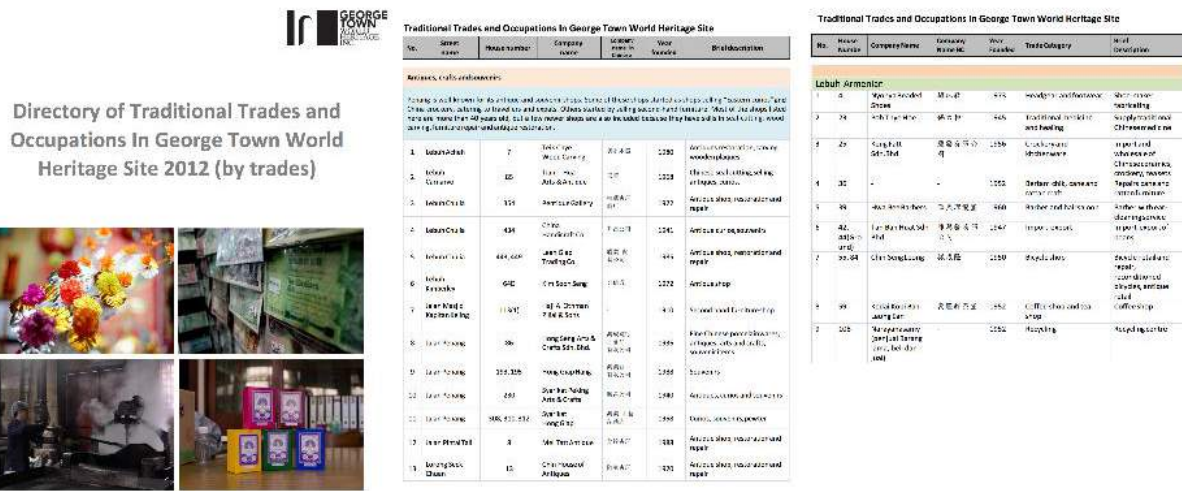


Figure 5.1: Directory of Traditional Trades and Occupations (source: GTWHI)



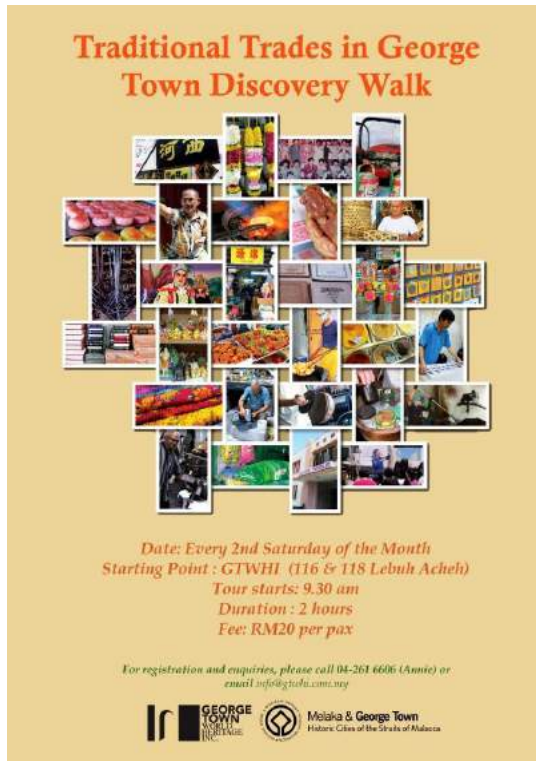


Figure 5.3a (left): Poster promoting the 'Traditional Trades Discovery Walk' (source: GTWHI)
 Figure 5.3b (right): the Chinese signboard carving shop (author's photograph)



Figure 5.4a: Row of five shophouses on Chulia Street (source: Mark Lay)
 Figure 5.4b: Mr. Ong, a heritage trader, taking a last look at his business of 65 years (source: Mark Lay)



Figure 5.5: View of the five shophouses in Chulia Street in May 2015 (author's photograph)



Figure 5.6: International Symposium on Intangible Cultural Heritage (source: GTWHI)



Figure 5.7: Leaflets based on the Traditional Trades Directory (source: GTWHI)

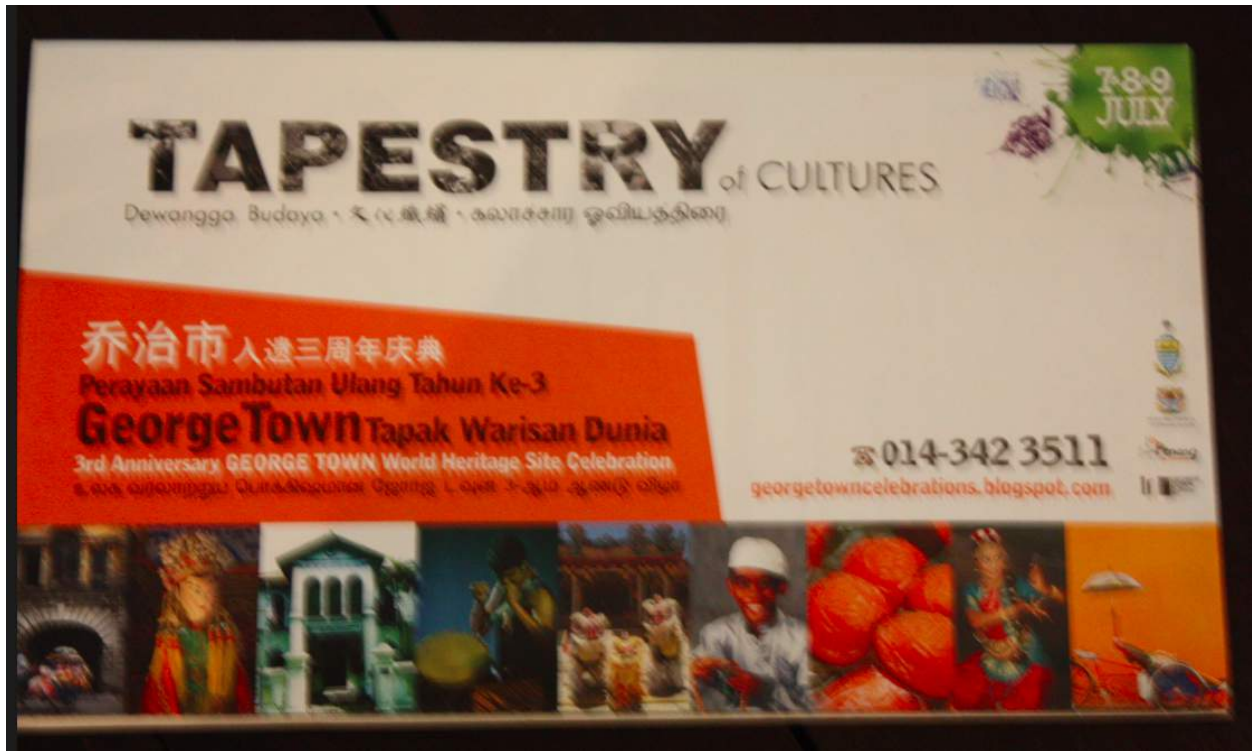


Figure 5.8: Annual Heritage Celebrations of previous years (author's photograph)



Figure 5.9: 'EAT RITE' 2015 George Town Heritage Site Celebrations (author's photographs)



Figure 5.10a: Poster of 'Mai Main' Celebrations (source: GTWHI)

Figure 5.10b: Press conference at KOMTAR (source: Buletin Mutiara June 2016)



Figure 5.10c: KOMTAR, the government building complex (author's photograph)

Chapter 6

EXTENSION

1. INTRODUCTION

The shape of Rattanakosin, Bangkok's historic district, is impeccably oval.¹¹⁸ The shape resembles an egg or a diamond. The confident contour is crisp and clear-cut. On the zoning map, *krung* Rattanakosin or Rattanakosin City is designated by the city government as the historic core of Bangkok. Lying on the right bank of the Chao Phraya River, Rattanakosin today is the site of royal palaces, Buddhist temples, historical monuments, and government buildings. In between these sites are residential communities that have begun to move out over the decades. Rattanakosin claims a special place in Thai national imagination as a nearly sacred site of rich historical heritage. Key among the heritage sites are the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, which function today not only as tourist attractions, but also a site of national pride. Given its significance in the history, culture, and economy of both Bangkok and Thailand, Rattanakosin has been subject to various state interventions such as historic preservation and beautifications schemes as the city government seeks to clearly delineate its field of operation.

In this chapter, I investigate one planning intervention that dictates a way of seeing: cartographic construction. To do so, I am interested in both Rattanakosin and its outside, in both what the authoritative historic district includes in its confine, and excludes to the status of an Extension. In a way, in borrowing the spatial metaphor of inside and outside, I invoke Derrida and his useful analytic of constitutive outside. The chapter explores as it deconstructs Rattanakosin as a product of cartography and historic preservation as they intersect to legitimate historical value and significance. Specifically, the paper analyzes how the city government's mapping instruments, such as building ordinances and zoning maps, have been

¹¹⁸ This chapter was published as an article in 2015. Prior to that, in 2013, I presented an earlier version at a graduate student conference on Southeast Asian history at Yale University. Full reference: Rugkhaman, N. T. (2015). Mapping the historic city: Mapmaking, preservation zoning, and violence. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 0263775815604916.

deployed to carve out Rattanakosin as an exceptional historical space above the rest. In short, this chapter is a cartographic illustration of Derrida's interest. Then, I depart from Derrida and argue that representation can have material consequences.

The remainder of this paper consists of six parts. Part Two, which follows, draws theoretical and methodological inspiration from two separate bodies of literature: critical cartography and historic preservation. In particular, it seeks to synthesize a productive connection through which to interpret the use of cartography in historic preservation. I argue that, as lines, dots, and shapes are put in place to demarcate what is historical and what is not, cartography is not a problem-free objective instrument, but a tool to map historicalness of a site while the larger, more complex historicity of that site is reduced. Part Three introduces a series of building ordinances and zoning maps issued by the city government of Bangkok since the city's Bicentennial Celebrations in 1982. The section discusses how these legal-cartographic instruments, following the rise of Rattanakosin as a new cultural consciousness, are used to demarcate and legitimate spaces and boundaries, particularly the historical boundaries. Part Four analyzes cartography as an attempt to prescribe and direct a certain way of seeing, exposing the rationality of seeing from the two-dimensional map. Importantly, it shows how the map's rationality and its truth claims may differ from other ways of seeing. Part Five and Six discuss the violent consequences that result from an uncomfortable intersection between cartography and historic preservation, looking in particular at the historical spaces that the maps commit to, as well as those that they omit. In doing so, we venture both inside and outside what we now call Rattanakosin City to seek potentially contrasting accounts that the official mapping regime seems to bypass and render silent.

2. CRITICAL CARTOGRAPHY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2.1 Questioning the Neutral Map

Critical cartography as theory and methodology was pioneered by John Harley. In his influential 1989 article, *'Deconstructing the map'*, Harley critiqued the field of cartography on two aspects: its pretension to objectivity and neutrality, and its ignorance of the map's powers. In the first critique, the commonly held assumption is that objects in the world are real and objective. As 'mirrors of nature', they enjoy an existence independent of the cartographer (Harley, 1989, p. 4). Therefore, the cartographer's only task is a technical one: to progress towards an accurate representation. Rejecting cartographers' ideal of maps as correct representations, Harley deconstructs the claim behind the scientific, technical rationality of cartography. Inspired by

Barthes and Derrida, he calls for an attention to signs and symbols, arguing that 'what constitutes a text is not the presence of linguistic elements, but the act of construction', demystifying the naturalness and refocusing instead on the constructedness of maps (Harley, 1989, p.8). Following Derrida, Harley further proposes that map as text is a more apt analogy than map as mirror of nature. By adopting the metaphor of map as text, analysts can avail themselves of useful literary analyses. For example, the issue of authorship leads us to question who writes or makes the map, to what audience, and for what purpose. Similarly, literary theory's focus on subtext may lead us to explore the other side of the 'imposed tapestry': deceptive appearance of naturalness, distortion, and arbitrary mechanism of representation. In addition to the visible signs and symbols, he also points to those that are absent or silent, thus opening up the other side of the tapestry for equal interrogation. Silences, Harley argues, take place throughout the process and steps in mapmaking: selection, omission, simplification, classification, creation of hierarchies, symbolization. These processes of silencing or omitting signify subjective human purposes, rather than some 'fundamental law of cartographic generalization'. The mapmaker omits those features of the world that lie outside the purpose of the immediate discourse (Harley, 1989, p.11).

The second critique is the ignored powers of maps. Drawing primarily on Foucault, Harley cautions that the Derridean deconstruction of signs and symbols in maps alone is insufficient, because maps are not only products for semiotic reading, but indeed tools for political manipulation. To understand the powers of maps, Harley proposes two analytics of cartographic power: internal and external. The internal power is the cartographer's power in selecting consciously or unconsciously some things and silencing others in the map. The external power is how maps are used by different social actors to legitimate or facilitate their claims. For example, in geopolitics, maps facilitate surveillance and control, so much so that a mapless society is politically unimaginable (Harley, 1989, p. 12).

Harley's propositions - deconstruction and powers of maps - have been significantly reworked to enhance the analytical rigor of critical cartography. Pinder (2003) ventures several pieces of methodological advice through which the deconstruction approach can be improved. First, the analyst is encouraged to look at hierarchies of representation, i.e. the signs, sizes of signs, and relative emphasis of each of these signs. Second, silences are not simply blank spaces, but may very well be intended erasures and omissions. A historical geographer by training, Harley himself does remark that early European town plans commonly skipped alleys and courtyards of

the poor (Harley, 2009, p. 138). Third, geometries of maps can shed light on how maps are purposely oriented, centered, and projected to create a normalized view. Going beyond deconstruction, signs, and symbology of maps, Crampton (2001; 2010; 2013) has importantly revisited Harley's two original concerns, objectivity and powers of maps, and suggested fruitful research agendas and methodology. Revisiting Harley's rejection of the map's professed objectivity, Crampton suggests we stop worrying about map objectivity altogether and accept instead intersubjectivity. That is, instead of viewing maps as records of landscape, or mirror of the world, and thus judging them on accuracy, we should accept their intersubjectivity as a form of social production, which is contingent, rather than foundationalist knowledge. With its emphasis on hard and fast lines, the map has supported the idea of clear territorial borders, when in fact the real world is more diversified and spatially transitional (Crampton, 2013, p. 248). On the second concern of map and powers, Crampton admits that Harley's 1989 article is more concerned with mapmaking rather than power relations of maps. That is, Harley was more explicit about the 'internal power' in maps, or how the cartographer picks and chooses what elements to represent and to omit. By contrast, his account on the 'external power' of maps to surveil and control is underdeveloped. To fill in the gap, Crampton (2010) suggests we trace out the genealogy of power discourse; how maps are used as strategies and tactics in the larger social relations of power and cartographic knowledge.

In fact, the external power of maps - how maps are used to facilitate and legitimate political claims - has been well expanded by various scholars following the spatial turn in social sciences, as will be further synthesized in later sections. State maps in their various manifestations, such as cadastral maps and town plans, were exercised bureaucratically in creating new spaces of government and new territories of rule (Mitchell, 2002; Scott, 1998). When mapping as an imagined space is administered on concrete space, it projects new realities altogether. The map's capability of territorialization is documented by Thongchai's (1995) work on the Siamese elite's encounter with Western powers in the mid-nineteenth century, where cartographic sciences were deployed to create and impose a national boundary that had never existed. 'A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. A map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent. It had become a real instrument to concretize projections' (Thongchai, 1995, p. 310). As Wood similarly argues, 'the map creates a territory by bringing it into being. Outside of its inscription on this map, this territory as such has only the slightest of claims to existence' (Wood, 1992, p. 68).

Along this line of inquiry, the current paper takes as a point of departure these two particular problematics: maps as contingent knowledge and the power of maps to legitimize claims and actions. The next two sections further explore how mapping intersects with historic preservation, and how such intersection may be an uncomfortable one.

2.2 Historic preservation as mapping historicalness

Mapping and historic preservation are brought to intersect because one desired result of such intersection is historicalness. Here, Baudrillard's (2003) distinction between historicity (*historicité*) and historicalness (*historialité*) is helpful in analyzing historic preservation, particularly historic preservation as an act of drawing, selection, and interpretation. In his study of the colonial hotels in Southeast Asia as a consumption of nostalgia, Peleggi (2005) critiques the recreation and refurbishment of the colonial hotels to appeal to the nostalgia-seeking tourists and visitors to the region. The architectural enhancement, the renovation of furniture and decor, and the overall creation of 'colonial ambiance', the author argues, are a form of historicalness that selects and interprets which aspects of the past to be curated and represented. By contrast, the historicity - the entire colonial context in which these items of historicalness were erected in the first place - is isolated if not entirely disregarded. Another similar, albeit more violent example is the redevelopment of the Singapore River as the 'River of Life', where certain historical icons are selected and others are actively forgotten (Huang and Chang, 2003). The government portrays the Singapore River as a tabula rasa upon the British arrival, by commemorating the symbols and statues of the heroic British pioneers and founding fathers. By contrast, no plaques or official mention were made of other pre-British and non-British native figures that had long occupied the river and had battled with the colonial administration. Despite what is marketed in the vibrant, tourist-friendly 'River of Life', what is also obscured is the less commercially viable, darker history of many overworked and underpaid workers suicided in this 'river of death', a common account still recounted by older Singaporeans today. Pre-British Singapore as a context of historicity is muted from the attempt to stage the historicalness of the Singapore River. Understood as selection, historicalness is a 'refusal of history masked by the exaltation of the signs of history', where history is 'simultaneously invoked and denied' (Baudrillard, 2003, p. 74, cited in Peleggi, 2005, p. 261).

It is possible and in fact productive to employ historicalness as an entry point to address the intersection between historic preservation with cartography. Historic preservation, I argue, is an act of mapping historicalness, delineating what Handler (1987) calls the historical 'picket fence'

around buildings, sites, and areas. These objects of historic preservation, e.g. historical buildings, historical sites, or historic districts, are important examples of a new territory of rule created and made possible by maps. A good example is Yeoh and Huang's (1996) study of the use of roads as a perimeter to forge Kampong Glam as an official historic district in Singapore. The 'inside' historic district, which has come to enjoy the status of heritage is delimited 'based on existing roads serving the area', leaving behind the 'outside' to the logic of development (Yeoh and Huang, 1996, p. 418). This is where historicalness becomes hegemony. The politics of being inside and outside points to the hegemonic potential of cartography when geometric lines are readily used in historic preservation to designate a certain thing as historical and, by quite literally putting a fence around it (Handler, 1987), implicitly say that the things outside the fence are not historical. Maps creates as they separate historicalness. Historicalness, hereby cartographically conceived, is isolated and detached from the context of its historicity, from the very geographic context where it really makes historic sense (Handler, 1987).

2.3 Cartography and human geography: an uncomfortable encounter

However, the intersection between cartography and historic preservation, between geometry and history, is not smooth. The new anticipated realities of maps, the new direction of desire, often intersect with the existing realities in an uncomfortable way that is often fraught and violent. For, as the scholars below show, it is not the abstract placement of the lines per se, but their material implications that lies at the heart of such uncomfortable encounter. Scholars have studied various kinds of human geography, from indigenous to colonial, from residential to historical, that have been impacted in their collision with state mapping. Bringing to light an awkward interaction between cartography and historical geography, Yeoh and Huang (1996) addresses the arbitrary act of demarcating the historic district of Kampong Glam in Singapore. Here, the rectangular boundary drawn around the historic district is more of a convenient cartographic production of roads that bound the historic landscape, rather than a careful study of the area's historical geography. As an official boundary, the historic district slices up the organic form and texture of cultural hearths dividing what is sanctioned as historic from what is not (Yeoh and Huang, 1996, p. 421). One immediate result is that two mosques of the same era are treated differently, for one is 'fortunate' to be in the historic district and the other is not. The neat rectangle is not elastic enough, the authors argue, to accommodate addition that would otherwise be seen as protrusion.

A similar effect of simplified mapping is documented by the study of the contested airport noise contour maps of St. Paul-Minneapolis Airport (Cidell, 2008). Here, akin to the Singapore's boundary that produces and polices historical geography, the noise-contour maps create, rather than represent, scientific knowledge. The noise contour maps are drawn up to represent the noise levels in a form of concentric-wave contours. The maps in turn serve as a basis for local authorities to determine compensation packages for residences within the contours. However, the contour maps produced by statistical modelling contradict with the perception of the people outside the contour lines, whose daily activities continue to be interrupted by the noise. Although the contour lines serve to determine which side of the lines would get compensated, the divisive lines cannot properly function as discrete boundaries between noise and quiet because 'noise spills over' (Cidell, 2008, pp. 1212-1214).

The effect of the state's mapping imaginations is most salient when they intersect indigenous geographies, introducing new ways of administration while disrupting local practices. This tension has been well documented by the literature on indigenous geography as an encounter zone between modern interventions and premodern human-environment relations. Chou (2006) explores the implications of the Growth Triangle, an aspiring economic bloc among the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore upon the preexisting native landscape. Intended to create regional cooperation zones for trade and investment, the Triangle eulogizes the ideal of transforming communities into a single people through universal laws that privilege standardized measures (Chou, 2006, p. 246). To this end, a new tool of territorial management, such as cadastral mapping, was introduced to legitimize rule over land, resource allocations, and access rights. In opening up fresh territories of rule, the Growth Triangle as a state mapping project supplanted the indigenous systems, replacing the customary spatial ordering of land with the official vision of growth. In a similar example, Byrne (2008) shows the conflict between populated human geography and colonial land policies in Australia and Southeast Asia. Forests, for example, were reclassified as 'wasteland' and interpreted by the state as unoccupied natural resource. The label 'vacant land' on the map was inscribed across places where the Aboriginal people lived without reference to those who inhabited it. Forged through ad hoc treaties and institutional arrangements, these superimposed boundaries and constructed geometries are at odds with local concepts and practices of space. As Bunnell and colleagues duly suggest, there are geographies, histories, and lives that cannot be reduced to cartesian geometries, triangular or otherwise (Bunnell et al, 2006, p. 236-237).

3. MAPPING RATTANAKOSIN CITY

The paper concerns Rattanakosin as a geometric construction of historicalness. Its genesis as a legal construction and an official boundary dates back to the Bicentennial Celebrations of Bangkok in 1982. In the months leading up to the Celebrations, a cabinet resolution was issued in 1981 to freeze all development and halt all construction activity within the innermost historic precinct (DFA, 1982). This area would later be designated as Inner Rattanakosin (see below). Although provisional, the cabinet resolution set an important precedent of invoking a legal instrument to control activities within a consciously drawn space in Rattanakosin. Unlike beautification projects that targeted sites and structures as isolated objects, the cabinet resolution targeted space in its entirety, encircling everything therein. Space now emerged as a field of intervention in its own right.

The section below discusses a number of Building Ordinances that were sequentially issued between the late eighties and early nineties in the wake of the 1982 Bicentennial Celebrations. Built upon the cabinet resolution and on Rattanakosin as a new heritage consciousness, these ordinances served as mapping devices to together carve out and cement historical space, concretizing in statutory terms Rattanakosin City and its boundaries. This important intersection between cartography, law, and history, I argue, had the effect of territorializing Rattanakosin; Rattanakosin was no longer a loose, diffuse spatial identity that simply existed discursively in collective memory or popular consciousness. Instead, through state practices of law and mapmaking, it came to exist materially as a 'city' that is official, whole, and bounded.

a. Delineating Rattanakosin

In 1985, the first Building Ordinance was issued to *kamnod boriwen*, or designate the area of, *Rattanakosin chan nai*, or Inner Rattanakosin. According to the Ordinance, '*boriwen krung Rattanakosin chan nai*' - the area of Inner Rattanakosin - was to 'refer to the area between the centerline of Khlong Khlu Mueang Doem (the original moat) and the centerline of Chao Phraya' (figure 1a) (BMA, 1985). This area is in the administrative district of *kwaeng* Phraborommaharachawang in *khet* Phranakorn. Having delineated its contour, the Ordinance proceeds to divide it into four *boriwen* or zones, and prescribe for these zones a list of zoning requirements that prohibit the construction and modification of certain building types, uses, and dimensions. Particularly for Zone 1, the largest zone that encircles the Grand Palace, Sanam Luang, and the surrounding areas, virtually no buildings with very few exceptions are allowed to

be constructed or altered (BMA, 1985, p. 21). The maximum building height for Inner Rattanakosin is set at sixteen meters.

In 1987, the second Building Ordinance followed suit to, this time around, officially designate and delineate *Rattanakosin chan nok*, or Outer Rattanakosin (BMA, 1987). '*Boriwen krung Rattanakosin chan nok*' was to consist of the area encircled by the centerlines of Khlong Khlu Mueang Doem (east), Khlong Ropkrung (west), and Chao Phraya River (north and south) (figure 1b).¹¹⁹ Similar to the 1985 ordinance, the 1987 Building Ordinance not only has the effect of forging and enforcing another legal boundary of Rattanakosin City, but also of prescribing the contents within it. However, the zoning provisions in these outer layers are more complex and the area is more finely divided into ten regulated zones. Unlike Inner Rattanakosin, where most edifices are palaces, temples, and government buildings, Outer Rattanakosin is the site of various urban communities from guild neighborhoods to wet markets, from 'Little India' Pahurat to the Khaosan backpackers district. Dividing Outer Rattanakosin into small, different zones with different zoning requirements reflects the need to cater for such a variety of preexisting landuse activities. Similar to the Inner Rattanakosin, the height restriction in Outer Rattanakosin is sixteen meters.

b. Peripheralizing Thonburi

In 1992, the third Building Ordinance was issued to control building activity, types, and heights in Thonburi, a former capital preceding Rattanakosin, located on the left bank of the Chao Phraya. Like the two preceding Building Ordinances, this legal-cartographic document was meant for the area designation of the left-bank districts of *khets* and *kwaengs* to form a distinct zone of building control.¹²⁰ However and more importantly, the Building Ordinance does not apply for the entire Thonburi, generally known as the areas of Bangkok west of the Chao Phraya. Instead, the ordinance targets a few specific *khwaeng* districts that are directly across the river from the Rattanakosin, particularly those that overlooks the Grand Palace on the other side (figure 2). In doing so, the ordinance designates *boriwen fang Thonburi trongkam boriwen krung Rattanakosin*, or the Thonburi that is opposite Rattanakosin City. In the map, the length of

¹¹⁹ The districts covered include *kwaengs* Chanasongkram, Talat Yod, San Chaophosuea, Bawonniwet, Saochingcha, Ratchabophit, Samranrat, and Wang Buraphaphirom, all in *khet* Phranakon. Source: BMA, 1987.

¹²⁰ The districts covered include *kwaengs* Bang Yikhan (*khet* Bang Phlad); Arunamarin, Siriraj (*khet* Bangkok Noi); Wat Arun (*khet* Bangkok Yai); and Somdej Chaophraya (*khet* Khlong San).

this zone, from the top to the bottom, tightly mirrors the western contour of Rattanakosin, creating a buffer strip between Rattanakosin and the city's left bank.

The Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin buffer strip is further divided into five zones, lending themselves to different degrees of zoning strictness. In particular, Zone 1 and Zone 2, which are directly across the river from the Grand Palace and the Front Palace respectively, have the strictest set of regulations. The Ordinance prohibits from these two zones construction and modification of any buildings, except those affiliated with religious sites, government edifices, and certain types of housing (BMA, 1992). As in Rattanakosin, the maximum building height in these areas was set at sixteen meters. The rationale¹²¹ behind the 1992 Building Ordinance is not to protect the historical heritage in Thonburi per se, but to ensure that the view and vista of Rattanakosin's Grand Palace will not be eclipsed by tall buildings, and thus can be appreciated from afar. As pointed out earlier, the Ordinance does not target Thonburi, but the specifically delimited piece of Thonburi that is *trongkam*, or directly across the river from *krung Rattanakosin*. Therefore, although the Ordinance intends to regulate the building heights and types within the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin on the left bank, the hoped-for effect is the visual impact on the right bank: the historic skyline and visual profile of the Grand Palace.

c. Relegating the Extension

In 1999, another Building Ordinance was promulgated for the areas east of Outer Rattanakosin in order to provide an extra development-regulation cushion wrapping the historic city. The Ordinance designated these areas as *Phuenthi tonueang krung Rattanakosin chan nok*, or the areas extended from Outer Rattanakosin (figure 3).¹²² These areas are mostly old commercial and residential *yarns* or districts (Askew, 1996) and old market communities that have long developed throughout the past two centuries. These include the historical *yarns* of Bang Lamphu, Bamrung Mueang, Charoeng Krung, Chinatown¹²³, Nang Loeng, among others. In this Building Ordinance, the rationale given for extending a protection measure to cover these extended areas was the following:

¹²¹ Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning. Retrieved on August 15, 2013, from www.onep.go.th

¹²² The districts covered include *kwaengs* Wat Samphraya, Ban Phanthom (*khet* Phranakon); Wat Sommanat, Ban Bat, Khlong Mahanak, Wat Thepsirin, Promprapsatruphai (*khet* Promprapsatruphai); and Samphanthawong, Chakkrawat, and Talat Noi (*khet* Samphanthawong). Source: BMA, 1999.

¹²³ This paper uses 'Chinatown' to refer to the historically predominantly Chinese settlements and streets of Bangkok: Sampheng, Yaowarat, Charoen Krung, and Talat Noi.

'The areas extending from Outer Rattanakosin are sites of historically important communities dating back to Kings Rama V, VII, and VIII, and are unique Chinese commercial and residential settlements... There is a growing tendency in these areas to construct in a large number modern buildings that are *yai* (big) and *sung* (tall), which may not conform and harmonize with the historically and architecturally significant buildings *within* the Rattanakosin City (emphasis added). Therefore, measures on building control should be put in place to regulate building construction in the areas extending from the Outer Rattanakosin.'

Bangkok Building Ordinance, BMA, 1999

The fact that the 1999 Ordinance recognized these districts and neighborhoods as an important accretion to Bangkok's history shows a sensitive knowledge of the city's broader historical geography. That is, the city government was fully aware that the historicity of old Bangkok is not limited to the confines of Rattanakosin, but extends beyond its moats and walls. However, given the clearly expressed rationale, the building regulation did not target these 'historical extensions' in their own right, but instead treated them as a buffer zone to cushion the historic city against out-of-context urban development. In this formulation, the 1999 Ordinance is not unlike the one previously issued for the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin in 1992; although the Ordinance extended protection to the areas surrounding from Rattanakosin, the main motivation for controlling height and development in Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin and in the Extension was to create a cushion wrapping around Rattanakosin on both fronts, west and east.

d. From Lines to Colors: the Zoning Map

Perhaps the most important intervention that has firmly cemented Rattanakosin as a legal construction is the landuse zoning map. Promulgated for the first time in 1992, the landuse zoning plan has become the important municipal apparatus that the city government of Bangkok has at its disposal for land management. As a land device, the zoning map serves to redistribute ideal landuse types and activities across the city. Unlike city ordinances that are issued on an ad hoc basis to target a specific area or thematic concern, the zoning map is more comprehensive as it applies to the city of Bangkok as a whole by dividing it into multiple zoning areas. Once the zone's boundary is outlined, its contents are prescribed. The zoning areas are, in turn, color-coded by functional landuse type e.g. red for commercial, yellow for low-density residential, purple for industrial landuse, and so on, to assign a function, a role, of that particular zone in relation to the city. As our present concern, Rattanakosin along with the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin is a zoning area in its own right (figure 4). The boundary of this zone is an exact replication, a direct descendant, of the boundaries designated by the Building

Ordinances in the preceding decade. Rattanakosin together with the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin is zoned as 'light-brown' or a historic preservation landuse - the only historic preservation zone in the entire Bangkok.

While the Building Ordinances of the 1980s forged the legal boundary of Rattanakosin, the zoning map of the 1990s filled in the contents. Looking at the city as a whole, the zoning map prescribed and made explicit Rattanakosin's function and role vis-a-vis the rest of the city. According to the zoning map, the light-brown zone is intended for the 'historic preservation, enhancement of the national artistic and cultural identity, and promotion of tourism' (BMA, 2013, p. 7). By comparison, the rest of Thonburi, the other Thonburi, is zoned as high-density residential, while the Extension is designated as 'red' or commercial areas to 'serve as a central business district to support businesses, trades, services, and recreational purposes for the general population' (BMA, 2013, p. 6). Since its first promulgation in 1992, the zoning map has been revised three times in 1999, 2006, and most recently in 2013 to redraw the zones and update the requirements to respond to Bangkok's rapidly changing urban condition.¹²⁴ However, all the three revisions have kept relatively intact the contour and color of Rattanakosin as Bangkok's only preservation zoning district, suggesting how stable it is as a spatial arrangement in the midst of a city that is anything but stable (figure 5).

However, the light-brown Rattanakosin as a historic district is a rather recent invention. Before the first zoning map of 1992, there had been earlier landuse plans and proposals, including the Litchfield Plan in 1960, the Metropolitan Plan in 1973, and the Metropolitan Plan in 1975¹²⁵. In all these three plans, the area that is now designated as a unified historic district, a homogeneously light-brown surface, was in fact zoned as a mosaic of disparate landuse types of different zoning color codes: commercial, recreational, and institutional (figure 5). In fact, Rattanakosin did not exist as a boundary or a self-contained zone at all. Instead, these plans portrayed the area to reflect the preexisting intermixed nature of buildings and spaces that had long characterized Bangkok's intramural settlements. Similarly, the piece of Thonburi situated across from the Grand Palace was not as yet annexed as part of the Rattanakosin historical sphere. It is important to also note that the light-brown color code did not exist in the Thai

¹²⁴ The Thai zoning ordinance is a five-year legislation, at the termination of which a new revision has to be updated.

¹²⁵ The first landuse zoning ordinance that was enacted is the one in 1992. However, before that, there were several landuse proposals and drafts such as Litchfield Plan in 1960, the Metropolitan Plan in 1973, and the Metropolitan Plan in 1975

landuse zoning taxonomy at that point in the modernist sixties and seventies, suggesting that the Thai intersection between zoning and historic preservation is rather recent. The Grand Palace itself was color-coded as 'blue' or an institutional landuse in the same way as every other government building. Now depicted as a monolithic zone of historical landuse, what is now thought of as Rattanakosin was once not bounded, but porous, and was not uniform, but very mixed in use. In this sense, as far as zoning is concerned, the Rattanakosin historic zone as a light-brown monolith is a post-1982 consciousness; while the modernist spirit of Thailand's first zoning era assumed the city to be a site of objective landuse classification and functional segregation, the zoning regime after Bangkok's Bicentennial Celebrations in 1982 introduced a classification of historical value.

4. MAPS AS A WAY OF SEEING: GEOMETRY AND GEOGRAPHY

These official maps see, construct, and anticipate space in a simplified way based on simple geometric descriptions. Let us recall that the purpose of these maps is to *kamnod boriwen* or to designate a legal area of control. In Thai, the term is more definitive than its English equivalents of area, region, or quarter, as the term *boriwen* often connotes a perceptible boundary. According to the Royal Institute Dictionary, the official dictionary of the Thai language, *boriwen* means *phuenthi phainai khet thi kamnod wai*, or the area within a designated boundary.¹²⁶ It is perhaps more revealing to understand that the term derives from the Sanskrit word *parivena* (परिवेण) that means monastery.¹²⁷ In this specific sense, a *boriwen* is then not just any area, but a geometric area, a coherent spatial entity whose bounds are identifiable. It is in this sense of the word that the legal boundaries of Rattanakosin, the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin, and the Extension of Rattanakosin are officially sanctioned.

In order make the spatial bounds of these *boriwens* knowable, mapping vocabularies are deployed in order to make these boundaries fixed and unmistakable. First, in all of the four ordinances, thoroughfares such as roads and streets are mostly commonly used as a visible marker, a convenient system of reference in delineating the zones and sub-zones. For example, Chao Fa Road is used as a northern boundary between Inner and Outer Rattanakosin. Second, where visible geometries such as roads are not readily available as a marker, artificial lines are drawn. For example, the centerline is drawn to bisect the waterway to objectively divide the otherwise fluid, elusive thing into zones of regulation. In this way, once the Chao Phraya

¹²⁶ Royal Institute Dictionary (Photchananukrom Chabap Ratchabandittayasathan), Bangkok, Thailand.

¹²⁷ Ibid

descends and flows past this part of Bangkok, it gets cleanly split into two zones such that the right half of the waterbody belongs to the historic city of Rattanakosin (figure 1a) and the left half to the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin (figure 2). Similarly, the left half of Khlong Ropkrung is part of Rattanakosin (figure 1b) whereas its right half is part of the outside world (figure 3). While the former is considered a historic area, the latter squarely is not, despite the two being of the same canal.

The operative language used in area demarcation is the rationality of mapping, and this rationality, I argue, comes to endorse a particular way of seeing. Basic mapping vocabularies - those of dots, lines, and polygons - are invoked to rationalize land into zones or *boriwens* to be governed, such that a zone is formed once two or more points meet (*banjop*) on the map. Once formed, these geometric shapes warrant a certain kind of truth. The production of the Extension to Rattanakosin is one illustrative example. To call something an *extension* of something else presupposes the existence of an established *core*, from which everything else extends and radiates. For the core and its extension to be conceived and perceived as such, I propose that they must engage in at least three conditions. First, each of them has to be internally coherent and identifiable as an entity. Second, each of them has to be externally discrete and distinguishable from one another. Third, the temporal relationship between the core and the extension is such that the core precedes the extension. Viewed from the ordinance maps, the relationships between Rattanakosin and the Extension convincingly fulfill these propositions. That is, the two areas are constructed on the maps - the 1982 and 1987 Ordinances, and the 1999 Ordinance respectively - as coherent internally and discrete externally. As for their temporal relationship, Rattanakosin was considered the historic core, to which the Extension was later appended as an insulating buffer in the larger scheme of urban development control. It is in this patchwork-like manner that the districts of Bang Lamphu, Charoen Krung, and Chinatown are rendered a plausible extension of Rattanakosin. The Extension, let us argue, is a geometrical truth depicted on, and made possible by, the planimetric view of the ordinance maps. With Rattanakosin situated at the center and positioned as the historic core, everything else - Thonburi or Chinatown - is by consequence constituted outside of, or peripheral to it. The Extension is a cartesian extension resulting from the Rattanakosin-centered way of seeing.

The mapping spaces produced through the Rattanakosin-centered worldview - e.g. the Thonburi-across-from-Rattanakosin, the Extension, and the light-brown Rattanakosin - are synchronic, ahistorical renditions. These geometrical truths, whose existence is validated by the

maps, are fragile as they do not hold up well against Bangkok's historical development. Here, I problematize in turn two geometric truths in the official maps: the core-extension relation (Rattanakosin as central) and the internally coherent, light-brown core (Rattanakosin as whole). First, despite cartographically depicted as such, Rattanakosin is hardly the oldest, isolated historic core decoupled from the Bangkok. Instead, the vast field of historical Bangkok is one of many overlapping historical geographies that had long developed in tandem: the landscape of court and palaces, the Buddhist temples and their surrounding residential communities, the trading district of the Chinese, the trading port economy, and the outlying agrarian villages. As will be shown below, historical Bangkok is not made up of concentric rings of the core and the periphery, an appliqué of sewn patches, but of overlapping boundaries of various historical settlements.

Chinatown is a counterexample of the core-extension relation. Various sites and structures as urban built archives (Pairaudeau, 2014) across Chinatown can attest to the long established presence of Chinese communities and their spaces in Bangkok. First, and perhaps the greatest irony, the current site of the Grand Palace, the heart and soul of Rattanakosin, used to be a Chinese trading settlement since the seventeenth century before the inauguration of Bangkok as the capital in the late eighteenth century. In transferring the seat of the capital from Thonburi on the left bank to the right bank of the Chao Phraya River, the first king of the Chakri Dynasty, King Yodfa, had the Chinese settlement relocated to where it is known today as Sampheng (Naengnoi, 1991, p. 88). In its place, the Grand Palace was built along with the Temple of Emerald Buddha. Today, the remaining trace of Chinese communities in this area is the small commercial neighborhood of Tha Tian located right outside the Grand Palace (Siririsak, 2009). Once relocated to a new marshy location east of the city wall, a Chinese marketplace quickly formed by 1790, as evidenced by dense rows of Chinese-style buildings still in existence in Talat Noi (Kulachol, 2003; 2003-2004, p. 2). The name Talat Noi, or 'small market' in Thai, gestures at the existence of the more prosperous, larger market of Sampheng, which is now all but redeveloped. Nonetheless, the origin of Sampeng lane, the main spinal pedestrian lane that runs through the heart of Chinatown can be traced back to the late eighteenth century, the very time Rattanakosin was founded (Naengnoi, 1991, p. 88). Another built structure that helps anchor the established presence of Chinese space in Bangkok's history is the Leng Buai la

shrine north of Sampheng. The shrine bears an inscription plaque stating that it was built in 1658 or over one hundred years before the establishment of Bangkok as a capital itself.¹²⁸

Related to the multiplicity of Bangkok's historical spaces are their multiple historical times. The historical time that underpins the cartographic construction of the core and the extension is the sequential, linear time, in which the core is assumed to have formed ahead of the extension. It is in this order that the relationship between Rattanakosin and its Extension is expressed: the latter in succession of the former. However, the aforementioned historical existence of Chinatown exemplifies simultaneous local histories that defy the sequential core-extension formulation. In urban morphological studies, Marshall (2009) proposes that the city is akin to a forest made up of competing and collaborating ecologies, rather than a tree that grows and extends under one logic of growth and decay from the center outwards. He critiques metaphors and analogies commonly used to describe the city's growth such as 'urban expansion', for it assumes wholeness and unidirectionality of urban growth. Bangkok is one such forest of ecologies. To assign Chinatown as an extension of the historic district as if the city had historically spread out in a smooth, centrifugal fashion is, therefore, a view strictly from the map and is thus a flawed perception of the temporal relations between historical geographies. As a way of seeing, the Ordinance Maps privilege sequentiality at the expense of simultaneity, and thus exclude a possibility that there can have been, too, other historicities outside the cartographic bounds of historicalness, suppressing the simultaneously existing historical settlements under the static mapping plane.

Second, Rattanakosin as a light-brown whole belies Bangkok's morphological history in at least two ways: form and contents. First, the form and formation of Bangkok's settlements is along rivers, irrigation canals, and waterways,¹²⁹ giving rise to the river- and canal-side settlements that still can be seen today. The monocentric-city model that is akin to the medieval European city departs remarkably from the sprawling city that had characterized Bangkok's early urbanization. Second, the landuse contents of what we now call Rattanakosin have never been internally coherent, orderly, or light-brown as the zoning map sees and wishes to prescribe, as earlier documented by the older versions of the zoning maps (figure 5). Against the government's attempts at recreating a sacred city and enhancing its vast, monumental vistas, Rattanakosin was as much a popular, residential city (Herzfeld, 2006). Since there was no

¹²⁸ Leng Buai Ia community committee publication. 2012. Bangkok, Thailand.

¹²⁹ Sunait Chutinatharanont (personal communication, June 2, 2014).

distinction between home and workplace in early Rattanakosin, the rulers' residences also functioned as their workplace. Therefore, formed around the palace or the residence of the nobility was a residential community of the entourage, servants, and attendants. As a new palace is built for the princes and their consorts, soon would follow an urban settlement of residential and market spaces (Naengnoi, 1991; Askew, 1996; 2002; Sirisrisak, 2009). This led to a sprawling pattern of palace-led urbanization within and outside the city wall. Although walled and moated like the medieval European city, the spaces within the wall were remarkably different. The Southeast Asian city was never densely built up, but lush, garden-like with large areas reserved for plantations, orchards, and farms (Mcgee, 1969; Pregrill and Volkman, 1999). The geography of early Bangkok was not intensely urban, monocentric, and monochrome, but sparse, riparian, and speckled in land uses.

5. PICTORIAL ELEGANCE, CARTOGRAPHICAL DELETION, AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL VIOLENCE

There is a pictorial elegance to the shape of Rattanakosin. The oval contour that resembles an egg or a diamond is compellingly legible, believable, and thus 'makes sense'. Over the years, the shape has been reinforced through the commonly rehearsed imaginaries of *krung* Rattanakosin, or Rattanakosin City, and *ko* Rattanakosin, or Rattanakosin Island¹³⁰, elevating the exceptionalism of this particular image of spatial isolation. It is reproduced in official plans, tourism brochures, mass media, everyday parlance, and popular culture as a device of common identification and as an appropriate perimeter of intervention. As a tenacious Thai imaginary, Rattanakosin Island is taken as given, as a boundary that is agreed upon, natural, and problem-free. Despite being a situated knowledge located in a particular way of seeing and mapping, the Island has come to circulate as a universal knowledge, parading as the historic core of Bangkok that is distinct and solitary.

The pictorial elegance of the isolated island does have a hegemonic potential. As far as zoning is concerned, it reduces Bangkok's urban history by forcibly containing it within a boundary that eclipses Bangkok's other historical geographies. First, by designating Rattanakosin as the authoritative historic district, the maps alienate and peripheralize pre-Rattanakosin historical geographies such as that of Thonburi, recreating but one part of Thonburi as Rattanakosin's

¹³⁰ The term 'island' is not an appropriate description of the physical geography of Rattanakosin because, unlike the Island of Ayutthaya, Rattanakosin is not surrounded by rivers on all sides, but by dug canals.

buffer strip, trivializing the rest by cartographically deleting it from the official preservation purview. Second, by taking Rattanakosin as a point of departure, as the fixed historical epicenter of Bangkok, from which everything else radiates, the maps demote other historical spaces to the status of geometric extensions, accretions, or dependents of the larger life, thus omitting other spatial histories that may have been both independent or constitutive of that of Rattanakosin itself. As earlier argued, the core-extension depiction strays significantly from Bangkok's morphological history. Such historical interpretations narrowly conceived by pictorial representations quite violently monopolize a singular claim to historical significance. The maps limit other possible intersections between cartography and historical geography that may better align official representations and human settlement histories, and thus allow the former to reveal rather than conceal the latter. In its current conception, the geometric coherence, visually compelling as it is, stifles histories.

The geometries of historicalness have a far-reaching effect beyond skewing the historiographical role of space. Quite far from the strictly semiotic realms of maps and drawings, the Rattanakosin boundary also serves to warrant subsequent technical practices such zoning codes that have serious consequences on the livelihoods of many. Let us recall that, as arguably the most important urban planning device of Bangkok, the zoning map is the one piece of paper that organizes relations between humans and space. Inheriting the shape of Rattanakosin and faithfully believing the stable, solid line that bisects old and new Bangkoks, the zoning map dictates contrasting material consequences on the built environment of the two areas through three zoning techniques: height control, floor-area ratio (FAR), and density zoning. First, the maximum height is capped at sixteen meters in the historic district, and thirty-seven meters in Chinatown.¹³¹ Second, zoned as a central business district, Chinatown has the FAR factor of seven, meaning that the total developable floor space of a given building is up to seven times the building footprint. By contrast, a few hundred meters west of Chinatown, Rattanakosin is capped at three to four, or half the development intensity allowed in Chinatown. Third and perhaps the most controversial, in an attempt to encourage development around transit stations, the latest zoning map permits large-scale residential, office, and commercial development of greater than 10,000 square meters, on the condition that such development is located within a 500-meter radius of a mass transit station. In Rattanakosin, development projects of such scale are entirely prohibited regardless of their proximity to the transit station.

¹³¹ Sixteen meters around religious sites, and thirty-seven meters for the rest of the areas. Source: BMA, 1999.

Once in effect, these three zoning techniques are invoked and exploited by the landlords who seek to evict the long-time tenants and turn their properties into a more lucrative development.¹³² One of the most tragic eviction cases is of one store-owner whose family has settled in Chinatown for over 100 years, who committed suicide following the eviction order that had come upon him as a short notice.¹³³ Perhaps unintended but authorized for certain, eviction exemplifies but one material consequence made possible by the new zoning regime despite its many arbitrary conditions. The abstract zoning map does act upon concrete, lived space, channelling redevelopment frenzies into some areas and diverting them away from others.

However, contrary to the abstract space that the zoning map seeks to prescribe and divide, historical urban space is much less clear-cut and constantly misbehaves in face of the official will to contain it within boundaries and categories. Another great irony is the commercial districts of Wang Burapa and ‘Little India’ Pahurat that are located in the historic district. The zoning acknowledges this instance of landuse diversity within Rattanakosin by designating these areas as ‘preservation-2’, as opposed to the general ‘preservation-1’, acknowledging the more bustling, commercial activity of the former that is nestled within the high-key heritage landscape of the latter. Therefore, while Wang Burapa and ‘Little India’, or even the backpacker district of Khao San, enjoy the natural status of a historic area because they happen to be in the light-brown Rattanakosin, the immediately adjacent, albeit extramural Chinatown is relegated to a commercial zone on the basis of the solid-line boundary. An immediate corollary is that while Wang Burapa and Pahurat are protected under the auspices of Rattanakosin zoning that more or less stifles expansion and alteration, Chinatown is positioned as a growth district fully exposed to redevelopment and speculation.

The elegant contour of Rattanakosin is a geometry that is convenient but inelastic. Such inelastic convenience, I suggest, results from the facile act of drawing hard-and-fast lines and assigning permanent colors upon human geographies that are anything but fast and easy. The inelastic convenience is, therefore, fragile and fraught with contradictions, inside and outside.

¹³² ทีซีซีแลนด์ทุ่มทุ่ทุ้ม4พันล.ปรับโฉมเวียงนครเขษม ทบตลาดเก่าปีระกาผุดที่จอดรถ1.2พันคัน (TTC Land to invest four million Baht to renovate Weong Nakhon Khasem, demolishing old market and constructing a new parking structure of 1200). (2014, July, 21). Prachachat. Retrieved from <http://www.prachachat.net>.

¹³³ เจ้าสัว “ย่งเส็ง” อลาชีวิต ปิดตำนานเวียงนครเขษม หมุดหวัง...พ่ายต่อนายทุน (Millionaire ‘Yongseng’ bids life goodbye, hopelessly ending a Weong Nakhon Khasem as he lost to capitalists) (May 17, 2014). Manager. Retrieved from <http://www.manager.co.th>

The flatness and smoothness of the light-brown color betrays the textured urban life within Rattanakosin that is characterized not only by the historic and the artistic, but also the popular, for the Island is not only peppered by the palaces and temples, but inhabited by everyday people and their everyday geographies. Similarly, the thin, yet sharp line decouples without difficulty the thick histories of Chinatown and other areas now relegated as Rattanakosin's Extension, ejecting them from Rattanakosin's very culture hearths.

6. CONCLUSIONS: DOUBLE SILENCING

In calling for a wider definition of historical heritage, Hardy (1988) makes a useful distinction between conservative heritage, one that is made to support status quo, nostalgia, and a noble past, and radical heritage, or the kind of heritage that explores the underlying social relations, the 'histories from below', or a more social historical geography (Butlin, 1987). It is easy to dismiss Rattanakosin City/Island as conservative heritage, concluding that it is a spatial manifestation of the royalist ideology. However, this would ignore the very tools that flesh out the ideology, overplaying the symbolic currency of ideas while downplaying their technical execution. The production of historical heritage is not only about communicating a certain ideology and value, but also the very instruments that makes possible such communication.

This article makes a case for the intersection between historic preservation and cartography, exploring how the latter is used in service of the former. I argue that what is now knowable Rattanakosin emerged from the state practice of law and mapmaking. The language of the abstract maps has a territorializing effect on concrete land as it pins down urban space, partitioning it into invariably fixed fields of governmental intervention. In particular, the lines and the colors of the maps have been used to demarcate and domesticate historicalness. However, such facile service of enlisting lines to invoke history is contested and filled with arbitrary conditions, because demarcation as a thin, swift stroke on the map often cuts across the thick spaces and lives of many. Geometry purports to mimic geography but ends up mocking it.

A product of state maps, the elegantly shaped Rattanakosin has firmly become a normalized worldview. However, as earlier argued, elegance is violence. In particular, the two cartographic constructions of Rattanakosin as Central and as Whole sanction a double silencing. By orienting Rattanakosin as the historical center or the core, the zoning maps render other spaces off the map. And in doing so, the zoning maps risk eclipsing a host of historical geographies outside the official bound, not only trivializing their histories into subordination but also leaving their very

concrete, lived space to laissez-faire speculation. Similarly, Rattanakosin itself is far from being whole. The practice of light-brown zoning entails a great degree of homogenization, treating an area as if it were a fabric of one contiguous landuse. Within Rattanakosin, there is also presence of other lesser communities therein whose livelihoods are muted by the historical sanctity of the color light-brown.

By revealing its cartographic situatedness, we can disrupt the epistemic continuity of the knowable Rattanakosin, and thus begin to do better service and justice to Bangkok's much larger historical geography. Rattanakosin as central and as whole is contingent knowledge that is abstract description at best but, unfortunately, makes for extensive prescription at worst. Once flipped, the other side of the imposed tapestry reveals the dangling threads of history that are less elegant, more fuzzy, and thus troubling for the quest for administrative convenience. And it is the very silence, slippage, the less elegant fuzziness that have long been hidden under convincing coherence. Very much like noise that does not respect but spills over the imposed technocratic lines (Cidell, 2008), history, too, spills over.

FIGURES

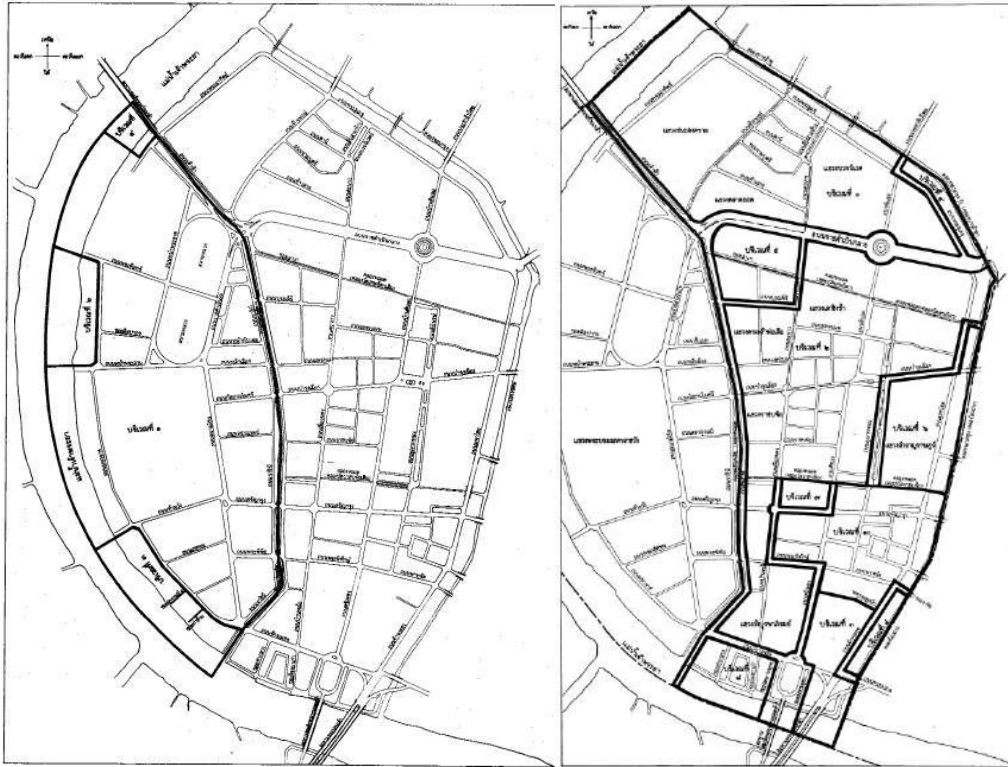


Figure 6.1a: 1985 Building Ordinance (source: BMA)

Figure 6.1b: 1987 Building Ordinance (source: BMA)

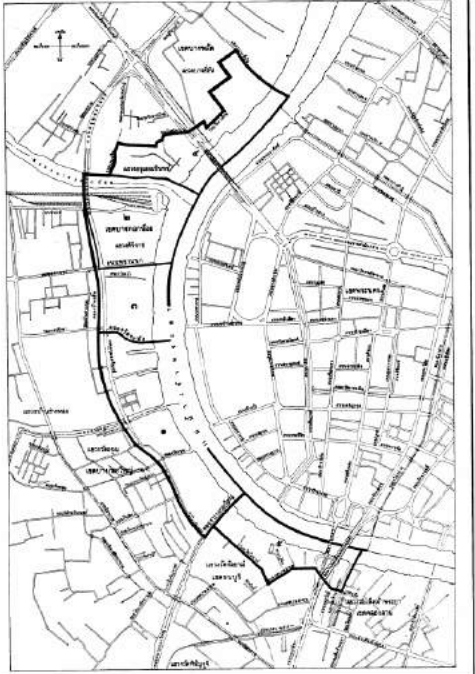


Figure 6.2: 1992 Building Ordinance (source: BMA)

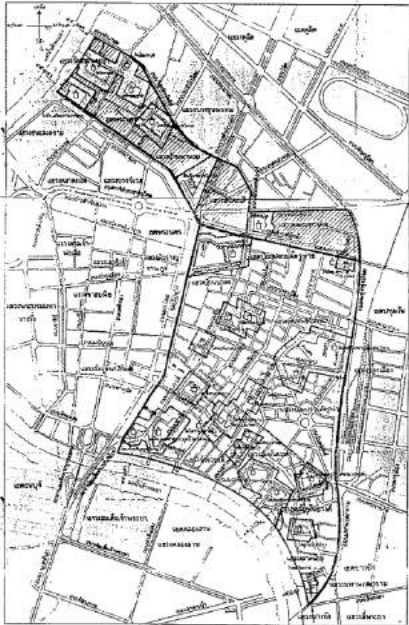


Figure 6.3: 1999 Building Ordinance (source: BMA)

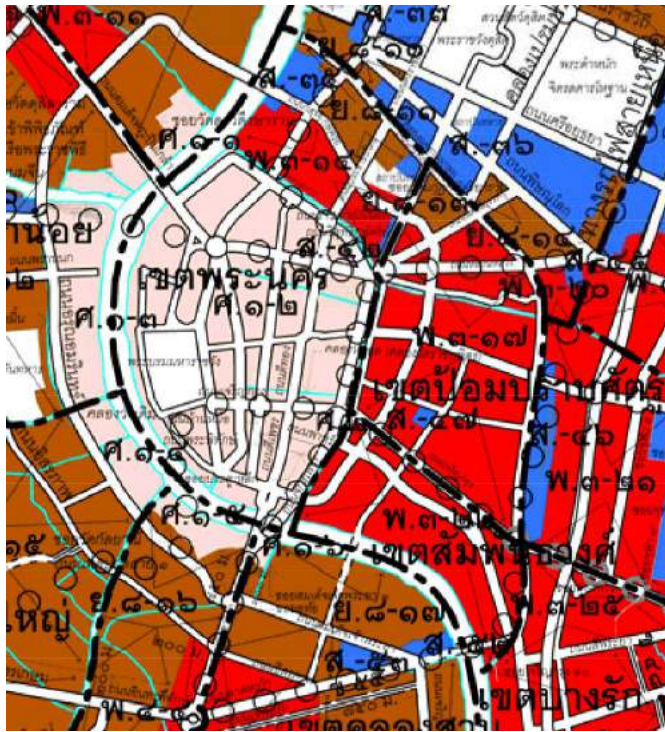


Figure 6.4: 2013 landuse zoning map (source: BMA)

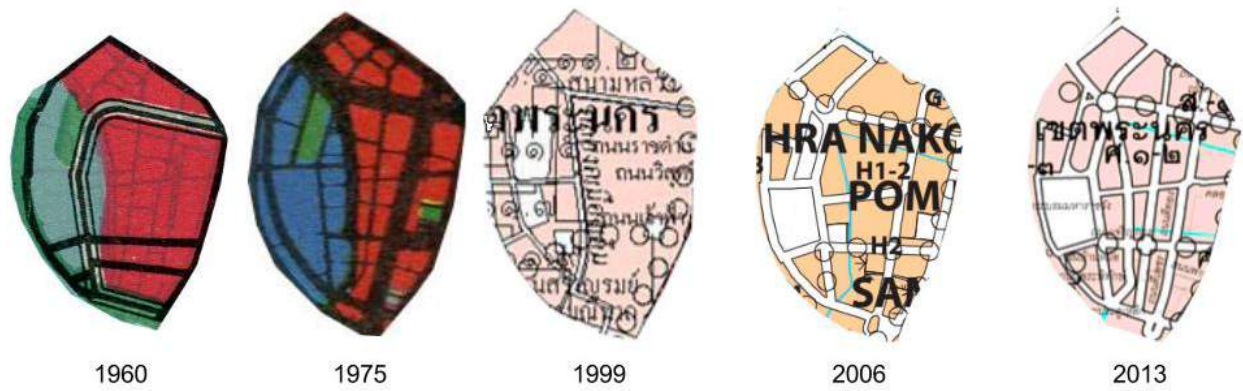


Figure 6.5: different versions of the landuse zoning map depicting the Rattanakosin City (author's compilation)

Chapter 7

CATEGORY AND GEOMETRY

1. INTRODUCTION

One evening in the year 2012, my friend and I drove back from our dinner in Chinatown, a popular dinner destination among Bangkok's middleclass.¹³⁴ As we drove along Charoen Krung Road, I noticed one long banner put up across the width of two shophouses. Written on a long, thin piece of white cloth, in an angry font type, the banner said: '*This is Chinatown. We do not want the metro. Do not destroy*'. I remember my near-reflex response that evening. I snorted to my friend and dismissively said: 'Maybe the residents don't realize this yet. But once the construction is complete, they will profit from it'. I read the banner to be yet another instance of NIMBYism against rail-induced density. That reading coincided with my own professional philosophy at that time. Between the years 2009 and 2012, I practiced as an urban planner for the Thai Department of Town and Country Planning. A young, freshly minted planner trained in 'postmodern urbanism' (cf Ellin, 1999), I was an advocate for 'density' and its companions (walkability, variety, vitality, placemaking, etc). To me, density became a panacea for most if not all urban ills. Density was a word that I would put in every policy document I wrote.

My then unquestioned enthusiasm for density was also shared by Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the city government of Bangkok. In 2013, the BMA announced the latest zoning plan (figure 1a). Much to the public's anticipation, the plan was believed to be a concerted response to the city's long entrenched problems of uncontrolled growth. Between 1980s and 1990s, the landuse policy (or the lack thereof) had consistently failed to keep up with national economic growth, the expansion of the middleclass, and the in-migration of labor from other provinces. The absence of a strong landuse policy provided a regulatory vacuum for real

¹³⁴ Chapters 5 and 6 were condensed into one journal article forthcoming in *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR). Prior to that, I have presented earlier drafts at two conferences, one international conference on heritage studies in Taipei in December 2014, and at Thailand's 2015 Annual Urban and Regional Academic Symposium in June 2015.

estate-led suburbanization and industrialization of the urban fringes. It resulted in the metropolitan form sprawling beyond the city proper. The metropolitan form is large in extent but thin in density. The city's population density is too low to support an extensive, cost-effective public transportation. Thus, cars are chosen by those who can afford them as a private solution to this very public problem. In the wake of this particular historical conjuncture, the BMA came to problematize low density as a culprit behind the fragmented urbanization. The 'compact city' - the city of walkable, high-density zones - is seen as the solution.

Meanwhile, in Chinatown, eviction notices abound. Leases are shortened. In many cases, they are terminated altogether. The landlords want to profit from the zoning allowance for increased density. However, unlike the familiar geographies of gentrification (see Ghertner, 2014), the displacement dynamics here not *laissez-faire*. Eviction in Bangkok Chinatown is actively endorsed by the zoning regime. This thus requires us to reevaluate the role of technical knowledge in validating state-sanctioned displacement. Scholarly literature on Chinatown is rich, but one line of inquiry that pertains to the present paper is state interventions upon the space of Chinatown. Anderson's important work (1987; 1991) explores state institutions and processes through which Vancouver's Chinatown was constructed, made, and remade from 1857 to 1980. The author recounts the shift in dominant discourses, in which the state defined Chinatown according to its taste and interest. Chinatown shifted from an unsanitary, lowly place to a slum ripe for clearance, and to a colorful, ethnic neighborhood. In a similar vein, Yeoh and Kong (1994) investigate the change of state interventions of Singapore's Chinatown that ranged from the modernist era, in which progress was used to justify demolition, to the present-day postcolonial multiracialism, in which Chinatown constitutes one of the four racialized 'historic districts'. Lin (1998) examines how global forces, e.g. investment and capital flows, impact local development, communities, and life in New York City's Chinatown. Although transnational in character, the cross-border dynamics are nonetheless mediated through local actors and institutions. For example, the attempt to rezone Chinatown to accommodate the high-rise vision of Lower Manhattan was met with resistance (Lin, 1998, pp. 151-156).

While the Chinatown-as-construction perspective above explores the making and remaking of Chinatown, the present paper posits the opposite question. It investigates how the particularities of Chinatown are unseen and unmade by a specific state intervention: zoning. It theorizes zoning as a technology of unseeing. As will be shown, the technology has many tools: the height limits that only regulates the individual buildings with little regard for the surrounding

context; the geometry of transit density that only sees land in terms of density; and the zoning categories see land as landuse. Therefore, rather than studying Chinatown as an urban geography, the paper analyzes Chinatown as a technical interface through which the urban geography is intervened.

The paper is a result of my fieldwork in Bangkok between January and April, 2015. It draws upon (1) the public archives of present and past zoning plans; zoning standards; plan implementation manuals; and planning petitions; (2) interviews with government planners and Chinatown residents; and (3) attendance in multiple public meetings. The paper consists of six parts. Part II outlines the theoretical perspectives that inform the analysis of the present paper. First, it draws analytical inspiration from important writings on modernist zoning. I pay particular attention to how the state seeks to intervene the built environment and often fails because their intervention programs are produced through a technical rationality. Second, such techno-managerial rationality, although almost passé in the Global North, is curiously a persistent, dominant mode of planning in the Global South. Part III introduces Bangkok's recent zoning plans, often touted as the 'greenest' plans of Bangkok. They bring in, for the first time, new zoning techniques in a hope of promoting urban sustainability. This section describes two such zoning techniques: (1) landuse subcategorization and (2) TOD zoning. Then, it unpacks their technical formulation and rationality. Part IV presents the case of Chinatown. I explore the experience of the two zoning techniques as they are implemented on the ground. In particular, I highlight a series of contestations that arise in response. These contestations expose the limits and flaws of the abstract, universal zoning techniques that do not account well for the specific conditions of Chinatown. Parts V and VI further theorize on zoning as it encounters a space of difference. Here, I show how universal zoning omits the space of difference, foregoing its local practices and housing tenure. Conceived as a neutral, technical intervention, universal zoning does not have enough conceptual and ethical room to account for these conditions. Worse yet, it plays into the hands of entrenched landed elite who use zoning to justify eviction.

2. MODERNISM, ZONING, AND TECHNICAL RATIONALITY

Scholars have studied modernist urban planning in various geographical regions to highlight its failure to improve urban conditions. The failure results particularly from a narrow technical lens, a selected way of seeing, through which urban planners see and intervene in urban space, whereby a complex phenomenon is reduced to a set of calculable variables. In his landmark *Seeing like a State*, Scott (1991) renders a detailed historical account of 'high modernism' - a

form of state intervention during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among its many traits, the high-modernist state project is characterized by simplified, utilitarian descriptions, a tendency to bring facts into line with representations, and a temporal focus on the future. Most importantly, high modernism ignores history and devalues politics. It believes instead in rational thought, scientific laws, and administrative criteria. Technical knowledge is made superior to other sources of judgment. As a result, one inherent paradox - and one source of failure - is that the social world is a flux. The twentieth-century modernist city planning, through its scientific, dehistoricized plan, clashes with very historical conditions. Despite the attempt to 'rule by the plan', the city resists being flattened to a set of numbers. Perhaps the greatest example is the city of Brasilia. Here, social engineering and spatial organization were brought into close alignment, where the latter was believed to facilitate the former (Holston, 1989). In particular, one quintessentially modernist tool was invoked in the project of organizing society: the masterplan. The two-dimensional plan specifies, on a clean slate, physical elements such as housing units, recreation areas, and public amenities. The clean slate hopes to produce a fresh, egalitarian landscape in order to neutralize class divisions and to 'replace the chaos of the capitalist city with a new, predictable, and controllable beginning' (Holston, 1989, p. 58).

The modernist project is not limited to grand masterplans exemplified by le Corbusier's *plan voisin* and Lucio Costa's Brasilia. In fact, the intervention can take various forms and often at smaller scales. In urban planning, intervention takes place more frequently in the minutiae of zoning, codes, and ordinances, than in the wholesale redevelopment. And it is planning at the exacting 'genetic' level that significantly shapes the city form (Marshall, 2012; Talin, 2012). Zoning is a classic example of state modernist calculation. Zoning is premised on the idea that land can be classified in terms of function. To this end, zoning instruments (e.g. maps, diagrams, codes, taxonomy, and classification) are deployed to, first, calculate space and, then, rule over it. Recent inquiry has helpfully paid attention to the role of 'calculation' used in the government's spatial intervention, exploring a variety of 'geographies of mathematization', i.e. geographical, spatial implications of numbers and calculation. The government's calculation can be both quantitative and qualitative (Crampton and Elden, 2006). Quantitative calculation includes cartesian geometry, numbers, counting, or the 'mathematization of the subject'. Qualitative calculation can take the form of ranking, ordering, or organizing a group. This present article profits from this line of inquiry. It will demonstrate how the zoning calculations, qualitative and quantitative, are used to intervene the space of Bangkok's Chinatown.

A few examples of zoning and mapping illustrate the state calculation (and its limits). Mitchell's (2002) important work on colonial Egypt explores the technopolitics of land and natural resources. One such example is the cadastral map as a tool for the colonial extraction of the country's agrarian land. The cadastral map is constructed for a certain purpose: tax collection. The objects are drawn in a way that conveniently facilitates that purpose. However, unlike their represented form, the real shape of land plots is never perfectly geometric, much less rectangular. Mitchell terms this process 'reformatted knowledge' as technicians manipulate mapmaking through 'wilful interference' to produce a simple scheme of information to suit their purposes (Mitchell, 2002, p. 106). The land is represented as a simple enumeration of desired information such as ownership status and boundaries - an itemization of quantifiable traits. As a result, it dismisses the underpinning social relations, neglecting the broader agrarian transformations and the oft-contested histories behind that piece of land. As I show elsewhere (Rugkhan, 2015), official mapmaking as a wilful inference can become a wilful violence when it chooses to see certain places and forego others. However, modernism has persisted long after colonialism. In the Global South, Watson (2009a; 2009b) highlights the 'techno-managerial rationality', in which urban modernism still rules supreme today. Importantly, the static blueprint of urban modernism conflicts with the indigenous preexisting sociospatial relations. In a historical review of zoning in Durban, South Africa during the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid periods, Scott (2006) shows that the modernist zoning maps were used to designate an industrial 'productive zone', imposed upon the town's indigenous residential landscape. Modernist in character, zoning acquired its power from the semblance of being scientific and neutral. It minimized the 'spatial unintelligibility', i.e. the largely informal and mixed-use land, transforming it so that it 'eventually closely resembled the plans that were developed through the planning process' (Scott, 2006, p. 258).

Modernism still exists as we progress into the twenty-first century. While modernist zoning is often associated with the experiments of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (e.g. efficiency experiments, urban improvement, and colonial exploitation), today it intervenes in a different policy area: urban sustainability. Today, zoning and sustainability intersect. The former is believed to be a tool to promote the latter. For example, land use can be intensified to increase density. By manipulating zoning codes, it is believed, the city can be made more energy-efficient, less car-dependent, and used intensively at its optimum (Charmes and Keil, 2015). Leffers and Ballamingie (2013) critique a series of recent densification projects in Ottawa, Canada. The authors incisively show that zoning has been used by state institutions to

discipline land towards today's ideal of 'highest and best use'. The ideal is translated to specific zoning techniques such as upzoning, increased height allowance, and brownfield redevelopment. In this formulation, the authors argue, the vocabularies of intensification, density, and 'underdeveloped space' frame land as simply about density. The language prompts entrepreneurial subjects to think about land explicitly in terms of space optimization, when in reality community concerns surrounding the issue of land development are more numerous. Although urban planning has shifted to embrace more 'postmodern' urban concerns such as density and walkability, or diversity and variety (Ellin, 1999; Fainstein, 2005), the legacies of modernist planning, i.e. the faith in scientific judgment and authoritative solutions, have persisted in the way planning is implemented.

The modernist planning interventions outlined above, from Brasilia to Ottawa, from Egypt to South Africa, are formulated through a certain rationality: a causal rationality of spatial intervention. It is a causal rationality that we can govern space by, first, problematizing its conditions and, then, finding deterministic solutions for them. Huxley (2006) reminds us of importance of, first and foremost, unpacking the governmental rationality, implicit and explicit, behind any spatial intervention. This methodology inspires Part III of the present paper. She suggests we examine how certain 'truths' are produced and mobilized. Oftentimes, the governmental logic that connects 'problematization' and 'solution' is that there is a causal relation between space/environment and bodies/comportments. That is, there can be prescriptive, linear effects of space on subjectivities, assuming that space can shape comportments (Huxley, 2006, p. 774). In urban planning, such causal rationality is exemplified by the belief that cities can and should be planned in particular ways in order to warrant desirable subjects, behaviors, and spaces.

3. ZONING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The 2013 zoning plan is the greenest plan of Bangkok. The BMA substantially revised the ten Planning Objectives (PO) of the last zoning plan, modifying them to clearly convey a more environmentalist focus (compare BMA, 2006, p. 3; BMA, 2013, pp. 2-3). In what I call the greening of Planning Objectives, BMA made a stronger connection between each PO and its urban environmental implications (table 1). For example, an emphasis on *convenience* and *efficiency* is added to the Transportation PO; *job-housing balance* and *travel-trip reduction* added to the Housing PO; *environment-friendly industries* to the Manufacturing PO; *urban growth management* and *compactness* added to the Agriculture PO. In addition, two new POs

were added to the plan. The two POs - on natural disasters and global warming - similarly point to the zoning plan's explicit concern for the environment. Given the sustainability vocabularies that saturate its production, the 2013 zoning plan is for certain very environmentalist. It suggests the city's new awareness of, and interest in, the broader global agenda of urban sustainability.

Planning Objective	2006 Zoning Plan	2013 Zoning Plan
Planning Objective 5 (Transportation)	'Support mass transit and connect transportation networks'	'Support <i>convenience, speed, and safety</i> by developing and connecting mass transit and transportation networks.'
Planning Objective 6 (Housing)	'Improve and rehabilitate residential areas and urban centers'	Improve <i>job and housing balance in order to reduce trips</i> by improving and rehabilitating inner-city residential areas and developing suburban centers'
Planning Objective 7 (Manufacturing)	'Support high-skill, high-tech industries that are safe and free of pollution'	'Support manufacturing industries <i>that do not affect urban environment</i> , and high-skill, high-tech industries that are safe and free of pollution'
Planning Objective 8 (Agriculture)	'Retain farmland'	'Retain farmland <i>through compact urban development and growth management</i> '
Planning Objective 11 (Disaster management)	-	Protect human safety by against natural and manmade disasters'
Planning Objective 12 (Global warming)	-	'Address global warming by reducing energy use and increasing green space to reduce carbon emissions'

Table 7.1: the 'greening' of Planning Objectives (emphasis added)

We understand a discourse more vividly by studying its enactment. If the aforementioned POs speak to the vision that underwrites the zoning plan, zoning techniques are prescribed to realize the vision. This paper focuses, in turn, on two zoning techniques and their underlying rationality: (1) landuse subcategorization and (2) TOD zoning. First, I explain the BMA's attempt to segregate land in terms of its functional landuse category, e.g. commercial, residential, or industrial. Each category is further subdivided or 'subcategorized' to reflect the position of a given zone within the city's larger hierarchy. Second, I discuss the BMA's experiment with a fashionable planning idea, the TOD. The city government wants to make TODs sprout up by 'upzoning', or increasing the density allowance around every metro station.

3.1 Landuse subcategories

Issued in 1992 and 1999 respectively, the first two zoning plans of Bangkok were crude. The taxonomy of landuse categories was limited to a few basic categories such as residential, commercial, and industrial. For example, In this first zoning plan of Bangkok issued in 1992, sixty-two (62) areas were zoned as 'commercial' (BMA, 1992). Very simplified, it did not distinguish the scale. The regulations for the sixty-two zones were prescribed the same way, despite their remarkable differences in size and character. The BMA adopted this simplified scheme from the Department of Town and Country Planning, Thailand's national agency for planning. However, the national standards (intended for Thai towns and cities) had proven too coarse to for the capital city.¹³⁵ In preparation for the third zoning plan of 2006, then, the BMA overhauled its planning standards. They tailored them to better suit Bangkok's landuse, which had grown increasingly complex over the past decades (BMA, 2005). A major introduction was a scheme to *subcategorize* each landuse category. Subcatrognization is a device to further subdivide each landuse type. The example below illustrates the subcategorization of 'C' or 'commercial' landuse zones (BMA, 2013, pp. 4-5) (table 2):

Subcategorization of commercial landuse
C-1: small, suburban commercial centers (general residential suburban areas)
C-2: suburban centers of business, housing, and employment (potential suburban growth areas)
C-3: general central business districts (CBDs)
C-4: sub-central business districts around major rail nodes

¹³⁵ Interview with a senior BMA planner, February 16th, 2015.

(park-and-ride areas) C-5: regional and international commercial centers

Table 7.2: the subcategorization of commercial landuse

The subcategorization is formulated under a particular logic: scalar thinking. The classification of land into landuse categories is a functionalist thought. Land is, first and foremost, assumed to be performative. A given zone is supposed to have an identifiable function - residential, commercial, industrial - and to duly perform that ascribed function. Second, the subcategorization of, for example, C-1, C-2, or C-3 is not only functionalist, but also scalar. It is a hierarchical way of organizing the city. The subcategorized zone reflects its role vis-a-vis the city (BMA, 2005, p. 5-99). In this manner, the C-1 zone is the suburban commercial area that caters for the day-to-day, basic provision of goods and services in the suburbs. C-2 functions as a larger suburban area with a more diverse range of commercial services. C-3 is a CBD, catering not only for its immediate communities but also for the city's residents at large. C-4 acts as a park-and-ride node that supports the areas around major rail stations. Lastly, C-5 is Bangkok's downtown core. The same logic applies for other landuse classes. For example, the residential zones are subcategorized into low-density, medium-density, and high-density residential zones.

The subcategorization device is, I argue, a move to produce functional analogues across the city. Currently, the zoning map designates twenty C-1 zones, five C-2 zones, forty-three C-3 zones, five C-4 zones, and seven C-5 zones distributed around Bangkok (figure 1a). In the eye of zoning, since these areas perform similar commercial functions, they are treated as analogous. They are perfectly identical. For example, a suburb in the city's northern fringe and, say, its southern counterpart are viewed as analogous C-1 zones because, in terms of function, they both act as suburban commercial centers. Likewise, two highly trafficked districts are viewed as comparable CBDs or C-3 zones if they function like one (i.e. large enough to cater for a wide array of goods and services). Most importantly, since these zones are viewed as analogues, they are thought to be governable by the same regulations. The zoning plan, then, proceeds to prescribe an *identical* set of zoning requirements (e.g. permissible and prohibited landuse activities; height; and development intensity).

3.2 Zoning for transit-oriented development (TOD)

The second addition to Bangkok's zoning is *upzoning*: the increased density for areas surrounding every metro station. Motivated by the TOD concept popularized in North American

cities to promote compact urbanism (Cerevo et al, 2002), the BMA has, too, adopted rather enthusiastically the concept as a potential cure to the city's urbanization problems. I locate Bangkok's newfound favor for 'urban density' in two contexts. One is the historical/domestic context of the city's long-entrenched urbanization problems. The other is the contemporary/international policy climate of urban sustainability. The latter, it is hoped, will help cure the former. In line with the revised Planning Objectives, the TOD was built into zoning in order to forge urban compactness -- an urban form that is internationally praised for its promising potential to contain sprawl.

In order to achieve a compact urban form, density is seen as a vehicle, an enabling *techne* (Legg, 2006; Legg, 2007) that can direct people back to where they should live and work: the transit node. In particular, the zoning plans of 2006 and 2013 coincided with the expansion of Bangkok's metro lines. Therefore, the vision of rail-based city life seemed irresistibly alluring. The planners responded quite enthusiastically to this vision. The faith in density, on the philosophical level, proceeds to translate into, on the technical level, one particular zoning technique: the increased density around every transit station in order to forge the emergence of a TOD node. Now, a development project - residential, commercial, or office space - with a total floor area of higher than 10,000 square meters is permissible, if not encouraged, on the condition that the development be located within a 500-meter radius of a metro station. Land parcels within the 500-meter radius are now appraised to be walkable. Amenable to accommodate for growth, the lands are thus upzoned for more intensive use (figure 2). Conceived in this manner, the zoning map is a tool of visibility (Legg, 2006; Legg, 2007) that enables the land surrounding the transit station to be seen in terms of density. In turn, density became a numerical value that can be increased, decreased, or arithmetically manipulated at will.

The rationalization that underpins Bangkok's enthusiastic adoption of the TOD zoning is the belief that walkable environments can lead to fewer car trips. Following Huxley (2006), the assumed causal connection between, on the one hand, the TOD zoning and, on the other, car dependence needs systematic dissecting. First, the geometry of a 500-meter radius is designated as a 'walkable' distance. Edifices and activities within the 500-meter radius, the reasoning goes, are accessible to the transit station. By upzoning or increasing the development density *around* the metro station, the zoning map can, therefore, create a conducive canvas to accommodate walkable, mixed-use environments, which will in turn allow people to live, work,

and play therein. As a result, there will be less need for cars since people can turn to the conveniently located transit stop as the main means of transportation (or as the destination in itself). The logic behind Bangkok's TOD zoning is one of spatial causality, where space, if properly governed, is able to direct a certain desired behavior (Huxley 2006). It is in this cause-effect reasoning that the TOD zoning is inserted into the Bangkok's zoning maps.

4.UNSEEING CHINATOWN

The following section examines Chinatown as a place on which the two zoning techniques are imposed. I use Chinatown as an 'interface' of policy translation (Watson, 2009b), the arena in which the technical plan is put into practice. As will be shown, the interface opens up Chinatown as a site of technocratic struggles. By way of introduction, Chinatown is zoned as 'C-3', or a major central business district (figure 1b). The stipulated floor-to-area (FAR) ratio is seven¹³⁶, meaning that the total of a given building's developable floor space is seven times that building's plot (figure 3). Also, a new metro station is being constructed in Chinatown.¹³⁷ Therefore, the TOD zoning applies here, boosting the developable density of the areas within the 500-meter radius of the metro station (figure 2). The section below discusses, in turn, these two zoning techniques and their impact on the space of Chinatown.

4.1 Chinatown as a landuse subcategory

In formulating a landuse subcategory (see section 3.1), the BMA selected one 'prototypical district' to represent the other districts in that subcategory (BMA, 2005). For C-3, Samyan was selected as the prototype to represent Bangkok's other CBDs. Founded in the sixties, Samyan is a market neighborhood of commercial blocks located in close proximity to Chulalongkorn University, its main driver of growth. Samyan is a commercial and mixed-use district. It is characterized by various types of trade ranging from wet markets to used auto parts. The BMA profiled Samyan in terms of its function: the existing landuse types, population density, and building dimensions such as building use, heights, and FAR. These numbers were tabulated to portray the functional character of Samyan. In turn, Samyan is no longer an urban district in whole. Rather, Samyan is abstracted into a statistical figure. The abstract figure, then, represents the other functionally analogous C-3 zones.

¹³⁶ By comparison, the highest FAR ratio, which is for the C-5 zone or Bangkok's downtown core, is a factor of ten (BMA, 2013).

¹³⁷ The location is near Wat Mangkon, a famous Chinese shrine located right at the heart of Charoen Krung Road, one of the oldest Chinese areas of Bangkok.

Does the C-3 label represent the experience of Chinatown, commercial or otherwise? To be sure, designating Chinatown as commercial is a sound, if not commonsensical decision. Indeed, Chinatown has always been one major trading district of Bangkok since its early history in the late-eighteenth century. Today, Chinatown is home to various retail and wholesale businesses, cottage industries, restaurants and food outlets. Here, goods and services range from gold shops to textile stores, from auto repair services to rice storage godowns. Thus, in terms of landuse, Chinatown is for certain commercial in character. And in terms of its role vis-a-vis the city, Chinatown does firmly constitute one of Bangkok's many CBDs or C-3 zones, as it caters for both district-level and city-level residents.

However, there are at least two problems with the conception of the C-3 subcategory: limits of generalization/standardization, and a severe omission of historicity. First, let us recall that C-3 is a standardized figure based on 1) the day-time population (labor in the trade and business sector) and 2) its extrapolated projection (BMA, 2005, p. 5-103). Chinatown is a counterargument to both calculations. First, the day-time labor population ignores in the first place 'other populations' such as tourists and migrant workers who occupy the space of Chinatown, traversing it throughout the day. The static day-time population does not account for these populations that may very well be transient and, yet, instrumental in bringing about the spatial qualities of the 'bustling, chaotic Chinatown' that differ markedly from the prototype Samyan and other C-3 zones. Chinatown is the second densest district of Bangkok. Its population density of 18,615 people per sq.km is substantially larger than other C-3 zones.¹³⁸

Moreover, the day-time population make a *temporal* assumption about the zone by consigning a certain space to a certain time. For example, the commercial zones C-1 to C-5 are calculated based on the zones' *day-time* population. This suggests the role of the zone as employment sites for labor and workers during the day. By contrast, the residential zones R-1 to R-10 use *night-time* populations, assuming that these zones are places of residence after work. However, unlike many other C-3 business districts that die down after working hours, the night-time Chinatown takes on a different profile. At night, Chinatown is characterized by small eateries, sidewalk vendors, and pedestrians and tourists, who begin to take over Yaowarat Road, the main artery of Chinatown, as night falls. Chinatown shifts from a day-time place of trade and commerce, to a more leisurely night-time district. Unfortunately, the subcategorization device

¹³⁸ The density of other C-3 zones are, for example, Pathumwan (6,160 people per sq.km.) and Bang Khen (4526 people per sq.km.) (BMA, 2014, p. 4)

omits this shift. It favors instead functional segregation, a major principle of modernist zoning. As a result, it fails to account for the ebbs and flows of the population peculiar to each 'zone'. Second, a more serious issue is an omission of, and a disrespect for, historicity. There is a whole commercial history of Chinatown that the 'commercial zone' fails to fully consider at best, or misrepresents at worst. One important question arises: are two similarly designated zones really comparable or 'analogous' like the zoning map seeks to produce? That is, do all of the forty-three C-3 zones such as Samyan, the two-hundred-year-old Chinatown, the modern-downtown Sukhumvit, or the eastern sub-center of Bang Kapi, to name a few, share any similarities, functional or otherwise? Chinatown is an old district that predates Bangkok itself. By the eighteenth century, the Chinese traders had settled in modern-day Bangkok, occupying the swampy areas east of the Chao Phraya River (Skinner, 1957; Naengnoi, 1991; Sirikulchayanont, 2009). Following the trade liberalization in the mid-nineteenth century, modern roads were constructed. The roads later became the locus of immigrant Chinese urban space. In this part of old Bangkok, Chinese commercial practices are reflected in the built environment: the godowns, the Chinese shrines, shops, medical clinics and dispensaries. While this is by no means an exhaustive review of Chinese immigrant history, it suffices to say that place-specific practices produce place-specific typologies. As we will see below, this 'difference' provided a basis for contesting the universal zoning map.

The FAR allowance is the case in point. The zoning plan stipulates an FAR factor of seven for all the CBDs (BMA, 2013, p. 41) (figure 3). Again, the intention is to upzone or to promote density. However, the FAR allowance contrasts dramatically with the existing settlement patterns as well as the building typologies (figures 4-5). Rather than a Western-style CBD of tall office blocks, the 'commercial' nature of Chinatown takes on a different physical form. Chinatown is a low-rise district characterized by two- to four-story shophouses (figure 5). Therefore, the existing FARs range between 1.03 to 3.91, barely half of the proposed factor of 7. For example, the neighborhoods of Charoen Chai and Woeng Nakhonkhasem have the FAR of 2.19 and 2.04 respectively (Pimonsathean, 2009; TURCI, 2015, p. 1-45). In fact, as an old district, Chinatown is mostly built up. Chinatown has changed very little in terms of its building density. Conducted 15 years ago, one BMA-commissioned survey reports the average FAR of 2.02 (KMITL, 2001, p. 4-3). In my archival search through the recent planning applications, it is found that between 2010 and 2014, the district office processed approximately eight to twenty-four building permit applications per year. And almost all of the applications were made for two-

to four-story buildings.¹³⁹ Therefore, in order to fulfill the universal vision of the C-3 CBD, the desired FAR of seven would presume the demolish-then-redevelop of the current building stock. As I will show below, the approach favors the landlord.

Contestations arise. The residents feel that the abstract C-3 do not reflect their version of realities. Two Chinatown communities submitted petition letters in order to protest the C-3 label. The letters illuminate the nature of the contestation. The first is Charoen Chai, an old Chinese neighborhood on Charoen Krung Road. In their motion letter, signed by forty-two residents, Charoen Chai petitioned that the zoning color be changed from 'red' to 'light-brown', or from a 'commercial' to 'historic preservation' landuse.¹⁴⁰ The motion explains the long history of their urban settlement. In particular, they call attention to the old buildings that date back to the reign of King Rama V. These buildings, they argue, are 'of historical and architectural value' that 'should even be protected under the National Act on Ancient Monuments'. To support the claim, the movants enclosed a hand-drawn cadastral map documenting the age of each building in the neighborhood as a plea for serious reconsideration. Using age as evidence, the attached map was an effort to add weight to their appeal, establishing detail in face of a comprehensive plan that lacks the same fine-grained resolution. The second was Weong Nakhonkhasem, another Chinatown community located a few blocks from Charoen Chai. They submitted a similar motion to the BMA, calling for a landuse change from a 'commercial landuse' to a 'commercial landuse with historical significance'. They also demanded that the FAR factor be reduced.¹⁴¹ The motion claims that the high FAR ignores the district's historical value that dates back to King Rama V. Worse yet, the FAR give an incentive for speculation and land grabbing. Once in effect, the forthcoming zoning plan would 'open up opportunities for demolition, accelerating the rapid disappearance of the nation's historical roots'.¹⁴²

The BMA dismissed both motions. In the preamble, the planners did acknowledge the historical and architectural values of both Charoen Chai and Weong Nakhonkhasem. They acknowledged that the two communities are nationally famed, historic commercial districts that should be 'commemorated as national heritage for later generations to study and take pride in'. Yet, as

¹³⁹ 2010-2014 Records of Building Construction Permits, Public Works Division, Saphanthawong District Office. Between these years, applications were made for 3 three-story, 36 two-story, 55 three-story, 34 four-story, and 3 five-story buildings.

¹⁴⁰ Motion No. 13-8, Motion Compilation Book, BMA, 2012

¹⁴¹ Motion No. 13-10, Motion Compilation Book, BMA, 2012

¹⁴² Ibid.

tenement housing, the BMA argued, the rental buildings have been left 'dilapidated due to lack of care'.¹⁴³ The BMA proceeded to dismiss the motions on two grounds. First, the two areas functioned as 'commercial zones catering for city-level services, and have high population densities', and have always been 'zoned commercial in the previous zoning plans.'¹⁴⁴ Second, the Building Ordinance of 1999, the BMA suggested, was already in place to control the building heights within the areas.¹⁴⁵ The decisions, although made separately for the two motions, invoked the same rationale and the same legal precedents. I will come back to critically discuss the two grounds in Part V. For now, the decisions were upheld by the Planning Advisory Board with no further comments.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, the residents lamented the decision. Although the BMA recognizes historic preservation as one of the official POs (PO 9), one resident contests that zoning only 'preserves' what it assigns as 'historic preservation landuse', which is Rattanakosin Island, the only historic preservation zone in the entire city of Bangkok (figure 1a). Therefore, the official definition of 'historic preservation', she argues, is severely inadequate because it is too narrowly defined around one historic district, ejecting 'other [historical] parts that made up the city' from the official preservation concern.¹⁴⁷

4.2 Chinatown as a calculable density

If C-3 label is an abstract category, the 500-meter TOD zoning is an abstract geometry. Unlike the actual construction of the metro station, where preliminary engineering survey has to be conducted to carefully appraise the feasibility, no survey was done for the so-called 'walkable areas' surrounding each station. Instead, it was assumed. The assumed radius of walkability was rationalized on the basis of the Planning Department's GIS map. That is, a circle is drawn, quite literally, around every metro station platform in order to designate the zone of walkability and thus higher density (figure 2). Similarly, the map is also used for planning interpretation. To determine whether or not a given edifice is within the radius, the circular extent of the walkable radius is to be strictly calculated on the official GIS interface alone. The BMA requires that the distance between the building and the metro station be measured only on the official construction *blueprint* of each metro station, not from the actual *site* itself, or from the actual experience from walking to the metro station (BMA, 2014). The planners measure a location

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Motions 13-8 and 13-10. Motion Compilation Book, BMA, 2012

¹⁴⁵ The Building Ordinance of 1999 stipulates a maximum of sixteen meters around temples, and of thirty-seven meters for the rest of the areas.

¹⁴⁶ Motions 13-8 and 13-10. Motion Compilation Book, BMA, 2012

¹⁴⁷ Comments raised at the public forum *rue mueangkao rakngao rao cha yu trong nai* [Demolishing Old Town, where will our historical roots be?], Bangkok, Thailand. August 5th, 2012.

based on its numerical length from the station, thus alienating other experiential qualities of the walkable TOD that they seek to promote in the first place. The TOD radius is produced strictly through a view from the official map.

The TOD zoning causes quite a ripple across Bangkok's real estate market. With a higher developable density comes a higher land price. As a result of the 2013 zoning map, land speculations have skyrocketed around current and future metro stations. Investors, real estate agents, and landowners seek to capitalize on their now prime locations. For Chinatown, the 500-meter TOD zoning has led to a series of eviction cases and shortened lease. Motivated by the new prospects of profitable development, the landlords want to turn their properties into high-density development, or sell their land titles to other developers. They already began to, quite abruptly and in many cases without prior notice, shorten the lease from three years to one, and recently to a monthly basis, or have terminated the lease altogether.¹⁴⁸

The TOD zoning is, then, strongly contested by the residents of Chinatown. As tenants, they fear that the zoning provisions will have the effect of demolition, eviction, and uprooting of their housing security. The residents criticize the looming threats upon their areas, lamenting that planners did not see the historical significance of their Chinese urban settlement. In particular, the most vocal is Charoen Chai, the neighborhood that is located right around the upcoming metro station. Here, I will briefly describe their narrative of contention.¹⁴⁹ Their main contention is the planners' ignorance of the neighborhood's spatial history, in at least three aspects: formation history, collective identity, and trade patterns. An old neighborhood of over one hundred years, Charoen Chai has housed four to five generations of Thai Chinese families. They attributed the origin of their historical, cultural, and architectural heritage to the economy of Charoen Krung Road, the first modern road of Bangkok, following the mid-nineteenth century trade liberalization. Upon the completion of the road in 1864, shophouses were built to accommodate a modern form of trade. Soon after, five Chinese shrines were built surrounding the Charoen Chai neighborhood. The shrine was, and still is, the center for Chinese spiritual life

¹⁴⁸ Based on an article in the Bangkok Post by P. Atthakor (published on 2 November 2012, entitled 'Preservation pleas falling on deaf ears' available at <http://www.bangkokpost.com> (accessed on 18 May 2015))

¹⁴⁹ In response to their uncertain future, Charoen Chai residents formed 'Charoen Chai Conservation and Rehabilitation Group'. The task force has to date produced various materials to showcase their community's history and heritage. Key among their projects are a local museum and various publications.

overseas and represents the epitome of Chinese collective identity.¹⁵⁰ The Chinese spiritual life extended far beyond a religious space, but also a space of social gathering, self-help, and Chinese medical care, at a time when such basic needs were extremely rare for early Chinese immigrants. Thanks to the proximity to the shrines, Charoen Chai has developed a particular kind of space: an agglomeration of Chinese ritual-merchandise stores and small eating houses. In what economists call agglomeration economies, Charoen Chai boasts the largest of their kind in Thailand, where Thais of Chinese descent can find all sorts of products that celebrate the Chinese rite of passage, ‘from birth to death’, some of which can no longer be found in China itself after the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵¹ Similarly, like most Chinatowns in Southeast Asia (Jackson, 1975), the dense concentration of eateries are the relics of Chinatown’s past as a site of constant, labor-intensive activities. This is exemplified by the well-known ‘laborer’s noodles’ shop, a popular spot among Bangkok food pilgrims.¹⁵² The place is named as such for their cheap prices and big portions prepared for the Chinese laborers of the past. Another example is an old building of a well-respected Chinese physician, bearing the name of Sow Li, located a few steps from the metro station. In Teochew Chinese, ‘sow’ means to help, and ‘li’ means ‘people’ or ‘the masses’, suggesting the public health conditions of (and underprovided medical care for) the Chinese immigrants during that time (CCRG, n.d.). This reconstructed and somewhat romantic account reflects a spatial history that emerged from the symbiotic relationship between Charoen Chai and its surrounding economies.

Despite their elaborate narrative, Charoen Chai residents see their local history denied. In dismissing the petitions, The BMA claims that the Building Ordinance of 1999 is already in place to restrict the building heights at thirty-seven meters. This implies that this Ordinance already prevents overly tall buildings from cropping up. However, I want to highlight that while a large-scale project of larger than 10,000 sq.m. cannot take the form of a tall, *vertical* structure, it may very well take place *horizontally*. That is, rather than building a high-rise building of 10,000 sq.m., the landowner can equally build a low-rise one by redeveloping adjacent plots into one big project. This is where the unintended politics of technical rationality comes in. The 500-meter radius conveniently plays into the hands of Chinatown landlords who tend to already

¹⁵⁰ Comments raised at the panel discussion *yankao lao krung: thima thipai lae kwamplianplaeng kong yan tangtang nai krungthep tungtae adit tueng pachuban* [Old districts recount stories: backgrounds and change in Bangkok’s old districts from past to present]. Bangkok, Thailand. April 9th, 2014.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² My translation from the Thai name *บะหมี่จັบกั๊ง* (*bami chapkang*). *Chapkang* is a Thai adoption of the Teochew Chinese pronunciation of 雜工, which means laborers or manual workers.

possess a large number of contiguous land parcels in the first place. The entire row of Charoen Chai shophouses, for example, are owned by Chumbot Pantip Foundation, a foundation of a grandchild of King Rama V.¹⁵³ Similarly, across the street, the Plaeng Nam neighborhood is owned by the Crown Property Bureau (who is now preparing redevelopment plans as well, much to the residents' chagrin). The Chumbot Pantip Foundation has terminated the leases, allowing the tenants to rent instead on a monthly basis and requiring them to move out upon notice. Failure to do so would result in a fine, per day, of one month of rent. To worsen the matter, Charoen Chai is tucked between two metro stations located 700 meters apart. One resident suggests that 'everything here [in between the two stations] is evictable', circling her finger around Charoen Chai's location on the map (see figure 2).¹⁵⁴

Let me share a few other examples that speak against the technical objectivity. In one public forum, one attendee dismissed altogether the objective, neutral basis of the TOD density zoning, arguing that the metro and the TOD zoning are not naturally the catalyst for demolition.¹⁵⁵ Instead, he questioned the role of human choice that went into producing what is otherwise passed as a technical calculation. The decision to increase density, he argues, descended directly from the 'vision of the people who laid out the actual plan' and 'it is ultimately up to those people, whether they see this area as a preservation or cultural space or not. It has little to do with the metro'. In fact, we can count at least five counterarguments against objectivity. First, in one of my interviews, one senior planner confirmed the role of human decision in the deliberation process of the Chinatown planning motions. As a rule, the zoning provisions are intended to be, he reveals, a 'comprehensive plan for the entire city'. Therefore, where there is a metro station, the TOD zoning would follow as an automatic condition. An exemption for the Chinatown station, he adds, is technically possible, but it would constitute an 'exception, thus violating the standards'. Second, when I asked about the rationale behind the specific figure of 500 meters (as opposed to, say, 421, 476, 658, meters, or any other imaginable figure), two planners similarly claim it is an international standard used by major cities in the world. Third, they admit that real estate interests have lobbied, albeit unsuccessfully, for a radius as large as 1000 meters. Fourth, the planners also add that, given the tropical climate of Bangkok, a shorter radius of perhaps 300 meters would be more

¹⁵³ Ironically, the current Bangkok Governor has a share in Chumbot Pantip Foundation.

¹⁵⁴ Interview, April 30th, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ Comments raised at the public forum *rue mueangkao rakngao rao cha yu trong nai* [Demolishing Old Town, where will our historical roots be?], Bangkok, Thailand. August 5th, 2012.

appropriate and 'walkable'.¹⁵⁶ Fifth, the BMA did make an exception for the historic district, exempting it completely from TOD zoning (BMA, 2013, pp. 62-65). Like much of the social world, numbers, too, can shift. There is little scientific objectivity behind the round numbers. Numbers are plastic. These various instances suggest the salient role of subjective judgment, the human choice, that contradicts the claim to 'universal application'.

5. ENCOUNTERING A SPACE OF DIFFERENCE:

a thin category and a careless geometry

This section ventures to conceptualize a space of difference, the kind of space that disrupts the universalism of zoning. Chinatown exemplifies a poor fit between simplified bureaucratic containers and the complex thing we call land. To be sure, the subcategorization device (e.g. C-1, C-2, C-3) marks an important planning novelty in Bangkok. It shows the planners' heightened sensitivity to a wide variety of urban economies. The planners duly recognized that the 'commercial zone' was not monolithic: not all commercial zones serve the same scales and purposes. However, such recognition remains a functionalist one. In viewing land as an entity that can and should perform one discretely prescribed function, land is cast as landuse. City dwellers are cast as 'producers' and 'users' of services and goods in a particular piece of land.

In such a thin formula, zoning caused misalignments because it cannot accommodate particularity. First, C-3 presents a problem for both space and time. Despite being true and precise at a certain time for a certain place (i.e. the prototypical Samyam) are used to regulate the experience of the central commercial districts everywhere and at anytime. Therefore, while the recent zoning maps are sensitive to commercial stratification, it is blind to the multiple particularities of each of the 'zones', denying their internal variations and subsuming them under a standardized category. The Chinatown residents' pleas for a landuse change from a 'commercial landuse' to a 'historic preservation landuse' or to a 'commercial landuse with historical significance' suggest another 'depth' of commercial experience. Second, as the zoning map seeks to join zones into the larger order, it ignores the local order. By inserting the zones into the city-wide hierarchy of functions, the zoning map decouples the zone from its immediate context, from other aspects of the complex thing we call land. From the aforementioned interviews and public forums, the residents' contentions point to other land-based claims that are both symbolic (e.g. historical identity, architectural value, and place attachment) and material (e.g. livelihoods and housing security). These claims to land suggest that there are

¹⁵⁶ Interview, August 18th, 2015.

more issues to a 'zone' than just its naked function. There is more to land than just landuse. Landuse is a poor arbiter of land, for the thinness of the former does not have enough room, technical and ethical, to mediate the thickness of the latter, which is historically tied to occupational livelihoods, communal cohesion, and the general will and rights to dwell.

Similarly, the TOD zoning is a result of technical rationalization. It involves a high degree of space-behavior determinism. Despite the unresolved empirical effectiveness of TOD (Cervero et al, 2002; Canepa, 2007) and despite no feasibility studies conducted beforehand, such hopeful rationalization led the BMA to approvingly underwrite the TOD zoning. However, the map's blank surface, on which the planners operate, belies a more complex urban geography. Intended as a well-meaning intervention, the 500-meter TOD zoning, became a careless geometry upon implementation. I use 'careless' not in an accusatory sense, but in an analytical sense. I started the research wanting to analyze what the 500-meter radius fails to see or 'care'. The geometry, I argue, does not care for two conditions of Chinatown: sociospatial forms and housing tenure. First, high density encourages an architectural form that is at odds with the preexisting sociospatial forms. The dense urban form that the TOD zoning desires - the string of intensely built nodes sprouting up along a transit line - contrasts with Chinatown's low-rise rows of shophouses (figure 5). There is a worrying contrast between the way zoning is administered and the way the neighborhood space of Chinatown is formed. Zoning treats a land parcel as an individual unit of calculable density. It views a discrete building as an appropriate site of intervention. By contrast, the historical emergence of land subdivision in this part of town is collective and mutually constituting, as exemplified by the building typologies and the agglomerate economies.

Second and more importantly, although the TOD claims neutrality in its universal application (which I earlier refuted), not everyone has the same agency to act upon the hoped-for density. The occupant of a given property is not necessarily the owner of the property. In this regard, the TOD zoning fails to see one important characteristic of Chinatown: housing tenure. The zoning map assumes an even, equal field of privately held lands. In fact, there exist historical landlord-tenant relations. There exist very entrenched, strategic land interests waiting to act upon opportunities. Only one half of Chinatown (55.31%) is freehold tenure and owned by a few private individuals. The rest of the area is leasehold from major landowners, e.g. the Crown Property Bureau, temples, state agencies, and single private individuals (KMITL, 2001, p. 3-30). The area we know as Chinatown was once considered an undeveloped, 'suburban' land in the

late-eighteenth century. Given that land was sparsely populated and was thus considered abundant until the late-nineteenth century (Ouyyanont and Sajjanand, 2001), the past monarchs quite freely gave away their land to their princes, princesses, and the aristocrats. Following the trade liberalization in the mid-nineteenth century, these members of the nobility, in turn, leased out their properties to Chinese traders. The historical tenure patterns have been persistent until today. For examples, four major neighborhoods in Chinatown, Woeng Nakhonkhasem, Charoen Chai, Loen Rit, and Plaeng Nam, are all owned by these landed elites.¹⁵⁷ A novel planning intervention that claims to provide benefits for all, in fact, opens up opportunities only for a certain group of people, i.e. the *owner* of density. Density should not be framed simply as a numerical figure, a calculation of housing units per land unit. Narrowly conceived, density not only poorly understands the fraught housing tenure, but also serves to justify eviction. An environmentally progressive policy such as urban density, carelessly formulated and hastily executed, ends up producing a socially backward effect.

6. CONCLUSION

The paper advances two arguments. First, the zoning techniques of landuse subcategorization and TOD zoning are formulated through the abstract devices of classification, hierarchization, and linear rationalization of cause and effect. Second, limits of such techniques are, in turn, exposed when they are imposed upon a space of difference. The space of difference is fraught with its own history and contested land tenure. Well-meaning but ill-informed, zoning forgoes histories. It unsees other aspects of land beyond its function and density. My argument is not that land is too complex to be reduced to 'zones' (maybe it is), or that every space is 'different' (maybe it is). Rather, my argument is that such difference is actively unseen under the banner of technical knowledge.

The most worrying concern is that, despite being a human choice, the functionalist-universalist interpretation wins. The way in which the BMA dismissed the planning motions submitted by the Chinatown residents suggests how technical rationality trumps other ways of seeing. The justifications are based on their confined perception of Chinatown's commercial function and its role in the larger city. To view Chinatown as 'commercial landuse' is to privilege functional similarity over differences. Similarly, the decision to not exempt the TOD zoning exception for Chinatown is a decision to uphold the universal application of standards. My purpose here is not

¹⁵⁷ Woeng Nakhonkhasem is now owned by TCC Land Company, Charoen Chai by the Chumbot Pantip Foundation, and Loen Rit and Plaeng Nam are owned by the Crown Property Bureau.

to point out the rhetorical obvious: the particular is different the universal or vice versa. Rather, the purpose is to highlight the undue weight of zoning in Bangkok (and Thailand). To be sure, high-density zoning in Lower Manhattan caused uproar, too, in the Chinatown of New York in the 80s . However, the residents managed to successfully challenge such imposition through various means such as local groups and court appeals (Lin, 1998, pp. 150-156). By contrast, Bangkok is a city that lacks such appeal mechanisms, and also a city that equates planning with zoning. Abstract as it is, the zoning plan is used the only source of authority, the ultimate truth, and the sole basis on which the planners arbitrate dissent.

Universal zoning is often viewed as an urban planning specter of the bygone twentieth century. Chinatown itself has been studied as a site of modernist interventions such as clearance and demolition (Anderson, 1991; Yeoh and Kong, 1994). However, such modernist zoning is alive and well as we progress into the twenty-first century to battle new urban imperatives.

Sustainability and its many cognate concepts (e.g. resilience, compactness, etc) are touted as the goals of contemporary urban planning. The lesson from Bangkok shows that the very means to achieve such a difficult end is a dangerously facile one. Despite its commendable recognition of the new urban problems, the new zoning regime still remains rigid in its character. The modernist city planning of Bangkok does not have at their disposal postmodern planning vocabularies, or the kind of vocabularies that recognize difference. As such, every space in the vast city including Chinatown, or Little India for that matter, is filtered through thin grids and careless geometries.

FIGURES

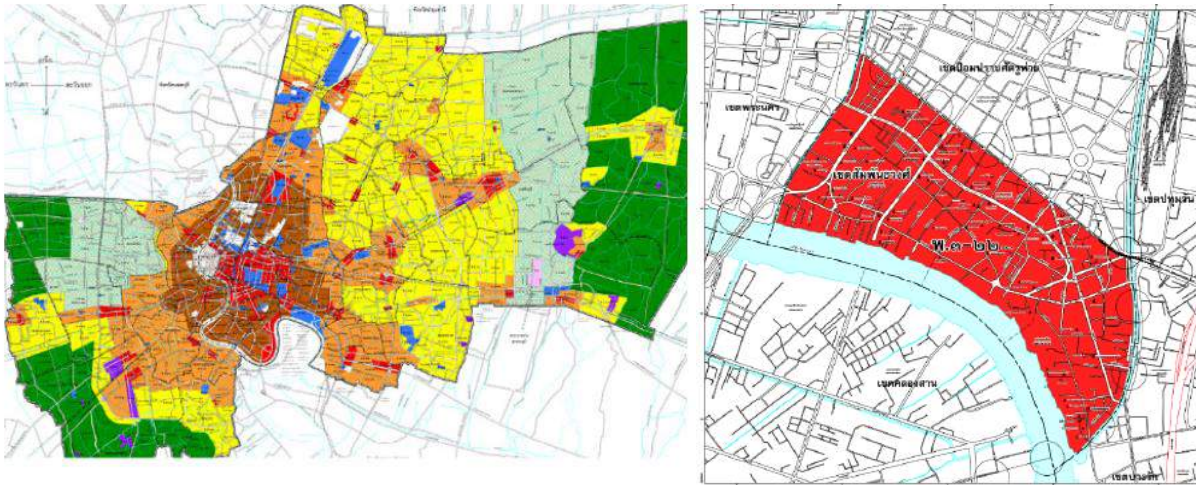


Figure 7.1a: 2013 landuse zoning map of Bangkok (source: BMA)

Figure 7.1b: Chinatown zoned as a 'red' C-3 landuse (source: BMA)

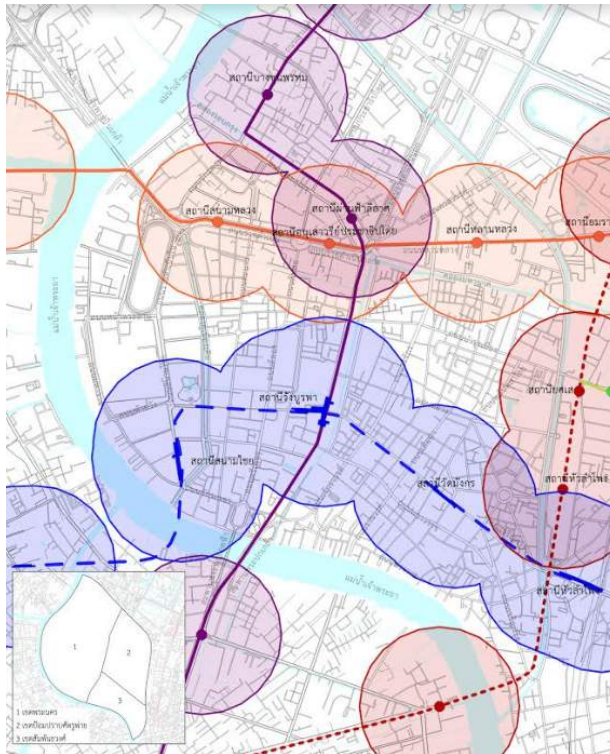


Figure 7.2: illustration of the 500-meter radii of increased density zoning (source: BMA)

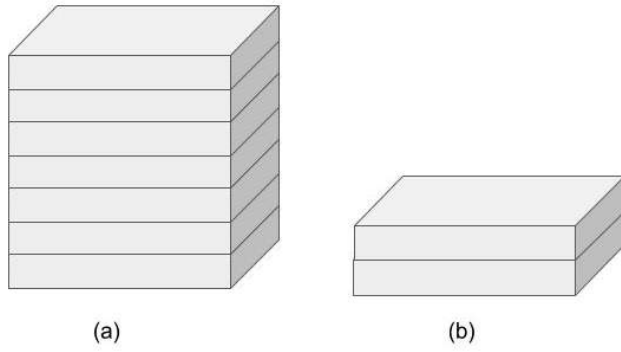


Figure 7.3: illustration of the FAR (floor-area-ratio) factor of 7:1 and the FAR factor of 2:1 (assuming a ground coverage of one) (author's rendition)



Figure 7.4: settlement patterns in Chinatown (source: BMA)



Figure 7.5: building typologies in Chinatown (author's photographs)

Chapter 8

PAST

1. INTRODUCTION

Located in a once rural area that connected Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City's central historic core, and Cholon, its Chinese entrepot on the west, Thien Ton Temple is a rather assuming building.¹⁵⁸ Instead of a grand, welcoming marble gate, the visitor walks through a pair of narrow metal fence panels, only to be greeted with a even more humble-looking temple. Instead of sporting an elaborate architecture that befits a religious site, Thien Ton Temple is housed in a modernist concrete building in fading yellow paint (figure 1). If it were not for a small faux pagoda-roof and an ornamental frieze (both were added later), one would mistake the temple for another ordinary building tucked away in the bustling Cholon. Yet, the temple boasts a plaque that says *Di tích lịch sử cấp thành phố* (city-level historical relics). In 2011, the temple was recognized as historical heritage for its active role during resistance against the 'foreign invasion' of the French and the Americans between 1940s and 1960s. The temple's secretive, subdued architecture is befitting, after all. Its marginal location had advantages. The temple has a secret tunnel and rooms in which the revolutionary cadres operated during the war days. Thich Minh Duc, the temple's first abbot (1954-1971), was posthumously awarded a Medal of Resistance (*Huân chương Kháng chiến*) for his service during the wars. On February 17, 2011, the temple trustees organized a grand ceremony to honor the award, pleasantly seeing their temple elevate to the prestigious rank of 'historical relics' (*Di tích lịch sử*) – the official heritage program that started soon after the war in 1975.

In this chapter, I interrogate the idea of heritage as a 'past'. I pay attention to the techniques employed by present-day actors as they revisit the past in order to strengthen their present historical narrative. That there may exist a 'present historical narrative' should sound like an

¹⁵⁸ This chapter was previously submitted as a journal article manuscript to the journal *Social and Cultural Geography* in November 2015. It received a revise-and-resubmit. I have withdrawn the submission to save it for the book manuscript.

oxymoron, as the phrase conflates temporalities. However, this is precisely my point. History, or historical narrative to be precise, is constructed in the present to render a certain view of the past. My focus is not on textual historiography, the archives as such, but on the past built environment and its role in this history-writing project. The humble-looking Thien Ton Temple is my point of entry. The temple epitomizes the heritage-making project in Ho Chi Minh City in general, and in Cholon in particular. As I will show in greater detail, in Vietnam, a structure may be recognized as heritage not for its aesthetic, historical value – today’s common rationale for heritage recognition - but for a historiographical one.

Cholon offers a twofold theoretical contribution to heritage studies. First, it expands our understanding of how (and whether) minority heritage is memorialized, particularly in a country where one ethnic group, the Viet (*kinh*), is otherwise predominant. The general convention is that minority heritage often receives belated recognition, or none at all (Turbridge, 1984). However, in Vietnam, the decision whether or not to recognize minority Chinese (*hoa*) heritage is further impeded by two other political contexts: the age-old Sino-Vietnamese tension and the contemporary socialist ideologies. Second, another layer of complexity is the context of cultural bureaucracy in the Global South, where cultural heritage is a rather recent policy arena. Therefore, the country’s institutional capacity is not fully developed or comprehensive enough to effectively manage its material past. As a result, the Chinatown that we see here is not a neoliberal multiculturalism witnessed in other Chinatowns, where the state actively promotes the marketable versions of multi-ethnic heritage (Loo, 2013; Yeoh, 2005; Yeoh and Kong, 1984; Anderson; 1991). Rather, heritage-making in Cholon reflects a policy nonchalance towards minority heritage in general, and the dominant political ideologies (i.e. socialism and Viet ethnonationalism) in particular in confining what can be known as heritage. In this regard, Ho Chi Minh City’s Chinatown offers a fertile ground, an interface that intersects ethnic geography, cultural policy, and political ideologies.

This chapter consists three parts: theory, heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City, and heritage-making in Cholon. First, I briefly outline theoretical perspectives that inform my analysis. I take as a point of departure the common premise that heritage is constructed. For heritage to be recognized as such, it entails authorization. That is, heritage is not given and does not already exist ‘out there’, but instead has to be authenticated. Further, not all heritage is the same. Borrowing Hardy’s (1988) useful distinction, we can speak of *conservative heritage* and *radical heritage*. While the former is made to support the status quo, elite exploits, and official

historiography, the latter takes a broader view of heritage as social histories, plural actors, and their contestations. I discuss on the former, explaining how Ho Chi Minh City's conservative heritage is underpinned by conservative values and ideology, particularly those of socialism. In Part Two, I set the context of heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City. In particular, I focus on one main instrument used in the process of heritage recognition: the heritage inventory. I investigate in ways in which heritage is constructed, paying attention to the (1) types, (2) hierarchy, and (3) rationale through which a given structure is authenticated as heritage. In addition, I refine the idea of heritage as construction, zooming into its progression. While we understand well that heritage is constructed, I show that heritage-making is not final or complete. Spanning decades, the project can be pending, tied up with the bureaucratic processes of a developing country, so much so we can speak of heritage-in-waiting. In addition to the well-established list, the peculiarity of Ho Chi Minh shows that there also exists a 'tentative list', pointing to the expansion of what we recognize as heritage. In Part Three, I introduce the case of heritage-making in Cholon. Here, I document how the state's official conservative heritage is played out in the predominantly Chinese area, showing how the official policy trickles down to the ethnic district rich in its own heritage. As I will explain, the official policy registers mostly sites and structures that play into the socialist nation's historical narrative. Where heritage of Chinese ancestry is recognized, such as Thien Ton temple, the recognition pays regard simply to a certain set of values.

2. HERITAGE-MAKING AND CONSERVATIVE HERITAGE

I take as a point of departure the common premise that heritage is not given. Rather, for it to be recognized and circulated as such, heritage has to be authorized. The term heritagization or heritage-making, as opposed to heritage, thus offers a greater analytical clarity for the purpose of analysis. As Harvey (2001) succinctly points out, heritage is more suitably thought of as a verb, than a noun. As a process, heritagization is a methodological reminder that heritage does not already exist in nature; it is a process question that the research methods need to uncover. Heritage is a process of authentication (Peleggi, 1996; Cosgrove, 1993; Lowenthal, 1985). Viewed as an act of validation, heritage unsettles a few questions for the analyst: What gets authenticated and what does not? And who gets to authenticate? These questions suggest that there is no heritage as such. Heritage results from the process of selection and authentication of the material past (Peleggi, 1996, p. 445). In this regard, given that heritage emerges by choice not by chance, the term 'intervention' may be a better term than 'preservation' to describe our practice of heritage (Handler, 1987, p. 138). For 'simply to appreciate or protect a relic, let alone

to embellish or imitate it, affects its form or our impressions. Just as selective recall skews memory and subjectivity shapes historical insight, so manipulating antiquities refashions their appearance and meaning (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 263). Taking heritage as authentication further, Handler (1987) studies the hegemonic potential of heritage, arguing that the authentication process directly addresses not only what made as heritage itself, but also what is left behind. By 'designating certain things as 'historical monuments', putting a picket fence around, for example, a certain 'historic' house, implicitly says that the things outside the fence are not historical' (Lewis, 1987, p. 25, cited in Handler, 1987, p. 138). Introducing insights from literary theory, Duncan and Duncan (1988) further deconstruct built landscapes by 'denaturalizing' them. Like texts, landscapes are not natural and innocent. They are not transparent windows through which built reality may be unproblematically viewed. Following Barthes (1986), the authors suggest we problematize signs in landscapes to reveal the ideologies and values ascribed to them.

If landscapes are filled with ideologies (Duncan and Duncan, 1988), and the image of a city is a reflection of the dominant group's values (Tunbridge, 1984), there may very well exist something on the other side of the fence. In reviewing writings on heritage and historical geographies, Hardy (1988) makes a further distinction between conservative heritage and radical heritage. In the former, heritage is used to support the status quo, nostalgia, and pastiche of history, whereby 'the dead governed the living', whereby popular consciousness is molded to suit the needs of a dominant class and their criteria of taste, selection, and 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977). By contrast, radical heritage engages a critical dialogue with the past, studying the social relations that governed the production of past townscapes rather than simply reflecting an aesthetic interest as such. The account pays attention to 'histories from below' or 'people's history', where the experience of the oppressed is studied in its own right and as an integral part of wider historical processes. The rise of the radical-heritage perspective aligned with the rise of social historical geography as a subfield that critiqued empiricist, data-oriented research, and focused in its stead on facilitating or constraining social structures (Butlin, 1987).

In urban Southeast Asia where the state across the political spectrum retains the monopoly of heritage-making, celebrations of conservative heritage abound in the way the city memorializes its sites and structures. Heritage is a primary instrument in the 'discovery' or subsequent nurturing of a national identity (Graham et al, 2000). In Singapore, despite its multiple sites of contested memories (Yeoh, 1996), the city-state has a favorable memory with colonialism. The

colonial administration quarter in the old days, for example, is now commemorated as a 'Civic and Cultural District' (Huang et al, 1995; Kong and Yeoh, 1994). Similarly, the reconstructed Singapore River portrays the icons sanctioned by the modern state's value and its historiography of a young nation on the rise (Huang and Chang, 2003). In Burma, where Buddhism is made an official religion of the state, the military government promotes Buddhist sites to propagate the Buddhist faith and legitimate its authority through its patronage of the 'politicized Pagodas' (Philp and Mercer, 2002). The bicentennial celebrations of Bangkok in 1982 is not a celebration of Bangkok as a human settlement per se, but a celebration of Bangkok as the seat of the royal Chakri dynasty, thus reinforcing but 'one dimension of urbanism' (Askew, 1996, p. 195). Postcolonial regimes are not necessarily more 'liberal' in the ways they memorialize spaces. In fact, they may very well enforce their own vision of the noble past. Kusno (2000) shows that although postcolonial Indonesia seeks to distance from the colonial past, the postcolonial regime in the sixties had its own way to reconstruct and revise the country's historical vision that is not less ruthless than its colonial antecedent. In Malaysia, the nationalist government casts the image of a modern Islamic state through of the capital city Kuala Lumpur (Loo, 2013; Bunnell, 2004). Here, the reinvented Islamic motifs are seen in the city's architecture and urban forms, old and new, such as the Petronas towers, the National Mosque, and the new city Putrajaya. As I will show below, the Vietnamese government, too, has endorsed a particular version of heritage inscribed in the environment of the predominantly Chinese Cholon.

3. LIST AS AN INSTRUMENT

In this section, I set the context of heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City. Combing through the record archives, I draw upon a series of government decisions (*Quyết Định*) pertaining to heritage, decreed between the years 1976 to 2012. In particular, I focus on the main instrument: the heritage inventory. The official Vietnamese name is *danh sách các công trình, địa điểm đã được quyết định xếp hạng di tích*, literally translating as 'Inventory of buildings and sites, which have been classified as heritage', hereafter called the inventory. In essence, the inventory is a registry that lists sites and structures of significant. It outlines the name, location, date, and other attributes associated with a given site. The first installment began as early as in 1976, the year that saw the victory of the Socialist party and the later Reunification of the country.

The inventory is an instrument through which the state authenticates what counts as heritage.

Informed by the aforementioned theoretical perspectives, I see the inventory as a form of selection, a demarcation of the ‘fence’ (Lewis, 1986). In this manner, the inventory entails politics, because the act of listing itself is political. Listing is a technology that involves a selection of what counts as heritage in two ways. The first is the term ‘heritage’ itself. Heritage is a loaded concept. It entails a range of affective, sentimental, patriotic, and even biological undercurrents. To avoid *a priori* designation, I have struggled to locate an English word — whether it be a literal translation, a perfect equivalent, or a satisfying shorthand — for the Vietnamese term *di tích*. The official term, *di tích*, employed in the heritage inventory is, in fact, not heritage. The term *di tích* translates more closely to ‘relics’. In contradistinction, *di sản* means ‘heritage’, or something that has passed down. Settling for the term ‘relic’, I admit to a risk of mistranslation, yet find use in the basic translation. The word choice is very telling. Introduced in the 1970s in the country’s first inventory, the word is still in use today. *Di tích* has a strong archaeological, antiquarian undertone, evoking the remains, remnants, or residue of something of the past. As I will show below, the term governs a range of possible outcomes from the start, constraining its purview around objects surviving from an earlier time, especially ones of historical interest.

The second aspect of the listing politics is the scale of significance. Two main authorities are in charge of such inventory. First, as a national-government agency, the Hanoi-based Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sports has authority to determine ‘national-level’ relics (*di tích quốc gia*). The national-level relics are further divided into regular national-level and exceptional national-level (*di tích quốc gia đặc biệt*). Second, the Municipal People’s Committee (MPC)¹⁵⁹, the city government of Ho Chi Minh City, is in charge of city-level relics (*di tích cấp thành phố*). In specific, the MPC’s cultural arm, the Department of Culture and Sports (*Sở Văn hóa và Thể thao*), embarked upon the inventory project between the years 2011 and 2012. They have listed the city’s sites and structures that warrant legal protection and care¹⁶⁰. Within these scales, the relic sites are further divided into three categories: archaeology, art and architecture, and national history. Although the MCP has authority on its own relic sites, they nonetheless employ the same set of top-down vocabulary.

¹⁵⁹ The People’s Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

¹⁶⁰ Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee. (2012). Inventory of structures and sites listed as relics in Ho Chi Minh City; and Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee. (2010). Inventory of historical and cultural relics in Ho Chi Minh City for the years 2010-2020, issued in Decision No. 5360/QĐ-UBND, 25th November 2010.

A few examples help characterize the inventory, revealing its underpinning ideology as a principle of organization. For the 'national history' category, socialist ideologies imbue the listing. To date, there exists only one exceptional-national-level relic (*di tích quốc gia đặc biệt*) in the entire Ho Chi Minh City: the Independence Palace (figure 2). The Ministry of Culture narrates the Palace listing as a site that 'marks a complete victory against the US, which culminated in the Liberation of the South and the reunification of the country'¹⁶¹. The listing makes no reference to the contested history of the antecedent building that it replaces: the Palais du Gouverneur-Général à Saigon, an extravagant French Baroque building destroyed during the war (Wright, 1991) (figure 3). Listed on June 25th, 1976, the Independence Palace was among the first batch of relics freshly listed after the Reunification, a time when a need to communicate the socialist victory was key. Similarly, in the other categories (archaeology and, art and architecture) the listed relics include, perhaps not too surprisingly, the city's major archaeological sites. The Ministry of Culture have listed many of Ho Chi Minh City's ancient sites, museums, pottery kilns, court buildings, assembly halls, and pagodas and temples.¹⁶² Today, these sites are considered national-level relics of exceptional value, reflecting conventional canon of Vietnamese fine arts and archaeology.

From the late 1970s and 1990s, the government significantly expanded their inventory, registering 25 relics under the 'national history' category. Here, national history is synonymous with social history. Very revealingly, of the 25 relics, 22 are sites that commemorate the country's socialist history.¹⁶³ Examples include a memorial site of the former president Tôn Đức Thắng, the tomb of the Vietnamese nationalist Phan Châu Trinh, and bases and headquarters of the Communist Party. Moreover, mundane buildings, such as printing house and medical facilities, were recognized for their association with the Communist Party's past exploits and events. In addition to the publicly visible premises, the government made an effort to include underground operations. For example, secret cellars and tunnels containing weapons or confidential documents during the American war were among the listed.¹⁶⁴ The inventory's expansion of 'national history' continued until as recently as the early 2000s. The government listed more sites that enhanced the country's wartime struggle. For example, The Rung Sat

¹⁶¹ Government Decision No. QĐ 77A/VHQĐ, dated June 25th, 1976

¹⁶² Among the officially listed sites are Hung Loi pottery kiln, Museum of Vietnamese History, and Ho Chi Minh City Museum (Gia Long Palace), and the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City.

¹⁶³ The three exceptions are the assembly hall of Hóc Môn District, Bình Đông ancestral shrine, and Phong Phú ancestral shrine.

¹⁶⁴ The secret arsenal in District 10 (Decision No. QĐ 1288 /VH/QĐ, dated November 16th, 1988), and the secret tunnel (Decision No. QĐ 2009/1998/QĐBVHTT, dated September 26th, 1998).

Special Zone, a mangrove swamp established as a military region during the wars in 1950s and 1960s, was listed in 2004. The Địa đạo Tunnel was listed in 2004. By contrast, the city's world-renowned landmarks built by the colonial French, such as the Saigon Notre Dame Basilica and the Saigon Central Post Office, have yet to be officially inventoried as relics (figure 4).¹⁶⁵ Perhaps, this is not too surprising. As historian Tim Doling notes, for the public officials, a decision to preserve some buildings may open up a range of sensitive issues related to the French and American colonial periods, the type of debate the authorities want to avoid.¹⁶⁶

Heritage is not definitive. Ho Chi Minh City's inventory reveals that heritage is not a completed project with full closure. Instead, heritagization is a work in progress, especially in a city beginning to rediscover the (political) value of its material past. In Ho Chi Minh City, a growing number of buildings and sites continued to be made 'relics', further expanding the original 1976 inventory. I draw attention to multiple versions of the inventory in order to trace what constitutes heritage and how the notion has been refined. The expansion, I argue, also reflects shift in the notion of relic/heritage. Importantly, these relics have different temporalities. The listing decisions come at various points in time, reflecting the political sentiment of the time. The first batch of relics were inducted between the years 1976 and 1988 during the Cold War. As I earlier mentioned, this wave is saliently characterized by buildings associated with the country's socialist historiography. The first two monuments listed in 1976 are the aforementioned Independence Palace and the building of the US Embassy. Shortly thereafter, in 1979, the famous underground tunnels of Cu Chi was included. In 1988, the government registered a wide array of buildings of the Vietnamese Socialist Party, such as the locations of 1929 Annam Communist Party, the Vietnamese Youth Association, and one secret cellar that 'contained war weapons used against the USA'.¹⁶⁷

The year 1988 also marked one important shift. In November 1988, the government began to recognize, for the first time, religious architecture, such as pagodas and temples. The shift reflected a cultural policy awareness that was contemporaneous with other countries in the regions like Thailand and Singapore of the late 1970s to the early 1980s (Askew, 1996; Kong

¹⁶⁵ Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. (2010). Inventory of historical and cultural relics in Ho Chi Minh City for the years 2010-2020, issued in Decision No. 5360/QĐ-UBND, 25th November 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Tim Doling (2014) Ho Chi Minh City's vanishing colonial architecture <http://observers.france24.com/en/20141013-ho-chi-minh-colonial-architecture-vanishing> (accessed on November 25th, 2015).

¹⁶⁷ Government Decision No. 77A/VHQĐ, dated 25/6/1976; Decision No. 54-VHTT/QĐ dated 29/4/1979; Decision No.1288-VHQĐ, dated 16/11/1988, respectively.

and Yeoh, 1994). Since the beginning, the national government has been dominant in determining relics in Ho Chi Minh City. The role of the city-government MPC did not come to the fore until 2005, when they were allowed to authorize 'city-level relics' (*di tích cấp thành phố*). The authority saw an expansion of the inventory. Again, the socialist ideology carried over to the city scale as the city government has continued the mission to uncover Ho Chi Minh City's many socialist relics. However, more 'vernacular heritage' has indeed been acknowledged and ongoing to these days. As recently as in 2012, the MPC issued a decision granting the relics status for Châu Hưng Temple, Phú Thạnh Ancestral Hall, Nguyễn Ảnh Thủ shrine, and an old city house in District 12. In the same year, the People's Committee also proposed to consider listing the city's four famous tourist attractions as national-level relics: the Ho Chi Minh City Museum, the Vietnamese History Museum, the People's Court, and the Municipal Theatre.¹⁶⁸ By law, like the previously listed relics, these areas will be zoned for protection, and all construction activities are prohibited.

Most importantly, in addition to the series of additions over several decades, the MPC issued a landmark heritage masterplan in 2010. The city government provided a tentative list of sites to be considered for listing between the years 2010 and 2010¹⁶⁹. The masterplan, I argue, suggests another heritage temporality. I call these sites *future relics*, once again conflating temporalities. Their temporality of becoming heritage is not ascertained by their intrinsic quality (i.e. value, style, integrity), but more importantly tied up in the official processes of documentation and certification. The future relics are symptomatic of the Global-south bureaucracy, where the government on the one hand seeks to endorse heritage, yet on the other lacks the current capacity to immediately do so. What results is a rather pending nature of sites and structures. To illustrate, the masterplan makes recommendations for sites at two future stages of listing: (1) those that meet the criteria and can thus be recommended for listing (*đủ tiêu chí đề nghị xếp hạng di tích*), and (2) those that are simply recommended for preservation (*đề nghị bảo tồn*). While the former will join the established inventory of buildings that warrant legal protection, the latter will not enjoy the same status.

As with the previously listed ones, these new relics will be recognized on the basis of their architectural value (*giá trị kiến trúc*), where age, exceptional beauty, and architectural integrity

¹⁶⁸ Decisions No. 1206-1209/QĐ-BVHTTD, dated 29/3/2012.

¹⁶⁹ Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. (2010). Inventory of historical and cultural relics in Ho Chi Minh City for the years 2010-2020, issued in Decision No. 5360/QĐ-UBND, dated 25th November 2010.

serve as the criteria. In the meantime, each of these future relics is scheduled for further research, between the years 2006 and 2015, to establish their history and significance. Importantly, the 2010 heritage masterplan also introduced a novelty. In this long-range plan, the government came to recognize a wider variety of building typologies. In particular, the 'art and architecture' category, is divided into five typologies: (1) buildings of religious significance, (2) old urban architecture, (3) old mansions, (4) old city quarters, and (5) ancient tombs.¹⁷⁰ While this is to be celebrated, the experience of Cholon shows the limits of their application. The next section investigates heritage-making in District 5, explaining how the politics of listing, particularly the five new typologies, trickles down to the predominantly Chinese district, recognizing some things and forgoing others.

4. Locating conservative heritage in the Chinese district of Cholon

As an old district of Ho Chi Minh City, it is no surprise that Cholon is home to many relics listed the state's inventory (table 1). In the administrative map, Cholon covers the Districts 5 and 6 of Ho Chi Minh City, located 10 kilometers from the downtown District 1. Over the years, the official scheme has recognized what Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown is famous for: religious architecture. Like other Chinese diasporic enclaves elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the streets of Cholon are dotted with temples and ancestral halls (*chùa* and *hội quán*), communal temples (*đình*), and pagodas. For example, these include the famous the Hà Chương, Ôn Lăng, and Minh Hương ancestral halls, and the internationally famed Tuệ Thành temple that attracts foreign visitors from East Asian countries who come to pay a visit throughout the year (figure 5). These temples scatter across Cholon, particularly in the district's oldest wards (Wards 10-12). The pattern reflects the original settlement of each Chinese dialect group in Ho Chi Minh City between the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Tuệ Thành and Ôn Lăng Assembly Halls for the residents of Guangzhou origin, Nghĩa An of Chaozhou, Hà Chương of Zhangzhou, Tam Sơn of Fuzhou, and Quỳnh Phủ of Hainan (Doling, 2014, p. 29).

It is in Cholon that the Vietnamese politics of heritage listing is most palpable. As I argued at the beginning, the criteria of relics, old and new, have narrowed heritage imagination, limiting the range of possible outcomes. Apart from the Chinese religious architecture, the inventory leaves little room for Chinese history. For the district that has long rivalled its neighboring Saigon, the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

government has so far recognized but two sites. Ironically, these two sites, listed under the 'national history' are used to narrate significant events and figures of the socialist nation. The two sites are Trần Phú memorial site at Chợ Quán Hospital, and the House of Nguyễn Tất Thành (another name of Ho Chi Minh). First, Chợ Quán is considered the oldest hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. However, it has a more gruesome colonial history that the government is not reluctant to reveal. It once served as a prison during the French colonial administration, where dissidents were detained and tortured. In particular, this place is commemorated for its most famous victim Trần Phú (figure 6). The first Secretary General of the Indochina Communist Party, Trần Phú was detained here and later died (Doling, 2014, pp. 289-292). The site was recognized as a national historical relic in 1988, in the last decade of the cold war.¹⁷¹ Its official title is 'Cho Quan Hospital Prison Zone, where comrade Trần Phú was detained and sacrificed'¹⁷²

A district-level subsidiary of the MPC, The District People's Committee (DPC) of District 5 presents the site as a proud history of the District. In recent years, it has spent over 700 million Vietnamese Dong (over 31,000 US Dollars) in restoring the place as a 'venue for a political and traditional education for the younger generations'.¹⁷³ An exhibition area is provided where the visitors can view the photographs, documents, and the actual cells during the old days. Importantly, a legend-like tale is inscribed into the history of the building, narrating the minute, gory details of Trần Phú's last few days in the prison in the last brutal decades of the city's colonial history. The stele depicting the great deeds of Trần Phú is stalled. In the words of the DPC, 'monuments have a vast educational effect on the young generations. From Trần Phú's shining examples of courage, steadfast, revolutionary spirit, and compassionate love for comrades, this monument will forever remind future generations of the instructions given by the first Secretary General of the Indochina Communist Party: "Remain determined to fight"'.¹⁷⁴

Second, the other site in Cholon listed as a national-historic relic in Cholon is the shophouse No. 5 Châu Văn Liêm street. This is the house where Nguyễn Tất Thành, later to be known to the world as Hồ Chí Minh, stayed for nine months before his departure to France. During that time,

¹⁷¹ Decision No. 1288 VH/QĐ, dated November 16th, 1988.

¹⁷² Khu Trại giam bệnh viện Chợ Quán, nơi đồng chí Trần Phú bị giam giữ và hy sinh

¹⁷³ The People's Committee of District 5, Ho Chi Minh City. (2013). Cultural Relic: Trần Phú memorial site at Chợ Quán Hospital [Di tích văn hoá: Khu Trại giam bệnh viện Chợ Quán, nơi đồng chí Trần Phú bị giam giữ và hy sinh]. <http://www.quan5.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

Nguyễn Tất Thành commuted between Saigon and Cholon, studying at L'école des Mécaniciens Asiatiques and supporting himself by selling newspapers in the commercial port area (Doling, 2014, p. 314). The shophouse is now an exhibition hall showcasing photographs and documents related to Hồ Chí Minh's sojourn in Saigon and Cholon. The site was recognized as a national historical relic in 1988, in the same decision as the aforementioned Trần Phú memorial site at Chợ Quán Hospital. Again, akin to the relics in the history category elsewhere in the city and the rest of the country, the two sites exemplify the relics listed for their strong association with the country's socialist past and important historical figures.

Not much else in Chinese Cholon is recognized for its contribution to 'national history'. To be sure, like Ho Chi Minh City at large, more sites in Cholon are waiting in line to be inventoried and thus heritagized. In the heritage masterplan for the years 2010 to 2020, the government made a generous room for the future relics in various categories: (1) history; (2) religious significance; (3) old urban architecture; (4) old urban quarters; and (5) ancient tombs (table 2). The masterplan significantly expanded the definition of relics from historical to cultural. Such expansion should be welcome. Pending as it is, the masterplan suggests a growing appreciation of heritage in Cholon as more sites are scheduled to be listed as relics in the near future. However, the expansion is still limited to what Hardy (1988) calls conservative heritage. Although the categories expand in number, their philosophical underpinning remains limited. Here, I outline how the official heritagization process revolves around three strict modes of appreciation: official historiography, style, and antiquity. First, let us revisit Thien Ton Temple. On the eastern edge of Cholon, Thien Ton Temple is slated to be listed as a relic in the 'history' category. As I have shown, the temple is recognized for its peculiar role in the city's socialist past. Despite being a religious site, the temple was used as the base of a support unit 'protecting the Revolutionary cadres during both periods of 'the resistance war against the French colonialism and the US imperialism'. The temple had housed many famous figures of the Communist Party, who fought for 'independence and freedom for the people'. Today, the temple carries on the mission. Thien Ton Temple is known for its education of the monks on the intertwined spirits of 'Dharma and Nation'.¹⁷⁵ Its first abbot was posthumously awarded a 'medal of resistance' by the state. Thien Ton Temple illustrates one role of Vietnamese heritage: the built structure serves as a material manifestation of official historiography. The built structure fits

¹⁷⁵ Inventory of historical and cultural relics in Ho Chi Minh City for the years 2010-2020, issued in Decision No. 5360/QĐ-UBND, 25th November 2010

an official criterion of ‘*đến sự kiện, nhân vật lịch sử*’, or associated with a historical event or a historical figure. It is used to narrate the official historical account. Following Lowenthal (1985), history provides cognitive data, allowing us to know about the past. Heritage (‘relic’ in my case) provides associative and sensate data, allowing us to feel, understand, and believe in the past. If history is a textual interpretation of the past, heritage is its material interpretation.

Second, beauty perfumes the government’s list of relics. The notion of exceptional beauty perfumand style has persistently permeated the masterplan for future relics to be listed in the coming decade. Beauty is a long-established concern in heritage studies and historic preservation. At the most fundamental level, the government describes a relic in terms its physical beauty, according significance to its aesthetic value. They establish a given place’s *giá trị kiến trúc* or architectural value through formal descriptions. For example, three major catholic churches in Cholon - St. Jean d’Arc Church, Cho Quan Church, and Cha Tham Church - are similarly recognized for their stylistic significance, decorative motifs, and finishings. Similarly, in the ‘old urban architecture’ category, under which two educational institutions are listed, care is given to more to the architectural than the urban. Cholon is famous for its historical schools. Founded by the colonial French, the schools produced bureaucrats and technicians to serve colonial extraction. Here, ‘urban architecture’ simply refers to a large building compound in the city, while little reference is made to the urban context in which it is situated. Lê Hồng Phon School is recognized for its combined traditional elements with Western European motifs. Similarly, the buildings of Saigon University is recognized for its interesting mix of French and Chinese architectural styles. Third, there is a fundamental view that relics are associated with antiquity. That is, relics are commonly associated with past objects, valuable antiques, and archaeological sites. Phú Nghĩa communal temple and Bửu Sơn temple are old temples in Cholon built between the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The government wanted to list the two temples because they house a range of valuable antiques. In the same way, also slated for listing is the tomb site of Trương Vĩnh Ký, the country’s famed linguist and literary scholar of the nineteenth century. The site exemplifies, the listing rationale goes, the ancient tomb architecture that consists of the gateway, grave, front, and the surrounding walls.¹⁷⁶

One sensibility is missing from the masterplan: a more urban typology, a typology that does not simply recognize isolated buildings, but an ensemble of buildings, streetscape, or quarters. An

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

emerging category that merits further discussion is the category 'old urban quarters', or *khu phố cổ*. In this category, sixteen Chinese shophouses on Hải Thượng Lãn Ông Street are listed (figure 7). Unlike the categories 'old urban architecture' (*kiến trúc cổ đô thị*) or 'old mansions' (*nhà cổ đô thị*), the 'old urban quarters' category shows a larger *urban* sensibility. The category suggests an important definitional expansion of 'relics', the definition that has thus far revolved around isolated buildings of archaeological value or high architectural styles. Thus, the category importantly hints at an emerging potential of historic preservation in Ho Chi Minh City to begin to recognize city space as ensembles. It is important to also note that the current listing of the sixteen colonial shophouses on Hải Thượng Lãn Ông Street is the first and only designated 'old urban quarters' in the entire Ho Chi Minh City, including the historic core of Saigon. In fact, the term *khu phố cổ* is more commonly associated with the Unesco-listed ancient town of Hoi An or the ancient quarter of Hanoi. The category 'old urban quarters' appreciates indeed a particular spatial contiguity of Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown.

Lastly, there is a list that is very inconclusive. An additional list was issued for structures and sites that are *đề nghị bảo tồn*, or 'recommended for preservation', following the amendments of the cultural heritage law in 2009 (table 3).¹⁷⁷ The listing means that, despite not meeting the relic criteria, they should nonetheless warrant preservation. Once again, the same underpinning philosophy can be said for this supplemental list. Although the preservation purview is broadened to cover more heritage assets, it is nonetheless limited. Here, we see the inclusion of Cholon's less illustrious yet significant temples, a school building, and ancient tombs. Again, like the officially listed relics, these structures are described in terms of their age and the century in which they were built; their architectural or artistic value; or the valuable artifacts they contain.¹⁷⁸ Tân Nghĩ communal temple, for example, is well known for its elaborate altar plaque, and the tomb of Cung Nguyễn for its representative tomb architecture. Another Chinatown attraction, the Binh Tay market is also included in the list of sites that warrant protection. Built in 1928, the market building is registered due to its peculiar mix of Western and Eastern architectural motifs.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee (2009). Structures and sites recommended for preservation in accordance with clause 4, article 33 of the amendments to the Cultural Heritage Law, year 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, pp 30-32.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p, 34.

5. CONCLUSION

The chapter favors as a line of inquiry the term heritage-making over heritage. While the latter connotes a product, and implies a closure, the former opens up room for interrogation on the makers and their instruments. Importantly, there is a deep temporality to heritage-making as an ongoing process. The case of Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown reveals that heritage has multiple temporalities: past, future, and contemporary. The first and the most apparent is the view of heritage as past temporality. It is the view that heritage is a landscape that belongs *in* and *to* the past (Byrne, 2008). The pastness of heritage is captured in the operative term of relics that views the present structure as a remainder of a foregone age, as something that has survived through time. However, the past is not unfiltered. Not every past structure is recognized as representative of the acceptable past. Instead, heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City speaks to the underpinning heritage conservatism in which landscape is used to support a set of ideas and values (Duncan and Duncan, 1988). As we have seen, socialist ideology and historiography imbued the selection and narration of the relic sites. Even when the inventory is expanded to recover a wider void of the past, the expansion is by number, not by kind. Although we see a shift from the socialist concerns in the seventies to the cultural heritage in the eighties, the newly listed relics remain those that conform to the official narrative of history and the official criteria of architectural beauty.

Second, peculiar to Ho Chi Minh City, we can, too, speak of heritage-in-waiting. These future relics are oxymoronic because, despite meeting all the criteria (*đủ tiêu chí đề nghị xếp hạng di tích*), they are not yet relics. Their heritage status cannot be ascertained by their intrinsic quality, but is more importantly entangled in the bureaucratic process that entails a timeframe to establish their 'history' (*thời gian thực hiện nghiên cứu xác lập lý lịch di tích*). To further complicate this pending temporality, there is another ambiguous typology of sites and structures that are simply recommended for preservation (*đề nghị bảo tồn*). The heritage-in-waiting suggests two important implications, conceptual and practical. As a concept, while we understand heritage is 'constructed', the act of constructing is not necessarily swift and decisive, but in fact straddled and suspended by the politics of waiting. In this sense, the heritage-as-construction perspective risks seeing the built environment as binaries of heritage and non-heritage, and forgoing a host of others that occupy not the clear zone of being, but the grey area of becoming. More importantly, since 'becoming' implies an opening, this in-between, grey area presents a practical problem for a rapidly changing city. The heritagization waiting room does not bode well for the rational city known in recent years for its indiscriminate demolition of older

buildings, replacing them with high-rise development that maximizes the use of space.

Third, I call attention to the contemporary temporality of heritage, suggesting a need to attend to its contemporary meaning and associations. The operative notion of relics does historic preservation great disservice, for it limits our vantage point to the heritage's historical significance, forcing us to interpret heritage historically and locate it in its historical time. Conceived as remainders of the past, the relics leave little room for the present tense and ignore how 'people in the present narrate these sites into their lives...into their own accounts of who they are' (Byrne, 2008, p. 259). As an illustrative example, the Chinese temple is a typology that defies the strictly past temporality, the past tense, of relics. Intersecting ancestral lineage and physical space, the temple is rootedly firmly in the contemporary, everyday Chinese-Vietnamese practices. This is documented in the ways the space of the temple is used for various purposes from paying respect to ancestors to socializing and wishing for good luck, significantly conflating the past, present, and future. If anything, lineage implies continuity.

Furthermore, the clear contour of heritage is at odds with the idea of Chinatown as an urban ensemble in the first place. The inventory presents one intrinsic problem of a universal template of documentation. The approach of itemizing heritage as a topography of dots in space poorly understands the topological space of Cholon that is muddled and intermixed in use. The idea of an ensemble, as opposed to an isolated site, calls for a different epistemology of heritage. Unlike the 'dead' statutes and museums, Cholon is a living space. This is, there is a whole phenomenology of Cholon that the isolated relics cannot fully capture. Human activities and interactions crisscross Cholon, giving rise to the animated space of markets, streets, and sidewalks, so much so that we cannot speak of Cholon without speaking of the activities it is home to. By shifting our vantage towards everyday people and their everyday spaces, we find that there is an experiential, phenomenological depth that surrounds the otherwise historical heritage of Cholon. After all, the construction of meaning is not permanent, but is negotiated at the level of everyday life, in the daily experience in which the landscape is used (Kong and Law, 2002).

In their influential contribution, Duncan and Duncan (1988) suggest that we denaturalize landscapes through the revelation of their ideological underpinnings, and that we put forth the 'politics of alternative readings'. To this end, the present article takes up the task of revealing not only the ideology, but also nuancing the temporality(ies) of heritage in order to

arrive at alternative readings. First, the case of heritage-making in Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown reaffirms the ideological, political contents of heritage. In particular, the city's prevailing heritage is conservatively defined around a select set of values and criteria. Even when the heritagization project is ongoing and a growing number of sites are recognized, the philosophical basis of what constitutes heritage does not shift. Heritage remains eclipsed by the rationale of relics and thus trapped in the past, when it indeed actively partakes in the everyday life of Cholon.

TABLES

Category	Building and sites
Architecture and Art	<u>National-level</u> Minh Hương Gia Thạnh temple Hà Chương assembly hall Nghĩa An assembly hall Nghĩa Nhuận assembly hall Ôn Lăng assembly hall Tuệ Thành (Chùa Bà) assembly hall Nhị Phủ (Chùa Ông Bồn) temple Lệ Châu temple Quỳnh Phủ assembly hall <u>City-level</u> Tân Kiểng communal temple Phước An communal temple Family Lý ancestral temple Phước Kiến ancestral temple
History	<u>National-level</u> Trần Phú's memorial site Nguyễn Tất Thành's home <u>City-level</u> Thiên Tôn Temple

Table 8.1: listed relics in District 5

Category	Building and sites
History	Thiên Tôn temple
Religious significance	Jean d'Arc Church Cho Quan Church Cha Tam Church Tam Son ancestral hall Phú Nghĩa ancestral hall

	Bửu Sơn Temple
Old urban architecture	Saigon University Lê Hồng Phong School
Old urban quarter	A row of sixteen shophouses on Hai Thuong Lan Ong Street
Ancient tombs	Tomb of Trương Vĩnh Ký

Table 8.2: sites and structures in District 5 to be considered for listing

Category	Building and sites
Religious significance	Tân Nghĩa communal temple An Bình communal temple Triều Châu ancestral temple
Old urban architecture	Hồng Bàng Junior School Binh Tay Market
Ancient tombs	Tomb of Ms. Cung Nguyễn Tomb of the family Lý

Table 8.3: sites and structures in District 5 recommended for preservation

FIGURES



Figure 8.1: Thiên Tôn Temple (*Chùa Thiên Tôn*), District 5, Ho Chi Minh City



Figure 8.2: Independence Palace (source: <http://www.dinhdoclap.gov.vn/>)

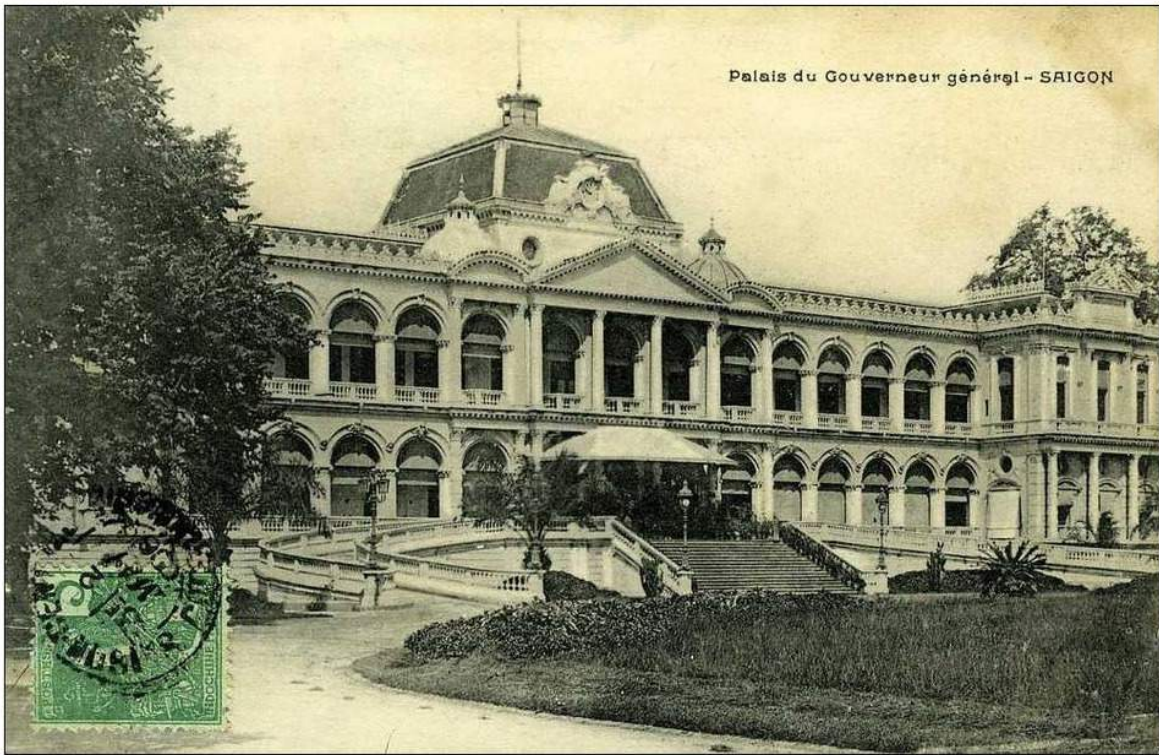


Figure 8.3: Palais du Gouverneur-Général à Saïgon (source: virtual-saigon.net)



Figure 8.4a: (left) Saigon Central Post Office (author's photograph)

Figure 8.4b: (right) Saigon Notre Dame Basilica (author's photograph)



Figure 8.5a: (left) Tuệ Thành Temple (author's photograph)
Figure 8.5b: (right) and Hà Chương Temple (author's photograph)



Figure 8.6: Tran Phu memorial at Cho Quan Hospital



Figure 8.7: shophouses on Hải Thượng Lãn Ông Street (author's photograph)

Chapter 9

FUTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

In Vietnamese, Cholon means 'Big Market'. Aptly named, the Chinatown of Ho Chi Minh City is indeed home to many marketplaces tightly squeezed in its small area of 4 sq.km. One of Cholon's famous markets is Soai Kinh Lam, the largest clothing market in Southern Vietnam. The market is noisily busy every day from dusk to dawn, bustling with scooters, cart-pushers, sellers and buyers heckling over prices of shirts and skirts. Right opposite is another Soai Kinh Lam. Appropriating the old well-known name, the new Soai Kinh Lam is meant to be a modern mixed-use project. However, in its present, the new Soai Kinh Lam shows no sign of life. Bound by construction hoarding on all four sides, the inside is an eerily quiet, emptily cleared land. On the rusty corrugated-metal fence shows a photoshopped vision of the new Soai Kinh Lam: a gleaming high-rise, mixed-use tower. Not represented is the old Soai Kinh, the old Cholon. The vision suggests the future that is to come, if it does come.

In this chapter, I trace planning as an exercise of future-making in District 5 of Ho Chi Minh City. Locally known as Cholon, the district was a predominantly Chinese entrepot during the colonial days. Today, it is positioned as a 'growth core' of Ho Chi Minh City. I am interested in the ways in which the government deploy its many planning instruments and institutions to materialize the vision. This chapter consists four parts. In Part One, I set the planning context of Ho Chi Minh City. Reviewing its masterplan documents, I bring into view the government's key interest in growth and modernization. They position Ho Chi Minh City to be the growth engine of Vietnam, if not Southeast Asia. Then, I introduce Vietnamese urban planning tradition, highlighting an intimate affinity between construction and urban planning. The latter, I argue, has always been cast as a tool of the former. To illustrate the affinity, I briefly explain the city's multi-tier level of urban planning, from 'general planning' to 'detailed planning'. As the city-level administration, the Municipal People's Committee (MPC) is in charge of city-level general planning, and the District People's Committee (DPC) of local detailed planning. In Part Two, I introduce urban planning in District 5, stressing that it is firmly positioned as a growth district along with the

downtown District 1. I show the ways in which the government mobilizes its planning instruments to realize the vision. In particular, one new typology is targeted: the mixed-use tower. Viewed as a modern replacement to the street-lining shophouses, the mixed-use towers have sprung across the district, symbolizing a modern form of trade and living. In particular, I also that the government is not reluctant to change zoning codes to suit their new ambitions. In Part Three, I zoom into the everyday detail of such towers. Through several examples, 'detailed planning' is invoked to help produce the expensive high-rise project. Part Four introduces the DVIC, a new district-level entity instituted to deliver the expensive visions. However, evidenced by the Soai Kinh Lam project, financing the grand visions is not easy, exposing a gap between vision and institutional capacity in the aspiring modern Cholon.

2.1 Eye on growth

In 2010, the Municipal People's Committee (MPC), the city government of Ho Chi Minh City, promulgated the 2025 masterplan (figure 1). Like many precedent versions, the 2025 masterplan is the government's ambitious efforts to guide the city's development towards the year 2025.¹⁸⁰ The past efforts have fallen short, exposing a serious gap between the 'plan' and the 'reality' to which the plan is implemented. The notorious gap has been duly noted for urban planning in Ho Chi Minh City (PADDI 2012; Huynh, 2015). Rhetoric has been more resolute than action. However, we should not dismiss altogether the gap as a failure to plan. The wholesale dismissal treats the plan as simply a suite of unrealized visions, thus missing an opportunity to characterize the plan as a 'direction of desire' (Legg, 2006). Rather, the plan can be read at the level of the policy discourse. Like the previous versions, the 2025 masterplan may be characterized in the following ways: future-oriented, high vantagepoint, and utilitarian. First, the masterplan is an exercise of visioning, offering a view of how the government sees and imagines the city.

Considering itself a 'young city with a...short history of more than 300 years old', Ho Chi Minh City figures as the 'locomotive of the country's economy'. It is a center of industry, finance, trading, tourism, service, and a hub of international and domestic transportation', contributing to 25% of the country's GDP. With this in mind, the 2025 masterplan seeks to further deepen the city's role as the key economic area of the South. To do so, the MPC envisions a 'harmonious development' between spatial development, infrastructure, society, and environment, where the

¹⁸⁰ Government Decision No. 24/QĐ-TTg, Approved adjustment of the Ho Chi Minh City masterplan for construction by 2025.

rhetoric of sustainable development imbues the goal of 'balancing of economic development and preservation of historical values, and environmental protection' (HCMC, 2010, pp. 3-5).

Second, the masterplan affords a broad, high-up vantagepoint that imagines territory in terms of its scale; hierarchy; and growth direction. Through the masterplan, the government views the city at the grand scale of the city and its metropolitan region - an effort that transcends the scale of city planning to the scale of spatial planning. It prescribes a hierarchy of urban zones, in which the zones are articulated as 'existing inner areas', 'developed inner areas', 'rural-residential townships', and 'new urban areas'. The government places faith in the plan's ability to shape the growth direction of the city. It imagines the city as a 'multi-center model' expanding in the east and south directions. Here, the irony is that the 'multi-center model' is not a result of plan-making. Rather, as land economist Huyn (2015) documented, the existing growth directions did not result from past plans but a lack thereof, as the plans have consistently failed to direct and control the city's urbanization. In other words, the 'development corridor' is almost an euphemism for decades of uncontrolled conurbations. Third, the masterplan has a utilitarian view of land, seeing land as an arrangement of functional clusters. The language of 'zone' and 'hub' is particularly distinct in the plan's attempt to construct what Shatkin (2008) calls bypass-implant urbanism. The 2025 masterplan is peppered with such bypass enclaves. It envisions industrial zones, natural preservation zones, tourism zones, and 'specialized centers' such as a science center, healthcare center, and culture and sport center.

THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH
 ĐIỀU CHỈNH QUY HOẠCH CHUNG XÂY DỰNG ĐẾN NĂM 2025
BẢN ĐỒ ĐỊNH HƯỚNG PHÁT TRIỂN KHÔNG GIAN ĐÔ THỊ

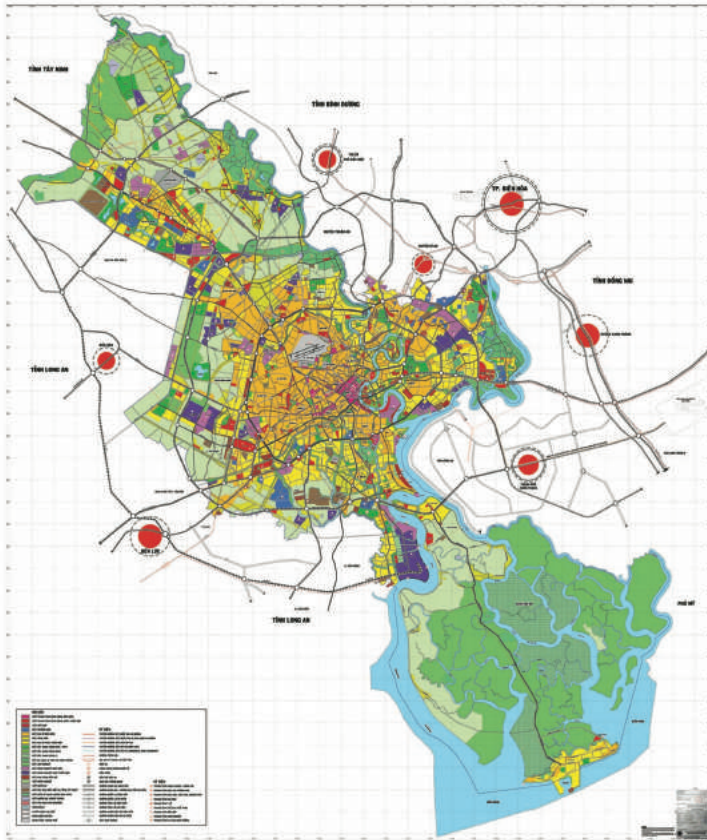


Figure 9.1: 2025 Masterplan of Ho Chi Minh City (source: MPC)

2.2 Planning and Construction: an affinity

Upon a closer look, urban planning has a narrow definition in Vietnam. It refers not simply to physical planning, but the specific activity of construction planning. While the former suggest the process of planning, the latter prizes the act of building. Institutionally, the Vietnamese idea of planning has been subordinated to the idea of construction. Historically, there exists no planning agency at the central-government level. Instead, planning is housed as an activity within of Ministry of Construction (MOC). In the socialist country, land *de jure* belongs to the entire people and the state acts as the representative owner¹⁸¹. Planning is viewed as a vehicle towards realizing the optimal construction of public lands to fulfill development goals prescribed in the country's highest directive, the socialist-style Socioeconomic Plan. Planning as such did not exist until much later. When the first Law on Construction was passed in 2003¹⁸², planning took the form of 'construction master planning' to be carried out at various scales: (1) regional

¹⁸¹ Law on Urban Planning, 2009.

¹⁸² Government Decision No. 16/2003/QH11

construction master planning; (2) general construction master planning; and (3) detailed construction master planning. In 2014, the National Assembly amended the Law on Construction¹⁸³ to clarify the scope and scale of construction. Here, the MOC once again domesticated urban planning as part of the larger goal of construction. Urban construction planning is classified as one of the four kinds of the country's construction-planning activity: (1) regional construction planning; (2) urban construction planning; (3) special functional zone planning; (4) rural construction planning. Planning is a tool of construction, not vice versa.

When urban planning finally emerged as a government sphere in its own right, the deep-seated masterplan tradition nonetheless trickled down to urban planning. In fact, I suggest that construction planning set precedents for urban planning that was to come, setting a framework for what urban planning should look like. When urban planning finally had its own law in 2009, the Law on Urban Planning¹⁸⁴, the legal provisions of the urban planning law readily mimicked the format of construction planning, replicating in effect the legal provisions of the latter. This is perhaps not too surprising. The Urban Planning Law was also prepared and passed by the MOC. In essence, the organization of urban planning mirrors that of construction in at least four ways: definition, scale, responsible agency, and tools (Appendix table 1.1). First, urban planning is defined as the 'organization of the space, architecture, urban landscape and system of technical and social infrastructure facilities and houses in order to create an appropriate living environment for people living in an urban center, which is expressed on an urban plan.' The definition does not depart remarkably from construction planning, which is defined the same way as the organization of space and infrastructure to ensure a habitable environment.

Second, the scale of the urban plans (e.g. 'general planning' and 'detailed planning' adopts that of the construction plans (e.g. 'general construction masterplanning' and 'detailed construction masterplanning'). Third, the government units responsible for their respective level of the plans are the same for both construction and urban planning, such that the Municipal People's Committee (MPC) is in charge of 'general masterplanning for urban construction' and 'general (urban) planning', while the District People's Committee (DPC) is in charge of 'detailed planning for urban construction' and 'detailed (urban) planning'. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the tools and contents of the construction masterplans and the urban plans are starkly the same (Appendix table 1.2). Both types of plans rely on the tools of maps, boundary-marking,

¹⁸³ Government Decision No. 50/2014/QH13

¹⁸⁴ Government Decision No. 301/2009/QH12

timeframe, and numerical norms (landuse density, building coverage, etc) to rationalize urban space. The similar contents of the construction masterplan and urban plan suggest how planning is defined to serve the larger goal of construction. The synchronization intended for a good alignment and coordination between construction and urban planning. As Matsumura (2013, p.2) suggests, the Construction Law institutionalized in effect ‘an inherent urban planning regime. The urban planning regime of Vietnam is centered on the realization of urban construction plans in public lands in accordance with socio-economic goals.’ In fact, Ministry of Construction is now scheduling to review the Law on Urban Planning to match with new regulations of Law on Construction passed in 2014 (Nguyen, 2015).

2.3 Tiers of urban planning

Ho Chi Minh City is one of the five ‘centrally-directed cities’ (*thành phố trực thuộc Trung ương*) of Vietnam, along with Hanoi, Can Tho, Da Nang, and Hai Phong. As a centrally-directed city, Ho Chi Minh is subdivided into 19 *quận* (urban districts) and 5 *huyện* (rural districts). Each district is further composed of *phường* (wards). Upon the promulgation of the Urban Planning Law in 2009, urban planning activity is refined into different tiers, reflecting this multi-level administration of Ho Chi Minh City (Appendix table 1.3). According to Urban Planning Law, there are three levels of city planning: (1) general planning (*quy hoạch chung*), (2) zoning planning (*quy hoạch phân khu*), and (3) detailed planning (*quy hoạch chi tiết*).¹⁸⁵ In this multi-level hierarchy, each planning level is managed by a local authority, such that the MPC is in charge of general planning, and the DPC of zoning and detailed planning. Importantly, given that Ho Chi Minh City is a centrally-directed city, the city’s general planning has to be approved by the Prime Minister.¹⁸⁶ At the heart of each planning level, one important instrument reigns supreme: the plan. The plan has a statutory standing and is used to regulate urban development within its designated territory (Eckert et al, 2009). In essence, the plan takes the form of a map depicting the city at a specific ratio colloquially known among Vietnamese planners as the ‘1:5000 plan’, the ‘1:2000 plan’ and so on.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ According to Article 18 of the Urban Planning Law, there are three types of planning: (1) General Planning, which is made for centrally-controlled cities, prefecture-level cities, towns, townships and new urban centers; (2) Zoning Planning, which is made for areas within cities, towns and new urban centers; and (3) Detailed Planning, which is made for the areas to meet urban development and management requirements or construction investment needs. In practice, another level of planning is the project/building plan, the level that most directly affects urban development.

¹⁸⁶ Law on Urban Planning, Article 44, Clause 1.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with a senior-level planner at the Department of Planning and Architecture, May 2015.

2.1 Imagining a Growth District

The 2025 masterplan, the MPC designated two major cores: Saigon (District 1) and Cholon (District 5). The two districts have long been the city's economic cores since early history. While District 1 serves as the downtown core, financial center, and tourist attractions, the predominantly Chinese District 5 is a trading district for both wholesale and retail, continuing its role since the colonial days. Today, District 5 has a total population of 174, 154 in an area of 4 sq.km., making it one of the most dense districts of Ho Chi Minh City (figure 2). Modernization was a major concern as early as the city's first general plan. In the first-phase construction planning (1998-2005), the city proposed a number of modernization projects to improve the areas of District 5. The rationale is that, the plan suggests:

'District 5 is one center of the old inner city. Given that District 5 is an old, predominantly residential district, the housing stock and infrastructure are aged. The investment directions in the next five to seven years should thus be the renovation and beautification (*cải tạo, chỉnh trang*) of the existing zones, focusing on the investment in upgrading and opening new systems of important infrastructure and public works [in order to] service and improve the living quality of the people'

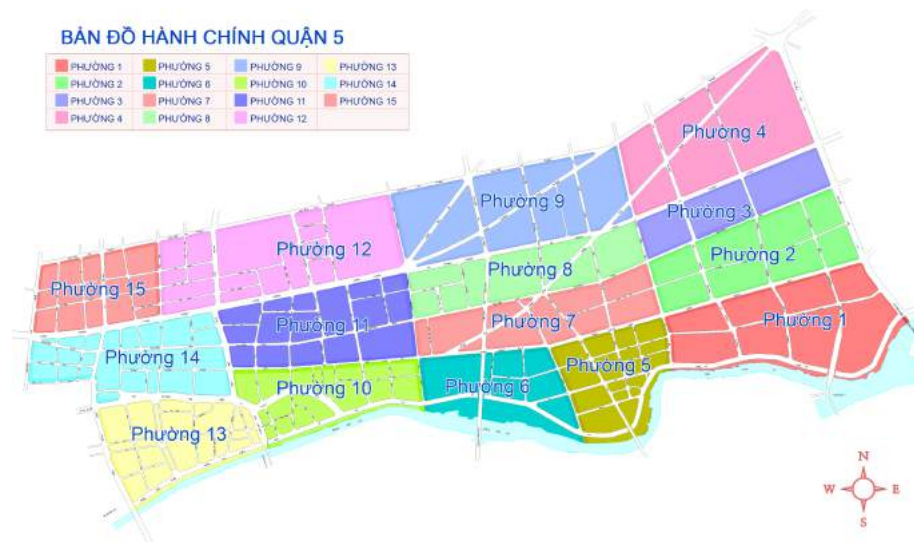


Figure 9.2: administrative map of District 5, Ho Chi Minh City (source: MPC)

To this end, the early days of urban planning in Cholon is characterized by a number of modernization programs. Specifically, in the 1998 plan, the government proposed a number of priority programs to be invested by the year 2005 in three categories: (1) residential upgrading, (2) public projects, and (3) infrastructure. In fact, some of these programs were slated to be

complete in the first phase of construction between the years 1998 and 2005. First, the plan's orientations for spatial development clearly indicated the need to renovate and refurbish the existing residential areas. This can be seen in the division of four residential zones and their respective population and housing needs (table 1).

Residential zone	Wards	Area (hectares)	Population (predicted in 1995)	Population (predicted in 1998)
Zone 1	Wards 1, 2, 3, 4	122.3	69,000	62,000
Zone 2	wards 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	135.1	80,000	72,000
Zone 3	wards 10, 11, 12 (east of Thuan Kieu Street)	80.1	46,000	41,000
Zone 4	wards 13, 14, 15, 12 (west of Thuan Kieu Street)	76.5	50,000	45,000

Table 9.1: four residential zones in District 5 designated in the late 1990s.

However, the housing upgrading takes on a particular spatial form. Instead of refurbishment, the government proposed redevelopment. As early as the first general plan, the modern high-rise block emerged as a favored typology. As I will show below, this typology will come to characterize much of Cholon, as the government replace rows of shophouses with high-rise buildings. The general plan proposed 10 residential-upgrading projects for residential quarters (*khu dân cư*) and apartment complexes (*chung cư*) across the District, ranging in size from 142,000 to 1,100,000 sq.ft (13,200 to 103,000 sq. m). Second, what is termed the 'public projects' category (*công trình công cộng*) is, in fact, mostly commercial-building projects.¹⁸⁸ The general plan proposed seven commercial complexes (*khu trung tâm thương mại*) that would later become Cholon's well-known commercial marketplaces, such as An Đông Plaza, Kim Biên, and Thuận Kiều. In addition to the public-sector investment in these commercial projects, the general plan also called for private investment in other similar projects (further discussed below), such as the Cultural Center and two residential high-rises.¹⁸⁹ Third, the general plan reflects another important imperative of District 5: the daily reality of infrastructure. The government prioritized the need to improve infrastructure to respond to long-standing local

¹⁸⁸ The general plan proposed ten public-works projects: six (6) commercial complexes, one (1) commercial-residential complex, one (1) hotel, one (1) office-hotel complex, and one (1) maternity hospital.

¹⁸⁹ The two locations were the residential high-rise on Lê Hồng Phong and by the Hang Bang canal.

problems, such as water supply, road resurfacing to prevent flooding, and long-term plan to build wastewater drainage.¹⁹⁰ The plan outlines a variety of infrastructure-upgrade programs to be carried out within the District. These include parking construction, road projects, water pipeline improvement, stormwater and drainage. Since its early plans in the 1990s, modernization has been in full swing. Urban planners have been preoccupied with improvement projects as they improved housing stock, built new high-rise towers, and upgraded the aging infrastructure.

2.2 Zoning and the new typology

Zoning is one important instrument which through the government realizes their vision for modernizing Cholon. In January 2015, the DPC of District 5 announced the 'landuse planning map of 2015' (*kế hoạch sử dụng đất năm 2015*) (figure 3). The map is part of the district's larger masterplan, the 'landuse plan towards year 2020' (*quy hoạch sử dụng đất đến năm 2020*). In essence, the purpose of the 2015 landuse planning map is to (1) to identify the basic landuse types and activities and (2), perhaps more importantly, to determine the location and landuse change required for new projects in the district. In the latter, the DPC announced a series of landuse changes. These changes, I argue, are made to accommodate new projects in the district. Updating the landuse map is particularly important for a commercial district like District 5, which has seen constant growth over the past years. As of 2013, the district had registered 15,038 business establishments of various types, including 1,879 limited companies, 197 joint-stock companies, 401 private companies, 12,561 individual business households.¹⁹¹ The DPC views the processes of 'industrialization and modernization' thus far as commensurate with the position of the district, stressing the role of District 5 as a center of commerce and services (*trung tâm thương mại, dịch vụ*) of Ho Chi Minh City. The goal of landuse planning should thus reflect the economic imperatives in building the district into a modern and civilized (*văn minh hiện đại*) center of commerce and services.¹⁹²

In the 2015 landuse plan, the DPC proposed 30 projects. Of the 30 projects, 13 are mixed-use

¹⁹⁰ Like many districts located upon the river, District 5 has long suffered from flooding and seasonal inundation. The matter is worsened by the higher ground of the northern part of the district, worsening the flooding in the southern part along the river. Also, currently, the district has the shared pipeline for stormwater and wastewater, thus straining the drainage capacity.

¹⁹¹ 'General Introduction', People's Committee of District 5, <http://www.quan5.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/>

¹⁹² Ibid

projects — the focus of my present writing. I want to focus on mixed-use projects in District 5 for two reasons to be discussed in turn. First, they usher in a new urban typology. Second, in order to facilitate the new typology, the government circumvents their own landuse codes, rewriting the landuse plan to accommodate a new vision. First, to be sure, Saigon and Cholon have always been mix-used. Within a street block, one finds a variety of building uses ranging from residential to commercial to even industrial. More often than not, the ground floor of a residential house performs a business of some sort, conveniently exploiting its location upon the street. From walk-up apartments to eateries, from a hair salon to an auto-repair shop. However, the recent mix-use projects herald a different spatial configuration. The mix of uses, which used to take place at the street scale, now shifts to the building scale, shifting from an outward-looking street to an inward, self-contained building. A row of street-fronting buildings are dissolved into one building or a complex of buildings occupying a block and retreating from the street line. These projects also introduce a new toponym. The projects often takes the name of a ‘center’ (*trung tâm*), ‘complex’ (*khu phức hợp*), ‘commercial zone’ (*khu thương mại*), or a ‘tower’ (*cao ốc*). These projects range in scale, from a small multi-story neighborhood mall to a large complex consisting of retail and trade, entertainment, office, residential units, hotel, or luxury apartments (*căn hộ cao cấp*). As will be discussed below, these mixed-use towers are or will be located on the district’s main thoroughfares, e.g. Tran Hung Dao, Tran Phu, Hung Vuong, Nguyen Tri Phuong, Ham Tu, and Vo Van Kiet. In particular, the broad highway of Vo Van Kiet is an attractive location for such projects, as the highway connects District 5 to other districts, ensuring a fast travel to and from the larger city.

Second, the government has readily modified their landuse map to respond to their new vision. Of all the 13 mix-used projects, only two are located in a commerce-service landuse (*đất thương mại - dịch vụ*). In fact, most are located in areas previously designated as residential (*đất ở*), market (*đất chợ*), and community landuse (*đất sinh hoạt cộng đồng*), among others (table 2). Therefore, the government changed the landuse type of each of the sites, revising it to enable the project realization. In this sense, the Vietnamese landuse map reverses the logic of zoning as we know it, upending the conventional wisdom. While conventional zoning is an instrument that *regulates* urban development, the Vietnamese landuse map is revised to *reflect* landuse change. It is employed to herald the proposed projects to be implemented in the district. The spirit of landuse planning is, then, turned on its head: landuse planning is no longer a regulatory endeavor, where the public sector ensures ‘harmonious’ development. Instead, landuse planning is a stocktaking exercise that announces new visions. Here, I must emphasize the

collaboration of both city-level and district-level administrations in affecting landuse change. While the DPC, as the district administration, is in charge of general landuse planning and its amendments (a provision by law), the MPC is heavily involved in the landuse planning of large mix-used projects. All of the aforementioned planning projects (and the rezoning) are considered to be ‘allocated from the superior level’ (*cấp trên phân bổ*) as opposed to decided by the district itself (*cấp quận xác định*). Below, I recount two examples from the 13 projects, Vina Square and Dragon Tower, in order to render the details of the government-backed landuse change.

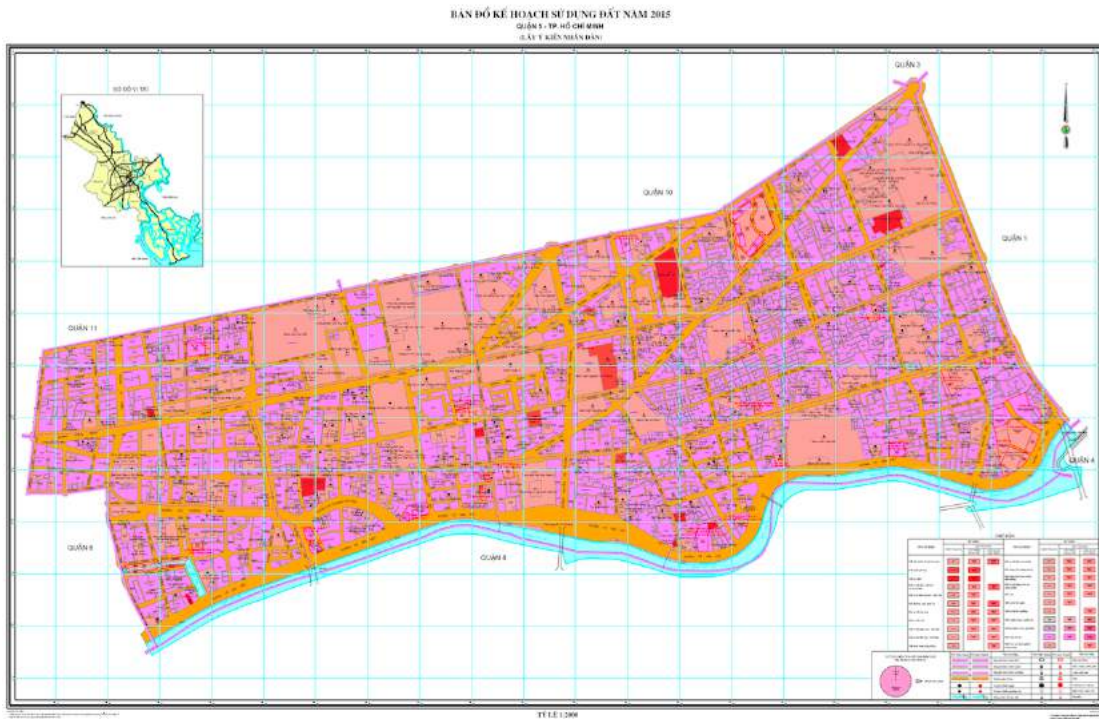


Figure 9.3: 2015 landuse planning map of District 5 (source: MPC)

No	Project name and type	location	From	To
1	Commercial Tower (Thương mại cao ốc)	727 Trần Hưng Đạo	Urban-residential (ODT)	Commerce-service (TMD)
2	Rạp Hướng Dương Commerce-entertainment-culture-sports complex (Thương mại giải trí văn hóa - thể thao)	33 Vạn Tượng	Commerce-service (TMD)	Cultural (DVH)

3	Commerce-service- rental apartment (Thương mại - dịch vụ nhà ở cho thuê)	107 Trần Hưng Đạo	Non-agricultural production facility (SKC)	Commerce-service (TMD)
4	Cát Đằng service and culture tower (Cao ốc dịch vụ văn hoá Cát Đằng)	780 Trần Hưng Đạo	Cultural (DVH)	Cultural (DVH)
5	Commercial-apartment tower (Khu thương mại - nhà ở)	738 Võ Văn Kiệt	Commerce-service (TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT)
6	Complex zone 8-8bis Hàm Tử (Khu phức hợp 8 -8bis Hàm Tử)	628-630 Võ Văn Kiệt	Multiple	Multiple
7	Tower for office, commerce/service center, and apartment (Cao ốc văn phòng - Trung tâm thương mại dịch vụ và căn hộ)	152 Trần Phú	Multiple	Multiple
8	Residential-commercial complex (with resettlement housing) (Nhà ở kết hợp thương mại (một phần nhà ở tái định cư))	926 Võ Văn Kiệt	Urban-residential (ODT)	Urban-residential (ODT)
9	Tower for office, apartments, and residences. (Cao ốc Văn phòng, căn hộ, nhà ở)	55-55A Nguyễn Chí Thanh	Commerce-service (TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT)
10	Đỗ Văn Sửu complex for commerce and residences Trung tâm thương mại kết hợp nhà ở Đỗ Văn Sửu	Corner of Lương Nhữ Học, Trần Văn Kiêu, and Hải Thượng Lãn Ông	Market (DCH) Urban-residential (ODT) and Commerce-service	Urban-residential (ODT) Urban-residential (ODT)

	(Trung tâm thương mại kết hợp nhà ở tại khu vực Chợ vật tư đường Đỗ Văn Sửu)		(TMD)	
11	Tân Đà 2 complex of commerce, residences, and office (Thương mại kết hợp nhà ở - văn phòng Tân Đà 2)	Corner of Hải Thượng Lãn Ông, Tân Đà, and Hàm Tử	Multiple	Urban-residential (ODT)
12	Commerce-apartment center (Trung tâm thương mại - căn hộ 66 Tân Thành (Công ty bia))	42 Tân Thành	Commerce-service (TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT)

Table 9.2: mix-used projects registered in the 2015 landuse-planning map of District 5

2.2.1 Vina Square

The government changed the landuse type to reflect the different landuse of the new project. In many cases, the new project calls for a redesign of the site. Therefore, the new landuse type also reflects the project's site reconfiguration. Two examples illustrate this point. The first is the Vina Square project on 152 Tran Phu Street. Lying at the corner of Tran Phu and Tran Thanh Ton Streets in the Northeast of Cholon, the project is located in a strategic area that connects Districts 1, 5, and 6. The location is also in close proximity to many education institutions, one major hospital, and commercial streets. The area is rezoned for the project Vina Square, a large 30,972 sq.m. mix-use complex consisting of office space, a commercial-service center, apartments, and hotel. Once complete, the project will include an eight-floor retail tower (58, 560 sq.m), 28-to-30-floor apartment units (171,060 sq.m.), and nine-floor rental office (15,000 sq.m.). My present concern is not the size of the project, but the rezoning undertaken *for* the project, the rezoning to make possible such a size. The planner rezoned the entire street block, modifying it to follows the design of the project. The 2015 landuse planning map is redrawn on this parcel, reflecting the redesigned site. The planners articulated new boundaries and site configurations: from street-fronting rows of buildings (a typical form of the district) to point-towers receding from the street in a sea of manicured landscape. In addition to the new morphology, the planners assigned new landuse codes in response to the design characterized by the mix-use project (table 3; figures 4-5).

Existing landuse type	New landuse type	Explanation
Commerce-service (TMD)	Green space (DKV)	Corner buildings demolished to make way for a new green landscape; Buildings demolished to make way for courtyard
Commerce-service (TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT)	Buildings demolished to make way for residential towers
Commerce-service (TMD)	Roadway (DGT)	Buildings demolished to make way for in-project roadways

Table 9.3: new landuse codes assigned to the Vina Square project



Figure 9.4: Vina Square project rendering

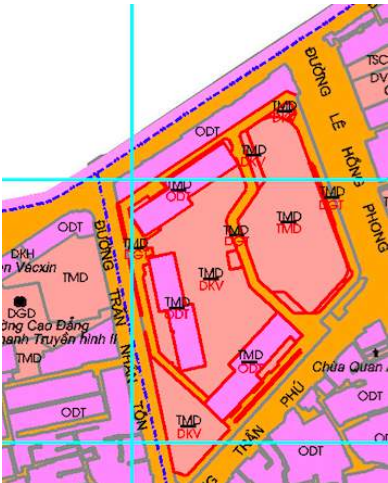


Figure 9.5: zoning change to accommodate the new project (source: MPC)

2.2.2 Dragon Tower

The second example is Dragon Tower on 628-630 Võ Văn Kiệt (discussed in more detail in the next section). The project recounts a similar story to Vina Square. The site is rezoned to reflect the new configuration (table 4, figures 6-7). Overlooking the Saigon River, Dragon Tower is a major mixed-use project located in District 5 . The project consists of residential towers, office space, retail space, and landscape areas. Once completed, the project will also feature one of the tallest buildings in Ho Chi Minh City. Here again, the planners redrew the boundaries. They also reassigned the landuse codes. The relationship between the official landuse planning map and the project is such that the site is revamped and redesigned, and then the landuse map is changed to reflect the reconfiguration of the site.

Existing landuse code	New landuse code	Explanation
Commerce-service; Urban-residential; roadway (TMD; ODT; DGT)	Green space (DKV)	Buildings torn down to make landscape edge along the southern front)
Commerce-service; sports facilities (TMD; DTT)	Commerce-service (TMD)	(sports grounds torn down to build commer complex)
Commerce-service; sports facilities (TMD; DTT)	Roadway (DGT)	Buildings demolished to make way for in-project roadways

Table 9.4: new landuse codes assigned to the Dragon Tower project



Figure 9.6: Dragon Tower project rendering



Figure 9.7: zoning change to accommodate the new project (source: MPC)

3. Detailed Planning and its vision

Vina Square and Dragon Tower are but two examples, hinting at what is to come to Cholon, transforming the shape of the district. In this section, I introduce detailed zoning — the smallest scale of urban planning activity in Vietnam. While the aforementioned rezoning shows landuse change, detailed planning - as the name suggests - entails more extensive change to the piece of land. I show that, by attending to change at this scale, we can reveal in clearest detail the

impact of planning intervention (and the lack thereof). Detailed planning should be understood in Vietnam's larger context of aging housing stocks. Vietnam looks to upgrade its old apartment buildings (*chung cư*), particularly in urban areas in larger cities. Instead of refurbishing, the government favors demolition and reconstruction. According to the Ministry of Construction, the country has over 1,700 old apartment buildings, with more than 1,100 in Hanoi and around 530 in Ho Chi Minh City. In the latter, only 38 buildings have thus far been redeveloped and upgraded.¹⁹³ Perhaps not surprisingly, the aging housing stocks are concentrated in older districts, e.g. Districts 1, 3, and 5. In a recent announcement, Do Phi Hung, the deputy director of Department of Construction, explained that the city has in recent years completed dismantling 148 apartments, started constructing new units, and arranged resettlement programs. In particular, the city will support the investors in the process of relocation, dismantling, and renovation of old apartments, a point I will turn to at the end of the chapter.

In what follows, I discuss a number of detailed-planning cases that illuminate the district's transformation - the transformation that is vigorously backed by the government. through a series of examples, I show how detailed planning is increasingly deployed as a tool to promote private redevelopment projects as detailed planning is relegated as 'landuse rights' to private entities. These projects often call for a demolition and redevelopment that changes the built form of the district, from 'apartment buildings' (*chung cư*) to a 'trade center' (*trung tâm thương mại*) or a 'modern complex' (*khu phức hợp*).

3.1 Dragon Tower

In October 2015, the MPC approved the 1:500 detailed plan of Dragon Tower, a street block on 628-630 Vo Van Kiet, a 18-kilometer broad waterfront boulevard that the city's many districts along the Saigon river. The block is situated in a strategic area: a location that connects District 1 and District 5, and bridges District 8 across the river. Previously known as Saigon Green Energy Tower, the project was expected to begin work in 2011. However, due to the divestment of the EVN Power Group, one of the main investors, the plan was delayed and readjusted several times. In 2015, the project picked up momentum again as the investor Saigon Vina Land won the landuse right to redevelop the land. The approved project is to set to be an office-commercial-residential complex with a 3700-person capacity (figure 8). Incidentally, the change of landuse project has been accounted for by the 2015 landuse planning map discussed above

¹⁹³ 'Bao giờ chung cư cũ mới được xây dựng, cải tạo?' [When will the old apartments be redeveloped?] Mua Bán Nhà Đất market news <http://www.muabannhadat.vn>

In November 2015, the firm reveals the approved plans for the Dragon Tower. The project is to become a 53-floor high-rise that will become one of the tallest buildings in Ho Chi Minh City.¹⁹⁴ The project has a BCR (building coverage ratio) of 55% and a FAR (floor area ratio) of 14.¹⁹⁵ Once complete, the building will house a five-star hotel, grade-A office space, serviced apartments, 1,200 residential apartments, an international trade center, and a shopping mall. The plan also features two other 38-floor apartment towers with underground parking. Designed by Ardor Architects, the two residential towers provide 'additional housing, daily commercial needs and help with the lack for parking capacity in the region'. The project, the developers argue, 'is consistent with the general developing trend of the city'. The high-rise towers 'maximize views to the city center and the Saigon river'.¹⁹⁶ A bold vision, the Dragon Tower projects to redefine the identity of District 5 in particular and the overall city in general. However, missing from the grand design philosophy is the preexisting context. Although the project faces the broad boulevard of Vo Van Kiet and the Saigon river to the south, in its midst, the project is located in a densely populated conurbation. On the west, north, and northeast fronts, the project is surrounded by older apartment buildings and existing residential areas (figure 9). The project has been approved by the government.¹⁹⁷

The Dragon Tower project represents but one example of such projects expected to dot Vo Van Kiet Boulevard. Ho Chi Minh City's first highway, the boulevard has a contested history as the construction displaced homes and families. Today, it is positioned as an important corridor of the city. Apart from being a main thoroughfare connecting Ho Chi Minh City's districts and neighboring provinces, the boulevard is a site of urban redevelopment in itself. In a recently approved landuse planning map, the MPC has designated Vo Van Kiet and its cross-streets as a 'growth corridor'. It is planned for a swath of high-rise residential, commercial, and service-oriented development, lining the Saigon river (figure 10). For Cholon, the boulevard has opened up new space for commercial development, deviating from its already congested markets and streets. The section of Vo Van Kiet in District 5 alone is home to at least five redevelopment projects (table 5). However, like most projects in Ho Chi Minh City, the delivery has been slow. In a recent statement, MPC Chairman Le Hoang Quan expressed his concern, calling for the

¹⁹⁴ '53-Story Dragon Tower Proposed in Ho Chi Minh City', CTBUH Global News, www.ctbuh.org

¹⁹⁵ 'Saigon Energy Tower', REIC, <http://www.reic.info/du-an/100/saigon-energy-tower.html>

¹⁹⁶ 'High-rise Complex', Ardor Architects, <http://www.ardorarch.com>

¹⁹⁷ The 2015 landuse zoning plan

acceleration and the timely implementation of projects along the boulevard.¹⁹⁸ He noted in particular the remaining problems of compensation clearance and trading activity spilling into the streets, thus breaching the ‘beauty, urban order, and sanitation’ (*mỹ quan, trật tự đô thị và vệ sinh môi trường*). The Chairman encouraged that the citizens be conscious of the protection of both sides of Vo Van Kiet, urging against the reoccupation of the cleared areas.



Figure 9.8: Dragon Tower project rendering (source: Dragon Tower Project)

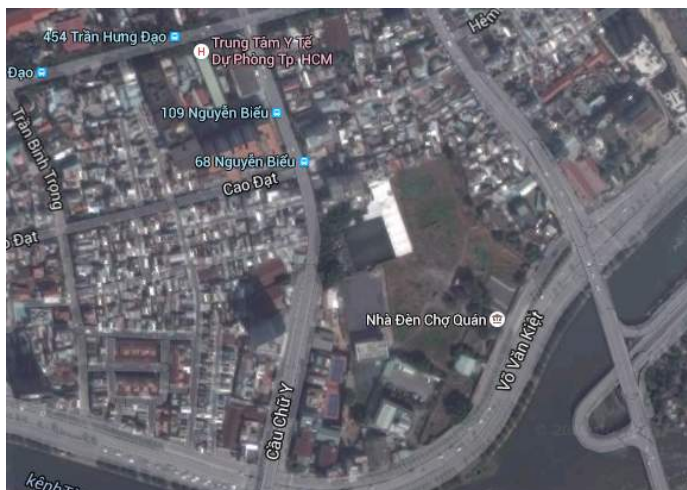


Figure 9.9: the Dragon Tower site and its surroundings (source: Google Maps)

¹⁹⁸ ‘Nhiều dự án dọc Đại lộ Võ Văn Kiệt chậm thi công’ [Many construction projects on Vo Van Kiet are stalling], Government News Portal (Cổng Thông tin điện tử Chính phủ).



Figure 9.10: the MPC's development masterplan for Vo Van Kiet Boulevard (source: MPC)

No.	Project	Address	Preexisting landuse	Proposed landuse
1	Do Van Suu Commercial and residential complex (Trung tâm thương mại kết hợp nhà ở Đỗ Văn Sửu)	Corner of Lương Nhữ Học, Trần Văn Kiếu, and Hải Thượng Lãn Ông	Market (DCH) Urban-residential and commerce-service (ODT+TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT) Urban-residential (ODT)
2	Tan Da 2 Commercial, residential, office complex (Thương mại kết hợp nhà ở - văn phòng Tân Đà 2)	Corner of Hải Thượng Lãn Ông, Tân Đà, Hàm Tử	Multiple (ODT+TMD+DGT ODT+SKC DSH0)	Urban-residential (ODT)
3	402 Ham Tu Commercial and residential complex, with resettlement housing (Nhà ở kết hợp thương mại, một phần nhà ở tái định cư 402 Hàm Tử)	926 Võ Văn Kiệt (previous address: 402 Hàm Tử)	Urban-residential (ODT)	Urban-residential (ODT)
4	Commercial-residential zone Khu thương mại - nhà ở	738 Võ Văn Kiệt (previous address: 136 Hàm Tử)	Commerce-service (TMD)	Urban-residential (ODT)
5	Dragon Tower complex and high-rise tower	628-630 Võ Văn Kiệt (previous address: 8-8 bis Hàm Tử)	Multiple	Multiple

Table 9.5: upcoming redevelopment projects on Vo Van Kiet in District 5

3.2 Do Van Suu Complex

A few kilometers west of Dragon Tower is Do Van Suu. It is yet another upcoming redevelopment project on Vo Van Kiet Boulevard in District 5. In 2010, the DPC initiated the project, 'calling for investment tender' (*dự án mời gọi đầu tư*) from interested private parties with the DPC as a co-investor. In a country where planning is closely associated with development, the two activities are put under the same category of 'planning and development' (*hoạch và phát triển*). The DPC sought to redevelop Đố Văn Sửu, currently an aging apartment building with a market on the ground floor, into a new commercial complex and apartment building (*Trung tâm Thương mại và căn hộ*). Like Dragon Tower, Do Van Suu is blessed with a prime location. It is located at the heart of Cholon in close proximity to the broad Võ Văn Kiệt Boulevard, Hải Thượng Lãn Ông Street, and the Cầu Chà Và bridge that connects to District 8. The tender was awarded to Đức Khải Corporation. The developer-investor has a plan to develop the area into a 25-floor tower block (figure 11). The project is worth over US\$ 22 million.

Ironically, the Do Van Suu project contradicts many earlier plans of the government. The decision to redevelop the land significantly differed from the earlier visions for this area (figure 13). In 2007, the DPC issued a detailed plan for this area. In it, they simply demarcated the functional zones and their utilitarian needs. More starkly, this area is it sits on possibly the oldest part of Cholon (figure 12). In fact, historical settlements were once generously acknowledged in the past planning of District 5. Although 'historic preservation' as such was not consciously expressed, the government made an effort at recognizing a variety of building ages. In the 1990s, the planners recognized a range of residential zones (figure 14). For example, several areas were designated as 'existing central areas' (*khu trung tâm hiện hữu*) and 'inner-city residential areas' (*khu dân cư hiện trạng nội thành*). These are acknowledged as stable, mature urban settlements, in contradistinction from other classifications, such as 'first-phase reconstruction residential areas' (*khu dân cư xây dựng đợt đầu*) and 'residential development zone' (*khu dân cư nội thành phát triển*). In 2007, the DPC announced a spatial development. Here, the variety of settlement ages is reduced somewhat (figure 15). Yet, the plan displays a certain preservation sensibility through its recognition of older settlements. In particular, It depicts old central district' (*khu trung tâm cũ*) and 'existing residential zones to be retained' (*khu dân cư hiện hữu giữ lại*). However, in the present plan of 2015 (see figure 3), these variants are eliminated altogether. The areas are simply designated as 'urban-residential' (*đất ở đô thị*) or 'commerce-service' (*đất thương mại - dịch vụ*). Today, the same piece of land is slated for

extensive redevelopment. As the plan indicates, the Do Van Su will require demolishing the preexisting low-rise buildings that currently line the streets.

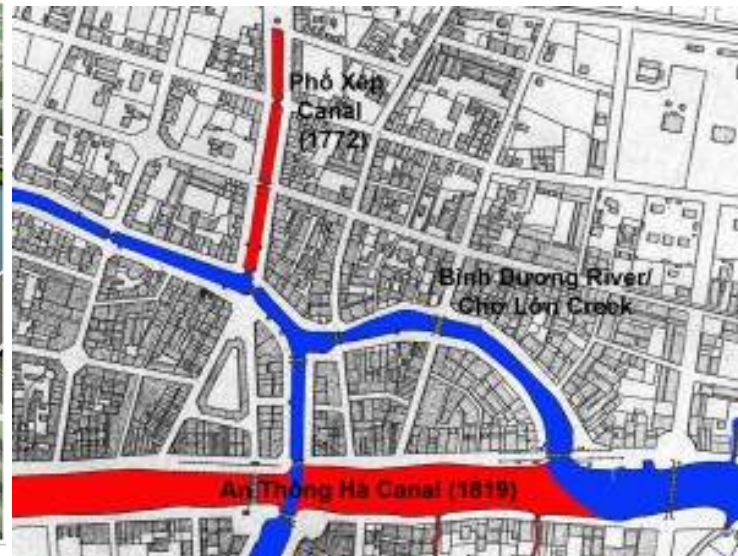


Figure 9.11 (left): Đồ Văn Sửu commercial and housing complex (source: Đức Khải Corporation)
 Figure 9.12 (right): 1893 map of Cholon

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QUẬN 5

ỦY BAN NHÂN DÂN QUẬN 5 CÔNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Số: 16/2007/QĐ-UBND Quận 5, ngày 13 tháng 7 năm 2007

QUYẾT ĐỊNH

Về phê duyệt hồ sơ quy hoạch chi tiết xây dựng đô thị tỷ lệ 1:2.000 khu dân cư liền kề phường 7, 8, 11, 12 quận 5

ỦY BAN NHÂN DÂN QUẬN 5

Chức vụ Luật: Tô chức Hội đồng nhân dân và Ủy ban nhân dân ngày 26 tháng 11 năm 2005.

Chức vụ Luật: Xây dựng ngày 28 tháng 11 năm 2005.

Chức vụ Nghị định số 08/2005/NĐ-CP ngày 24 tháng 01 năm 2005 của Chính phủ về quy hoạch xây dựng.

Chức vụ Quy chuẩn, tiêu chuẩn xây dựng Việt Nam ban hành kèm theo Quyết định số 60/2006/QĐ-BXD ngày 14 tháng 10 năm 1996 của Bộ trưởng Bộ Xây dựng.

Chức vụ Quyết định số 137/2005/QĐ-UBND ngày 02 tháng 8 năm 2005 của Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố về triển khai, phê duyệt nhiệm vụ, đồ án quy hoạch chi tiết xây dựng đô thị và quy hoạch xây dựng đô thị của phường 7, 8, 11, 12 quận 5.

Chức vụ Quyết định số 4796/QĐ-UBND ngày 16 tháng 12 năm 1998 của Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố về phê duyệt chi án đầu tư đầu tư Quy hoạch chung quận 5.

Chức vụ Quyết định số 3650/QĐ-UBND ngày 01 tháng 9 năm 2004 của Ủy ban nhân dân quận 5 về phê duyệt nhiệm vụ quy hoạch chi tiết xây dựng đô thị tỷ lệ 1:2.000 khu dân cư liền kề phường 7, 8, 11, 12 quận 5, diện tích 117.000ha.

Chức vụ Công văn số 2109/QHKT-CH ngày 24 tháng 8 năm 2004 của Sở Quy hoạch - Kiến trúc về ý kiến về nhiệm vụ quy hoạch chi tiết xây dựng đô thị liền kề phường 7, 8, 11, 12 quận 5.

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- Y tế cấp thành phố và khu vực phía Nam của Bệnh viện Chợ Rẫy, Viện Kíng Hâm Tử, Bệnh viện Mắt phố An Bình, Bệnh viện Nguyễn Trí Phương, Bệnh viện Nguyễn Trãi, Bệnh viện Hùng Vương, Bệnh viện Y Dược,...

- Trung tâm thương mại - dịch vụ.
- Khu ở hiện hữu cũ tạo chỉnh trang và xây mới tạo môi trường đô thị.
- Khu công viên cây xanh - thể dục thể thao.

3. Các chỉ tiêu quy hoạch kiến trúc và cơ sở và dụng để:

a) Chỉ tiêu quy hoạch kiến trúc:

TT	Nội dung	Đơn vị	Chỉ tiêu
1	Tổng diện tích khu vực quy hoạch	ha	117,000
2	Diện tích đất liền	Ngược	37,000
3	Đất dân dụng	m ² /người	6 - 8
	- Đất CTCC	m ² /người	2,5 - 3,4
	- Đất cây xanh	m ² /người	1,0 - 1,5
	- Đất giao thông nội bộ	m ² /người	5,0 - 5,5
4	Diện ngoại dân dụng	ha	2,540
5	Mật độ xây dựng chung toàn khu	%	40 - 50
6	Tổng cao tầng bình của khu dân cư mới	Tầng	3,2 - 4
7	Mật độ dân số	Người/ha	487

b) Cơ sở và dụng để:

Tổng diện tích khu vực quy hoạch là 117.000ha, được bố trí cơ sở và dụng để như sau:

- Đất dân dụng: 114,558ha chiếm tỷ lệ 97,83%.
- Trung tâm, gồm:
 - Đất khu ở: 34,900ha chiếm tỷ lệ 29,81%.
 - Đất CTCC: 19,350ha chiếm tỷ lệ 16,51%.
 - Đất công viên - TDTT: 6,030ha chiếm tỷ lệ 5,06%.

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- Phà Tây gần phường 14, 15 quận 5 giới hạn bởi đường Châu Văn Liêm và đường Đỗ Ngọc Thanh.

- Phà Nam giáp phường 5, 6, 10 quận 5 giới hạn bởi đường Trần Hưng Đạo.

- Phà Bắc giáp phường 9, đường An Dương Vương và đường Nguyễn Chí Thanh, quận 11.

Điểm 6. Khu đất tính cả được chia thành nhiều khu chức năng sau: (Xem bản đồ quy hoạch tổng thể bằng số dụng để)

- Trung tâm hành chính: Ủy ban nhân dân quận 5 và các cơ quan hành chính cấp quận nằm trên trục đường An Dương Vương, phường 8.
- Trung tâm giáo dục: Trường Đại học Y Dược, Trường Đại học Sư phạm Thủ Đức Thủ Đức thành phố.
- Trung tâm y tế: Bệnh viện lớn của Bệnh viện Chợ Rẫy, Viện Kíng Hâm Tử, Bệnh viện Mắt phố An Bình, Bệnh viện Nguyễn Trí Phương, Bệnh viện Nguyễn Trãi, Bệnh viện Hùng Vương, Bệnh viện Y Dược,...
- Trung tâm thương mại - dịch vụ.
- Khu ở hiện hữu cũ tạo chỉnh trang gồm khu nhà phố và khu chung cư.
- Công viên cây xanh - thể dục thể thao.
- Giao thông khu vực và số bộ.

BẢNG QUY HOẠCH SỬ DỤNG ĐẤT

TT	Loại đất	Diện tích (ha)	Tỷ lệ (%)	Chỉ tiêu (m ² /người)
1	Đất dân dụng	114,558	97,83	20,09
	- Đất ở	34,900	29,81	6,1
	- Khu ở hiện hữu	30,688	26,17	
	- Đất ở xây dựng mới	4,212	3,64	
2	Đất CTCC	19,350	16,51	3,6
	- Giao thông nội bộ	0,956		
	- Giao thông phố thông	6,270		
	- Thương mại - dịch vụ	4,399		
	- Cơ quan, y tế, văn hóa	7,805		
3	Đất cây xanh - TDTT	6,030	5,06	1,2

Figure 9.13: illustration of the detailed planning documents for Wards 7, 8, 11, 12, District 5 (source: MPC)

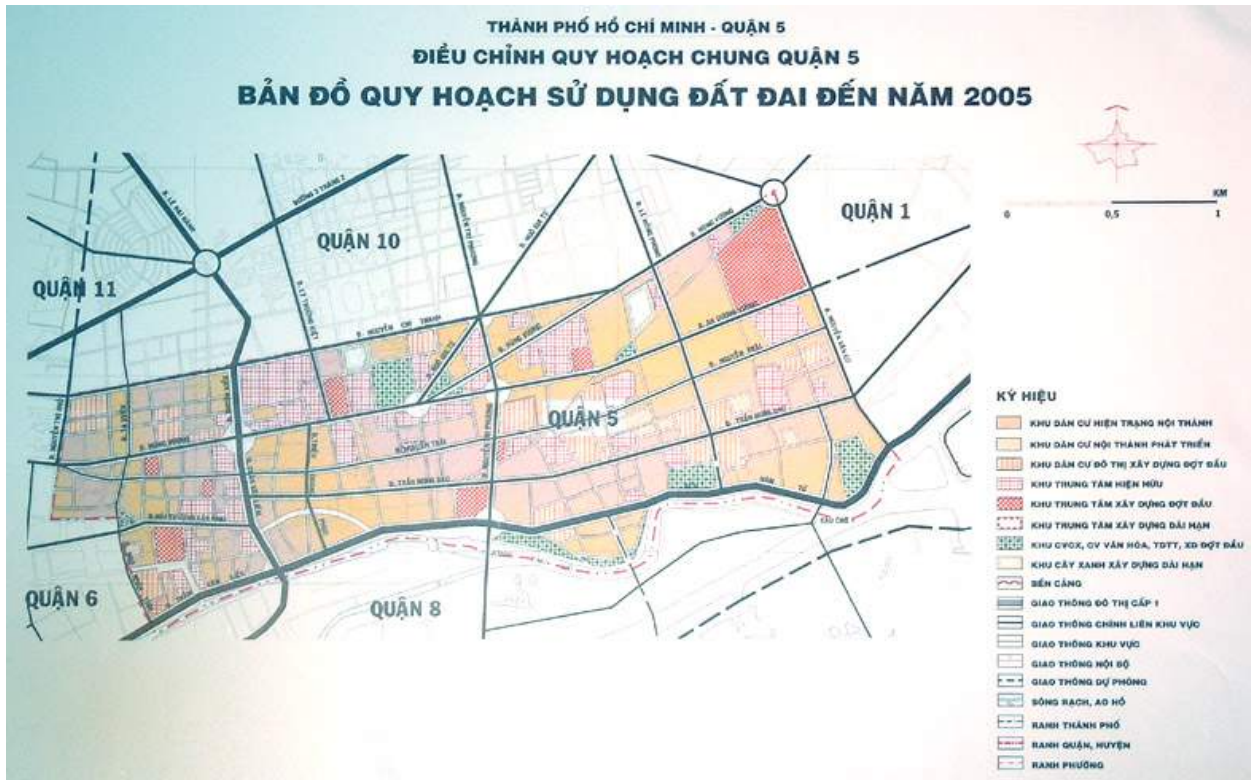


Figure 9.14: Landuse planning map towards year 2005 (source: MPC)

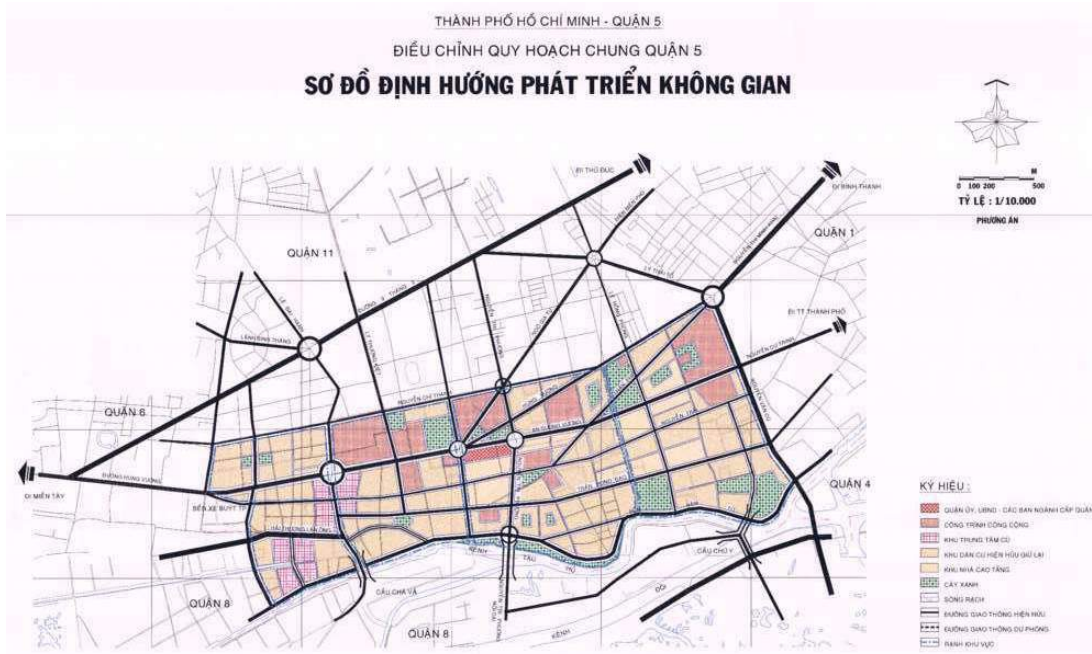


Figure 9.15: District 5 spatial development plan announced in 2007 (source: MPC)

3.3 Cultural Center of District 5

Large-scale redevelopment is not limited to mix-used commercial/residential projects. The government has in equal measure targeted public institutions, as well. The Cultural Center of

District 5 is a good example. In October 2013, the MPC instructed the Department of Planning and Architecture to ‘urgently study’ (*khẩn trương nghiên cứu*) the possibility of planning a new Cultural Center of District 5.¹⁹⁹ A triangular-shaped land, the site is located in Ward 6 of District 5, bounded by Tran Hung Dao, Tran Phu and Nguyen Tri Phuong Streets. The initial idea was to auction a landuse right to construct a modern multifunctional complex of a 5000-person capacity. However, when the design contest for a 1:500 plan was announced in June 2014, a high-rise residential component was added as a new requirement to the tender.²⁰⁰ According to the tender brief, the Cultural Center will now be divided into two main functional areas: (1) District 5 Cultural Center itself and (2) a mix-use complex for commercial, service, and office for rental, and residential high-rises. In addition to the complex, the final design will envision landscaped green spaces, public service buildings, amenities, and underground parking. Importantly, the planning parameters are very generous and open-ended towards the eventual built form. In the government’s vision, the complex may cover only 50% of the whole site. And there is ‘no limit on height and underground construction’ (*không hạn chế tầng cao xây dựng và tầng hầm*).²⁰¹ This means that the final design will depart from the surroundings that tend to be low-rise and full-coverage (i.e. low FAR but high BCR). The approved design (figure 16) is by HSP International Vietnam and Ardor Architects, the firm that also designed the Dragon Tower. The rather avant-garde design contrasts with the otherwise dense neighborhoods.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Quy hoạch khu vực Trung tâm Văn hóa quận 5 thành khu phức hợp’ [Planning a Cultural Center Complex for District 5], October 30, 2013, www.cafeland.vn

²⁰⁰ Government Decision No. /20142594/QĐ-UBND.

²⁰¹ Except the locations already have planning criteria as No. 626 Ham Tu Street and 107 - 107B Tran Hung Dao.



Figure 9.16: District 5 Cultural Center project rendering

4. Financing modern living

In addition to granting a ‘landuse right’ (*quyền sử dụng đất*) to private developers, the government itself is an active promoter of large-scale projects. This section discusses the financial arrangements recently recreated to enable project delivery. One institutional entity peculiar to Ho Chi Minh City that helps promote redevelopment is a *Dịch vụ công ích* (DVCI), a Public Services Company. Literally meaning ‘public services’, DVCI was established in 2010 as a private enterprise arm of each District of Ho Chi Minh City with its own business registration.²⁰² For District 5, the DVCI was founded in August 2010. The rationale for the transformation of state enterprises into a limited company is to ‘promote proactive, creative dynamism of business productivity, activity, and equality under the Enterprise Law (*Luật Doanh nghiệp*)’. Currently, District 5’s DVCI has a capital and equity of VDN 90,700 billion (USD 4 million). The scope of activity of the DVCI includes public sanitation services, drainage works, park maintenance and street landscaping, and garbage collection. In recent years, the company has engaged in activities, profitable businesses, and service delivery, in the larger mission to raise income and living standards of the residents and its employees.²⁰³

In addition, another important aspect of the DVCI is its active role in the district’s physical development: infrastructure and housing. The company plans and manages infrastructure projects, including the design, civil engineering, and construction of the district’s civic and

²⁰² Government Decision No. 3811/QĐ-UBND

²⁰³ *Dịch vụ công ích*, District 5’s Public Services Company, <http://dichvucongichquan5.vn/>

industrial projects. It conduct cadastral surveys. It also manages the district's many marketplaces by both investing in market businesses and leasing kiosks, shops, and businesses premises. More importantly, the company actively shapes the geography of housing within the district in two ways (see below). First, the company has the authority to grant and transfer a landuse right (*quyền sử dụng đất*) to build a home. Second, the company leases, buys, and sells homes itself, and funds ancillary infrastructure construction associated with home building.

However, funding a large-scale construction can exceed the financial means of the DVCI, thus requiring the involvement of private-sector capital. In 2013, the Department of Finance makes a recommendation to the MPC on an array of possible financial mechanisms for the redevelopment of dilapidated housing complexes in District 5. As part of the recommendations, it is suggested that DVCI can be a sole investor if a project's total investment is below VND 500 billion (USD 22,190,000). If the total investment exceeds VND 500 billion, DVCI is allowed to form a joint venture with other entities. The breakthrough in joint-venture financial arrangement enables several projects in District 5. Currently, the DVCI of District 5 is investing in four construction projects summarized in the table below (table 6).²⁰⁴ It is important to note that the total investment of the four projects amounts to VND 665 billion (USD 29.5 million). However, the current charter capital of DVCI of District 5 is only VND 90.7 billion (USD 4 million), meaning that the company would be otherwise incapable of simultaneously carrying out the four projects.

No.	Project's name	Project type	Total investment	Investment by DVCI
1	402 Ham Tu	Mix-used, residential (320 units), office, commercial	VND 1,040 billion (USD 46.2 million)	10%
2	727 Tran Hung Dao	Office building	VND 1,738 billion (USD 77 million)	20%
3	Soai Kinh Lam	Mix-used, residential (208 units)	VND 823 billion (USD 36.5 million)	20%
4	District 5 Cultural Center	Cultural center, business center, entertainment, office	VND 490 billion (USD 21.7 million)	10%

Table 9.6: redevelopment projects initiated by DVCI of District 5

²⁰⁴ According to the decision, some new residential units in Ham Tu and Soai Kinh Lam will be assigned as resettlement housing (*tái định cư*) for those affected by the redevelopment projects in District 5, such as the redevelopment/rehabilitation of old apartment and beautification projects.

More importantly, the Department of Finance made three further suggestions to expedite the new investor-state arrangement. First, given the past experience of unimplemented projects, the DPC of District 5 was advised to select investors capable of delivery and to consider legal mechanisms to encourage compliance and commitment in case the investors fail to complete the project upon schedule. Second, in the event where an old apartment is to be redeveloped, the DPC needs to create a resettlement fund (*tái đình cư* or TĐC) for compensation. Third and perhaps most importantly, the investor in a redevelopment project is entitled to receive a number of tax incentives, such as reduced corporate income tax and tax exemptions. In addition, the area that will be used for resettlement homes is not levied an additional value added tax.²⁰⁵

4.1 402 Ham Tu Street

403 Ham tu Street is one of the mix-used projects in which the government is heavily involved. Although the project was approved in 2013, it was halted and later changed hand to another investor. In January 2015, the MPC granted the landuse right to Tam Duc Company to continue the delivery of new apartment buildings. The project is a joint venture in which District 5's DVCI contributes 20% of the charter capital. Importantly, the MPC instructed the Department of Construction to research into the need to use resettlement funds (*quỹ nhà tái đình cư*), proposing that 30% of the newly built units (96 apartments) will serve the resettlement, and the remaining 70% (224 apartments) to be put on the market in order for the investors to recover their invested capital.

Like many projects on Vo Van Kiet Boulevard, the project capitalizes on the prime location, speculating its promising advantages on the ease of transportation. The project will be designed as a 25-floor mix-use complex of two towers, Block A and Block B. The lower floors (Floor 1-3) will be designated as commercial areas, or 'trading zones'. The upper floors will be used for office space and apartment units. The project will have a BCR of 47.59% and an FAR of 11.66. Importantly, the name of the project has been changed from 402 Ham Tu to 926 Vo Van Kiet to

²⁰⁵ There are further details regarding the tax breaks promised to potential investors. For example, Investors in apartment rehabilitation or construction projects are entitled to corporate income tax rate of 10% within 15 years, the tax exemption for 4 years, and 50% reduction of the tax payable in the next 9 years. Regarding the resettlement funds, the DPC proposed that, for resettlement projects that have a TDC ratio of over 30-40%, the investor can supply TDC units left over from TDC funds for other business projects. Additionally, entities and individuals eligible for resettlement projects (in the old apartment building) do not have to pay a registration fee for ownership certificates.

take advantage of the more famous Vo Van Kiet Boulevard. As with other developments on this broad thoroughfare, this project boasts its strategic location and close proximity to the downtown District 1, located two kilometers away. Similarly, the proximity to the bridges Nguyen Tri Phuong and Nguyen Van Cu promises a rapid connection to the outer districts such as District 8 and District 4. The project also takes advantage of Chairman Le Hoang Quan's favorable view of the boulevard and his desire for trolleybus routes and waterway tourism along the boulevard and the canal.

4.2 Soai Kinh Lam

In 2010, the mix-used project 'Soai Kinh Lam Trade Center' was announced (figure 17). The project was to be located in the commercial heart of District 5, bounded by Tran Hung Dao, Nguyen Trai, and Phung Hung Streets. It is located right across the namesake Soai Kinh Lam market, the largest fabric market in Ho Chi Minh City and southern Vietnam. As a multi-million-dollar project, the investors consisted of Giai Loi Company, District 5 Housing Management & Development Company, and the DPC of District 5 who contributed a 20% investment. Once complete, the project promised to become a mix-use complex of commercial center and residential apartments, with a number of units reserved as resettlement homes. Like many other similar projects previously discussed, the project will feature two tower blocks of 30 floors and 17 floors respectively, with two underground floors for parking. Floors 1-6 will be used as a center for trade and services; floors 7-12 for rental offices, a swimming pool, and an entertainment zone; and floors 13-30 for a 208-unit residential apartment (108 as resettlement units and 100 as sale units). The site has a BCR of 48.63%, with the remaining area for green space, yards, and internal roads. The project was scheduled for completion in 2014. In October 2010, the construction contractor officially began foundation work of the site. The foundation construction was expected to be completed within 165 days. Once the construction was completed, the project was stalled. From late 2011 until now, the site has been abandoned with no sign of further construction. On the 2015 landuse planning maps, the plot of land remains 'urban-residential', unlike other land plots that were rezoned (figure 3) for new projects. At the time of the writing, the site remains empty and closed off by construction hoarding (figure 18)



Figure 9.17: Soai Kinh Lam project rendering as envisioned in 2010

Figure 9.18: the site of Soai Kinh Lam today

4.3 The role of ITPC

It is worth mentioning the role of the Investment and Trade Promotion Center of Ho Chi Minh City (ITPC), another central-government agency that is instrumental in the transformation of District 5. Established in 1982, the organization was initially founded as the Export Development Center to boost Vietnam's early days of liberalization. In 2001, in shifting its focus from simply exports to trade and investment, the MPC renamed the organization to Investment and Trade Promotion Center. Currently, the mission of the ITPC is to promote and attract foreign investment and enterprises into Ho Chi Minh City. They assist local and foreign businesses with updated information, matchmaking services, acting as an 'efficient bridge between local enterprises and foreign counterparts'.

ITPC regularly announces calls for investment in order to attract potential investors to various development projects. Currently, ITPC has eight investment plans for District 5 (table 7). By and large, these projects aim at reconstructing and redeveloping old apartment complexes; building resettlement housing; and building new 'trade centers'. Some of these projects require wholesale demolition of the urban fabric. For example, in order to construct an office, commercial, office complex, the Phu Dong Thien project will entail demolishing 67 apartment units and nine shophouses²⁰⁶. Similarly, the Do Ngoc Thanh mix-used project necessitated the clearance of six shophouses to make way for new development.²⁰⁷ In addition, as discussed in

²⁰⁶ Shophouses on Nguyen Trai Street from No. 653-678 Nguyen Trai Street, Ward 11, District 5 (from Phu Dong Thien Vuong Street. to Trieu Quang Phuc Street)

²⁰⁷ Six cleared shophouses from 93b to 95 Pham Huu Chi Street, Ward 12 District 5 .

detailed planning, the government favors streetblock-scale wholesale planning. Detailed planning has been used as an instrument that enables a replanning on a block scale, where a new proposal supersedes the existing group of buildings. The block of Ward 9 is a case in point. In the quadrangle planning area for 4,000 residents, the government seeks to ‘exploit the favorable position of the planning area to achieve a rational use of land’ by ‘building a commercial, service and tourism area associated with high-class housing, in line with development trend of the city’.

No.	Project names	Stated objectives	Total investments	Promised compensation
1	Do Van Su (trade center and apartment building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve the urban and old apartments as well as meeting accommodation needs and business activities 	VND 684 billion	VND 427 billion
2	Tran Tuan Khai (apartment building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve the urban, enhancing land using effectiveness and meeting accommodation needs 	VND 328 billion	VND 131 billion
3	24-26 Ngo Quyen St. (office, commercial, apartment complex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remove damaged apartment block; ● Construct Commerce- Office Building; ● Renovate urban area and create a spacious residential area in district 5; ● Establish resettlement housing ● Create income to ensure the financial efficiency for investors. 	-	-
4	3-23 Phu Dong Thien Vong St. (office, commercial, apartment complex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remove damaged apartment block; ● Construct Commerce- Office Building; ● Establish resettlement housing ● Create income to ensure the financial efficiency for investors. 		

5	Vo Truong Toan St. (Trade center and apartment building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve the urban environment ● Enhance land use efficiency ● Meet accommodation needs 	VND 556 billion	VND 280 billion
6	Le Hong Pong Apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve the urban environment ● Enhance land use efficiency ● Meet accommodation needs 	VND 488 billion	VND 488 billion
7	Street block planning Ward 9, District 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quadrangle area planning for 4,000 people ● Exploit the favorable position of the planning area to achieve rational use of land. ● Building a commercial, service and tourism area associated with high class housing, in line with development trend of the city's existing factors as infrastructure, landscaping, transport, environment in the region. 		
8	194 Do Ngoc Thanh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remove dilapidated apartments and build a new construction; ● Develop a trade center ● Establish resettlement housing ● create income to ensure the financial efficiency for investors. 		

Table 9.7: redevelopment projects advertised by ITPC

However, the process is cumbersome as it involves legal settlement, compensation arrangement, and population relocation. Nguyen Van Du, deputy director of a real estate firm, pinpoints relocation and clearance of households as the main difficulty. Even when the land use right has been granted, the progress can still 'crawl' (*rùa bò*) due to a variety of reasons. In many cases, instead of receiving compensation for relocation, people insisted on staying in the old apartment simply because their family livelihoods have been associated with a certain area for a long time. Or, the compensation is not enough to finance a new home. The investors perceive that these relocation-associated costs are not worth the investment, thus

disincentivizing them to proceed forwarding. 727 Tran Hung Dao is one case in point. A tall housing complex that used to house American soldiers during the war, the building quickly fell into disrepair and was earmarked for demolition. However, although listed as a state-financed project, the progress has been slow as families refuse to relocate due to unsatisfactory compensation.²⁰⁸

To facilitate private-sector investment in redevelopment, the Ministry of Construct recently announced a new Draft Construction Decree (*Dự thảo Nghị định Xây dựng*)²⁰⁹ in December 2015. The Decree specifically aims at incentivizing private investors to participate in redevelopment projects. In essence, real-estate investors will enjoy a range of mechanisms and policies (table 8). First, forcible demolition and relocation is possible if the investor has been granted the project title. Second, the investor has the option of simply investing or contributing capital without having to carry out land acquisition. The state will be responsible for demarcating and acquiring that piece of land. Third, the investor can change land configuration to suit their purposes, particularly in light of the needs for business and services. Fourth, the investor will be exempted from fees associated with land rent and land transfer for the entire area allocated for the project.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) forcible demolition(2) state-led land acquisition(3) Land-plot configuration(4) Fee exemptions

Table 9.8: summary of the forthcoming Draft Construction Decree

5. Conclusions: Making future

In this chapter, I traced how planning has shaped the built environment of Cholon, District 5 of Ho Chi Minh City. In concluding, I reflect on the role of the state, paying attention to its philosophy, instruments, institutions/bodies, and mechanisms that come to transform the district. First, in philosophy, the notion of ‘modernization’ underpins the planning of Ho Chi Minh City in general, and a ‘growth’ district like District 5 in particular. From the general plan’s broad philosophy to the detailed plan’s daily maneuver, modernization is celebrated as the order of the day, and planning is a vehicle of the growth agenda. As I have shown, the state themselves is

²⁰⁸ <http://saigoneer.com/saigon-culture/2205-saigon-urban-legends-haunted-727-tran-hung-dao>

²⁰⁹ Ministry of Construction, Circular No. 2015/TT-BXD

active promoter of modernization, bringing together a wide range of state bodies, from the city-level MPC to district-level DPC, from establishing the development agency of DVCI to enlisting the promotion agency of ITPC. I have traced in the instruments that these bodies respectively use to transform space. They revise zoning codes to suit development. They invest in modernization projects. They actively call for new investment. They offer financial mechanisms and incentives to facilitate new visions. They themselves sponsor those new visions. Moreover, In the era where planning mechanisms are increasingly privatized, laissez faire became an active laissez faire. In relegating the responsibility of planning to the private sector, the government has opened up new frontiers. In particular, I highlighted what has been considered as efficient use of space: the mix-used tower. Increasingly a popular typology, the mix-used towers are mushrooming across the district, replacing the street-based row of shophouses.

The DPC of Cholon takes pride in the modernization of the district.²¹⁰ Although well conscious of the district's long history, the eye on the future is clear. At the fundamental level, the development of District 5 reflects the larger national economic policy. With the resolutions of the National Congress of the Vietnamese Socialist Party (*Đại hội đại*), the economy has shifted towards 'trade, services, industry, cottage industry' (*thương mại, dịch vụ, công nghiệp, tiểu thủ công nghiệp*). Between the years 2000 and 2005, the district registered a 23% growth of trade and services, a sector that accounts for 80% of the district's economic activity. Moreover, from 2000 to 2004, the total value of exports and imports of the district amounted for US\$ 494 million. By the end of 2004, the DPC had facilitated 1,484 enterprises operating under the Enterprise Law, 25 cooperatives, and 15,925 individual business households with a total investment of over 5114 billion. despite its long history as a trade entrepot, the modernization has taken on new typologies. Besides the network of markets and trading areas, the District is now home to legal-advisory services, finance, banking, tourism, and health care.

The aforementioned modernization necessarily impacted the shape of the urban built environment. District 5 has gradually emerged as a major commercial-service center of Ho Chi Minh City. However, the most significant change took place in housing typologies - a landuse type that constitute the majority of land in Cho Lon. Over the years, the DPC boasts the district's 'new urban face' (*mới bộ mặt đô thị*) that is more spacious (*ngày càng khang trang*) and modern (*hiện đại*) with all the construction works and urban beautification (*công trình xây dựng và chỉnh trang đô thị quy mô*). The modernization spirit is encapsulated through the figure of the mix-

²¹⁰General Introduction', People's Committee of District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, <http://www.quan5.hochiminhcity.gov.vn>

used tower. Over the years, a number of apartment complexes and mix-used towers were constructed, such as Nguyen An, Hung Vuong, Phan Van Tri, and Ngo Quyen, to address the housing and business needs. The district managed to, the DPC highlights, add 1800 residential units, exceeding the target of 1000 units set out earlier²¹¹. In addition, the district is beginning to see other modern building typologies, boasting many multimillion-Dong economic and cultural centers (mostly privately invested) such as An Dong Trade Centre Plaza, Thuan Kieu Plaza, District 5 Cultural Center, Tinh Vo Sports Club. The list is recited as proud achievements. In this regard, planning has been directed at realizing the future visions of city living.

Historic Preservation: a missing vocabulary

Planning as future-making comes at a cost. Historic preservation as we know it is not a planning concern in this growth-oriented city. Although mentioned and provided for by the Urban Planning Law, it is rarely invoked. The treatment is rather superficial. In some cases, historic preservation receives a perfunctory, footnote-like mention. For example, the detailed planning of District 5 mentions the need to research in order to 'preserve specific characteristics, promote the identity, and identify areas with valuable architectural heritage'.²¹² Or, the 'works of religious belief in the are well-preserved, maintained, and restored'.²¹³ As earlier shown, the Vietnamese concept of cultural heritage is rather narrow. The term '*di tích*', which literally means relic in English, is used to define the value of past landscapes in terms of their historical value, significance, and style. Along the same line, in the landuse zoning map, historic preservation is further reduced. It is represented as a landuse type that can be quantified. This thus leaves very little room for other potential typologies and other possible systems of value. A good example is the 'vernacular' shophouse, a common building typology that characterizes the dense urban district and symbolizing an efficient use of land. The same typology highly treasured in Penang, it is seen as plenty and commonplace in Ho Chi Minh City. In recent years, the shophouses have been demolished to give way to, indeed, the modern mix-use complex. This is simply a sign of things to come. In September 2016, the MPC announced the plan to demolish at least 237 of its oldest tenement buildings by 2020, many of which are in Cholon²¹⁴. What will replace

²¹¹ The resolution made at the 8th meeting of the DPC of District 5.

²¹² As stated in the 1:2000 zoning planning for three neighborhoods in District 5: Wards 2, 3, 4; Wards 10, 11, 12; and Wards 13, 14, 15, and 2015 zoning planning, Government Decision No. 5598/2015

²¹³ Decision No. 10/2007 QD-UBND

²¹⁴ Tuoi Tre News. September 5, 2016. Ho Chi Minh City poised to pull down hundreds of old tenements. <http://tuoitrenews.vn/society/36867/ho-chi-minh-city-poised-to-pull-down-old-tenements> (accessed on September 5, 2016).

them, I conjecture, is yet another mix-used tower, the like of Soai Kinh Lam - a future that is promised, but not always fulfilled.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

1. The Ideal Type Unbound

In this concluding chapter, I return to the notion of comparison as defamiliarization. To do so, I seek to conceptualize a few lessons from my three-case individualizing-comparison design. If we agree that, one, there is no one way to do comparison (Robinson 2011; 2016), and, two, comparison may be studied in its own right, what may this dissertation's comparison look like? I distinguish between two sets of lessons: fundamental and emerging. First, the fundamental lessons are, of course, the differences among the three sites. Let us recall that the three cases are chosen their contrasting results (for anticipatable reasons), in order to show a range of contrasting experiences in the technopolitics of historic preservation. In this logic, each of the cases produced its own 'bespoke differences', corresponding to the dimensions of in-case investigation (tables 1 and 2). After all, they are three different sites with three remarkably different histories and trajectories of historic preservation. Individualizing comparison set out to do justice to these differences. Second and more importantly are some emerging insights. Now, I venture to theorize more substantively the two notions of 'ideal type' and 'difference', which have thus far undergirded cross-case comparison.

Comparison pushes the limits of the ideal type, unbinding it to reveal its true constituents. The ideal type is a useful point of departure. My original logic of case selections ('theoretical replication') was to convey contrast. At the onset, I started out to portray differences, to contrast the 'styles'. Very quickly, what had been chosen as three coherent, bespoke styles quickly dissolved, giving rise to a more nuanced account. Seen from afar, Penang seemed well-equipped to manage its recently listed World Heritage Site. It has comprehensive guidelines, active stakeholders, longer familiarity with historic preservation, and specialized government units. However, a closer investigation showed that the state's curatorial attempts to manage the Heritage Site are caught in their own technopolitics of knowledge production. As these pages

have shown, the state's vision is contested and evaded. Textbook architectural guidelines are not implemented, much less enforced. Municipal expertise is in its infancy. Ironically, what goes on display are the curatorial versions of heritage: the books, brochures, walking trails, celebrations. In this sense, curation takes on a new, qualified meaning, one that feeds more on vision than action.

Seen from afar, the government of Ho Chi Minh City seemed nonchalant about historic preservation. The picture is true somewhat. Old buildings await the wrecking ball as new high-rises come to replace them. Protecting the city's historical built forms is never a main concern of the government. Yet, preservation nonchalance, too, needs qualifying. It does not mean a lack of care altogether; instead my research revealed the two conditions of selective preservation and active modernization. First, the Vietnamese state has a rather definition of heritage/historic preservation. Second, it actively promotes redevelopment and demolition, particularly in growth-designated districts. Taken together, the two conditions do not bode well for historic preservation in Ho Chi Minh City, accounting instead for the rapid disappearance of vernacular typologies in old areas such as Chinatown.

In this sense, the ideal type necessarily mutates. During fieldwork, one confronts with the fundamentally itinerant quality of the ideal type. It is reconstituted by empirical material. Useful as a point of departure, the ideal type (i.e. the three discrete 'styles') provided conceptual scaffolding for the researcher to pre-organize contrasts. However, upon the case's unfolding, empirical materials bring about a greater awareness of the issue at hand. Deeper evidence came into view, thus rendering a more nuanced picture. The bespoke ideal type has, then, mutated away from ideal discreteness. To this end, unbinding the ideal type is impossible without deepening the case's particularities. In this sense, I did not use the fieldwork to substantiate the ideal type, or to corroborate prior conviction. The fieldwork was not mobilized to 'confirm' or cement the case, but to see the precise points at which the ideal type holds, and at which it breaks down, giving away to other possible views. To quote historian James Clifford, '[t]heory is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home' (Clifford, 1989, p. 177).

2. Towards difference-in-parallel: Defamiliarizing planning techniques

The second is the notion of ‘difference’ used in comparative research. Of course, there exist endlessly enumerable similarities and differences among the three sites. However, simply enumerating them is not a useful comparative strategy, for I do not wish to turn my dissertation into a mere trope of similarities and differences, a litany of same/different — a primitive notion that ‘comparison’ seems to conjure. Doing so would mean generating a matrix of scattering differences. More worryingly, comparison as a quest for similarities and differences is a quest for familiar terms of reference. In other words, it is a refamiliarization.

Towards the project of comparison as defamiliarization, I see a potential for *organized* differences, or a more productive way to organize comparison beyond enumeration. How then do we, while recognizing remarkable differences, organize them in a meaningful comparison? Instead of throwing away ‘difference’ altogether, viewing the cases as uncomparable heterogeneities or peculiarities, I propose that we reformat it into what I call for now ‘difference in parallel’. The shared unit of analysis already lends itself in this direction. Let us recall that while the dissertation subscribes to Tilly’s individualizing comparison as a means to render in-case practicalities, it rendered them within the same theoretical frame: the technopolis of historic preservation (or even more precisely: the governmental relation of planning technique (see table 2 in Chapter 1)). Thus, far from staggering differences, there is a helpful parallel here that merits comparison or comparative organization.

In order to theorize difference-in-parallel, thus reinvigorating the notion of difference, I now return to the dissertation’s central interest: the technopolitics of planning techniques. At the most basic level, the three city governments use comparable tools to effect spatial change. In fact, some planning techniques are universal across the sites. However, these seemingly universal planning techniques diverge. In their own ways, they are used to produce particular effects. What appears familiar, similar, and universal needs scrutinization with a view to defamiliarization. Therefore, comparison as defamiliarization is to compare how one universal technique is used in a particular way to produce particular outcomes. That is, to recognize a difference-in-parallel is to recognize difference in repetition (Jacobs, 2012). Let me demonstrate this notion through three instances: mapmaking, zoning, and list.

MAP

Maps are employed across the three cases for the same fundamental purposes, and yet to radically different effects. The basic purpose of mapmaking is a tool of visibility (Legg 2006) that renders (hyper)visible certain objects in space. As a planning technique, mapmaking assists the planner in outlining a clear field of intervention. In Bangkok, mapmaking made possible the emergence of the city's royalist historic district. As I have argued, as a neatly oval contour, Rattanakosin is a cartographic construction emerging from a series of municipal ordinances. In the same logic, Chinatown was quite literally 'appended' as its buffer-zone Extension. The case of Bangkok illuminate the classic tenet of critical cartography, where cartographic lines sharply split the inside and outside. I bring this theme of mapmaking as selection to investigate its use in George Town, Malaysia. George Town, I found, provided a more fertile site for critical cartography. Therefore, it may offer lessons to deepen the outside-inside argument. As the city struggled to demarcate an area of 'historic George Town', George Town was more bothered (until recently) by the authoritative reading that sharp lines can convey. Since the 1980s, the boundary for historic George Town has shifted many times, manifesting itself under different names: the inner-city, conservation zones, heritage enclaves, historical enclaves, among many others. In particular, unlike Thai royalism, Malaysia is governed, at least in words, by the discourse of multiculturalism. Map, then, is used as a tool to make visible a spatiality of multiculturalism. Until recently, state actors constantly adjusted the boundary, reorienting the cartographic point of view to include bits and pieces that convey the image of 'melting-pot' city ('the Street of Harmony' is a prime example).

The cartographic struggles stopped in 2008, with troubling consequences, when George Town was officially inscribed as Unesco World Heritage Site (Chapter 1). Now, it has a clear Heritage Site. Cemented and static, the finalized boundary belies a whole history of struggle, redefinition, and redrawing. Equally important, it has material consequences for those inside and outside. Despite belonging to the same historical fabric, the Heritage Site and its Other receive different treatments (e.g. regulation and funding). It is true that, compared to Bangkok, Penang seems to have devoted greater attention to mapmaking. Yet, once in place, it reaffirms the basic dilemma of mapmaking, reactivating the basic cartographic politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Therefore, in drawing difference in parallel between Penang and Bangkok, one re-appreciates the role of mapmaking as an authoritative tool in historic preservation. In fact, map is a fundamental prerequisite for preservation intervention. For 'mapped historicalness' (Rugkhapan,

2015) has to be known in some cartographic form, whether it be a 'district' or 'enclave'. My argument is that, despite an attempt to infinitesimally map historicalness, map should be read as suggestive, not definitive. This argument will irritate policymakers/planners who need to make a decision for something that, I argue, is fundamentally undecidable (Mouffe 2000, Roy, 2015). In this light, as contingent knowledge, map has to be incorporated into a thicker understanding of historical geography.

LIST

Like mapmaking, list entails selection. While list is used to include, inclusion imbricates its own exclusion. I studied the exclusion-by-inclusion technopolitics of list as it is used to inventorize relic sites in Ho Chi Minh City. The making of the inventory, as I have argued, revolves around the selection of socialist heritage sites that privilege the elite over the vernacular, the building over the people. To provide a diametric opposite, I analyzed George Town's Traditional Trades & Occupation Directory. There, the intention opposes that of Ho Chi Minh City: to recognize vernacular cultural practices and their human bearers. The Directory registered George Town's traders, artisans, craftspeople, and other 'heritage practitioners'. The stated goal was to 'safeguard' the increasingly disappearing cultural practices. Yet, while the Directory includes an impressive array of people — the kind that would be inconceivable in Ho Chi Minh City — it excludes the question of land tenure, omitting the fact that most of the 'heritage traders' are, after all, lease tenants. In other words, the very livelihoods that the planners wish to 'safeguard' depend not on the list per se, but on the land on which the traders sit, on the precarity of land tenure in the rapidly gentrifying city.

So what does comparison tell us about the technopolitics of list? I draw attention to the fundamental problem of list: despite the different intentions, listing amounts to the same effect of selection. In their own ways, the two cases of Ho Chi Minh City and George Town respectively commit a politics of inclusion and exclusion. Here, I recall Goody's (1977) proposition that, for what is often seen as a continuity, list is in fact a discontinuity. In my mind, this is a powerful caution. It reminds us that list, after all, is a representation. For it to make sense as a cohesive whole, it abstracts things (e.g. relic sites, heritage traders), detaching them from their contexts (e.g. national historiography, land tenure). This caution has implications for professional practice. There is an indelible politics in culling elements from different places and relocating them in the same place (i.e. the list). Of course, planners need not find this politics disabling.

However, it needs to be acknowledged. For, while list is capable of expanding, expansion alone can rarely safeguard things.

ZONING

Zoning is another way to anchor difference in parallel. To be sure, Chinatowns everywhere have been sites of growth, commerce, and business activity. However, yet I hope to have shown that the commercial experience is differently appreciated by zoning. The governments of Penang, Bangkok, and Ho Chi Minh City all subscribe to the basic power of zoning in managing space, but they do so in order to effect different spatial outcomes. As Watson (2009) remarks, while a passé mode of land management in the Global North, zoning remains the order of the day in the urban Global South. Bangkok is a prototype of modernist zoning that has persisted into the twenty-first century. In Thailand, zoning is still caught in functionalist concern, where land is seen strictly as landuse, or land as utility. The functionalist, utilitarian view is cemented through monochromatic color code, in which one singular landuse type is assigned to one color (e.g. 'red' for commercial landuse, 'light-brown' for historic preservation, and so on). Worse yet, one 'zone' is assigned to one singular landuse color. The case of Bangkok, then, opens up the question of zoning/zone as an imaginative state geography. In specific, it sheds light on the clash between the universal and the particular. While zoning endorses the universal vision of a functionalist city, a specter of particularities resist this vision (Chapters 5 and 6). I use Chinatown as an example to show that, despite being 'commercial' in nature (thus a 'commercial zone'), it is fraught with its own cultural identity, land tenure, architectural typologies that the universalist zoning does not see.

In one similar way, Ho Chi Minh City uses zoning as a way to categorize land. Like Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, too, has a taxonomy of landuse codes, albeit peculiar to the Vietnamese context. However, the insight I drew from Ho Chi Minh City's zoning is that land is central to the state's imagination of the city's urban future. Ho Chi Minh City has long been imagined as the country's economic hub. Recently, the government aspires to become yet another hub of Southeast Asia, too. To do so, a host of 'growth districts' and 'new urban centers' have been designated. Zoning is a vehicle in this project. Designated as a 'growth district', Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown, is to be transformed into an intensively developed area outside of the downtown core of Saigon. Importantly, the government is willing to rewrite their zoning codes to reflect the new vision. Land use codes are reassigned, and plot boundaries redrawn to accommodate new projects. In fact, zoning in Cholon is updated in an almost haphazard, incremental manner in

order to keep up with the district's growth. In this sense, the state is an active agent in the district's transformation, proactively employ zoning to channel development.

Unlike Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, Penang has a more preservation-minded zoning regime for George Town World Heritage Site. While Bangkok employs universalism and Ho Chi Minh City growth to dictate their zoning regimes, Penang's imperative (at least in its outward intention) is to protect the city's townscape. George Town is divided into 'thematic clusters', from the waterfront to the cultural enclave. 'Overlays' are introduced to as a zoning device that is sensitively attuned to the intricate fabric of the historical multicultural port-city. Importantly, one planning technique that is present in Penang, but absent in Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City is architectural guidelines. A product of a decade's worth of research, a chronology of six official 'Penang Shophouse Styles' was assembled to represent the local building typologies. Importantly, the architectural history is translated into architectural guidelines. The guidelines pay close attention to every part of the building's anatomy, guiding its every components from roof to gutter, from color to material. In all, at least in its outward intention, zoning in George Town, Penang, is comprehensive, detailed, and layered.

If one is to draw a difference in parallel among the three zoning regimes, it will be that zoning is a way of (differently) seeing land. Everywhere, zoning similarly invokes the basic power of law enforcement upon private properties. However, comparison can help distinguish the nuances, enabling us to the diverse ends to which zoning is used. While the basic concern for control is parallel, the purposes across cities are dissimilar. Like other planning techniques discussed in this dissertation, zoning is a way of seeing. In specific, it is a way of seeing land. Rather than simply a technical intervention, zoning, I argue, is underpinned by a certain thought. Seeing implies a vantage point, a point of view, or a frame of selection. The way of seeing, in turn, informs the technical intervention, framing land in its image. In short, zoning is a nexus of thought and action through which land is conceived to be optimally intervened. Zoning as a technology of seeing is parallel across the three sites (and beyond). However, since each site (city, country, etc) has its own view of land, the specificities of zoning necessarily differ. In their own ways, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, and Penang reflect different ways of seeing land.

Three pairs of cross-case comparison can help frame zoning differences (table 1). First, in comparing Bangkok and Penang, one sees a contrast between particular universalism and particularism. On one end, zoning is used to standardize land, where street blocks are put under

some universal scheme of categorization (i.e. landuse types) and hierarchization (i.e. districts and subdistricts, centers and subcenters). On the other end, universalism is reversed, giving way to particularism. Land is rendered in its specific details, real and imagined.

Beyond basic modernist categorization (e.g. commercial, residential), distinct 'themes' are made hyper-visible. As a World Heritage Site, each 'cluster' of George Town is put in sharp relief and in relation to one another. In this sense, as a way of seeing, zoning is used to both unsee and resee land. It may be used to unsee spatial histories and relations, favoring instead some universal order. Or, it may actively seek to resee land, reinterpreting and reinforcing its particularities. In the second pair of zoning comparison between Ho Chi Minh City and Penang, we see that zoning can direct growth or preservation. In Ho Chi Minh City, zoning is cast under the city's larger development ethos. Vocabularies of 'growth' and 'development' direct the vision of urban planning. By contrast, in Penang's World Heritage Site, preservation is prioritized. The government wrote zoning to specifically promote preservation, be it height control, architectural guidelines, or table of permissible uses. This does not mean Penang forgoes growth altogether. In fact, outside of the World Heritage Site, where things are less scrutinized, development frenzies run amok. Even in the World Heritage Site, the zoning codes are not strictly enforced by the officials, and thus evaded by the developers. Yet, my present concern is about zoning as a fundamental form of knowledge construction. My point is that, by demarcating certain areas as 'growth' or 'preservation', the government has at its disposal zoning as a tool to mobilize the otherwise imaginative geography of rule.

The third pair of zoning comparison between Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City provides a deeper look into the dilemma between 'development' and 'preservation'. While the two seem to share a dismissal of historic preservation, they should not be reduced to the same category. Zoning in Bangkok is more resistant to change. The zoning codes have changed very little since its first plan in 1992. In fact, the notion of preservation zoning has not changed at all. In Ho Chi Minh City, zoning is constantly updated. It readily responds to change in an almost whimsical way. Therefore, in Bangkok, 'preservation' is an official category, one that is narrowly defined. In Ho Chi Minh City, we see downright rejection of historic preservation.

Site	Purposes of zoning	Land seen as	Zoning techniques
Penang	Preservation	Curatorial theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thematic clusters ● architectural guidelines
Bangkok	Universal order	Function and hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landuse category ● Landuse subcategory ● Density control
Ho Chi Minh City	Growth	Development potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landuse code change ● Plot redrawing

Table 10.1: comparison of zoning regimes in the three sites

3. Reformatting ‘similarities’ and ‘differences’

In concluding, thinking through difference-in-parallel allows us to reformat the twin notion of ‘similarity’ and ‘difference’ – one frequently recurring logic of comparative research. In many ways, similarity and difference are tired, overdetermined analytics that need dismantling somewhat. I argue that similarity and difference are not antonyms occupying two separate spheres of thought. Here, I make a distinction between neat comparison and a messier comparison. A neat comparison is one that privileges a listing of cross-case similarities and differences. In this way, comparison takes on the quality of a ‘list’ (see my fuller critique of list in Chapter 3 and 7). By contrast, messy comparison takes us beyond extracting a suite of different and similar traits. It treats in-case investigation in full, addressing a peculiar set of actors and dynamics in one case that may not their ‘equivalence’ manifesting in the other cases. This signals a required departure from a neat comparative framework. I have committed at least two departures. First, architectural guidelines in George Town is a case in point (Chapter 2). Of all the three sites, George Town is the only regimes that employ architectural guidelines. Not addressing them would miss analyzing the central role that architectural regulation (or imagination) plays in the technopolitics of historic preservation. Second, Ho Chi Minh City does not use mapmaking to assign a cartographic identity to their Chinatown. This absence disrupts an otherwise neat comparison of mapmaking across the three cases. In this sense, my comparison entails both departures and a lack thereof. This goes to show that cities are not controlled experiments. Researchers cannot wish away thorny terrains in the name of orderly comparison.

Yet, while making the necessary deviated departures, messy comparison remains sympathetic to cross-case comparative imagination. It attends to difference-in-parallel, locating comparable phenomena in the otherwise seemingly internal differences. I have demonstrated the principle of

difference-in-parallel through the three instances of mapmaking, list, and zoning. The intention is to use comparison to illuminate the differing manifestations of the same planning techniques: (1) the boundaries of George Town World Heritage Site and Bangkok's Rattanakosin; (2) George Town's Traditional Trade Directory and Ho Chi Minh City's relic inventory; and (3) three styles of zoning: curatorial, universal, and development zoning. By confronting their difference-in-parallel, comparison allows us to defamiliarize our understandings of the respective planning techniques.

Defamiliarizing expertise

'The list relies on discontinuity rather than continuity.'
(Goody, 1977, p.81)

1. Limits of expertise

Almost forty years ago, anthropologist Jack Goody wrote *The Domestication of Savage Mind*, which was to become a classic text in anthropology. The title clearly recalled Levi-Strauss's 1966 *The Savage Mind*, as Goody, too, was preoccupied with the ability of human thought. But in his book, his focus was the effects of writing on human modes of thought. That is, he is interested in the means through which humans organize knowledge, putting thought into written form. Each chapter traces each of the means of the written form, such as literary criticism, formulae, recipes, tabulation. In Chapter 5, *What is in a list?*, he reflects on list, arguing list-making to be crucial to the development of literacy. The list has many manifestations but shared basic characters. He writes:

"The list relies on discontinuity rather than continuity...it has a clear-cut beginning and a precise end, that is, a boundary, an edge, like a piece of cloth...[T]he existence of boundaries, external and internal, brings greater visibility to categories, at the same time as making them more abstract. (Goody, 1977, p. 81)

I draw a helpful parallel between Goody's book and what I attempt to do in these chapters, not just because I, too, addressed the 'lists' in the literal sense, e.g. George Town's directory of traditional traders (Chapter 2) and Ho Chi Minh City's inventory of relics (Chapter 7). More broadly, like Goody, my dissertation is about the various forms of organized knowledge. But further from Goody, I show that such organized knowledge is used not only for the purpose of human thought, but also for professional intervention. I traced various planning techniques

through which the planner organizes the city, shaping space in the name of professional vocabulary. The techniques included mapmaking, zoning, architectural guidelines, heritage guidelines, density control, to name a few. There is an important parallel between the list and the other planning techniques. What they all have in common, I argue, are *list-like* qualities. Let me elaborate. First, they have perceptible edges, ‘a clear-cut beginning and a precise end’...’like a piece of cloth’. While the perceptible edges are most clear on such planning techniques as maps and lists, others, too, have delimited edges. Height regulations have a clear bracket. Density zoning stipulates a range of allowable development sizes. Second, the planning techniques are a kind of abstraction, a kind of representation. Like a piece of cloth, their defined edges provide a synoptic quality. They have attended a kind of generality they would otherwise not have. The hoped-for geometry of density (Chapter 6) originates from the plan. And the Ideal Shophouse (Chapter 3) rarely exists.

The two list-like qualities of the planning techniques, in turn, expose the limits of the techniques themselves. As I have shown, these techniques either have failed to achieve their intended effects, or, quite ironically, produced unintended ones, or both. This is why studying the official rationale is so important to me. The Directory of Traditional Trades (Chapter 2) did not ‘safeguard’ the Traditional Traders as claimed and proclaimed. It presents them, but does not preserve not. The celebration of heritage only celebrates certain aspects of that heritage. The contours of historical districts (Chapters 1 and 4), while recognizing some areas as historical, inevitably neglect others at the latter’s expense. The geometry of density (Chapter 6) ended up enabling eviction (table 10.2)

Planning technique	Targeted space	Rationale	Points of contention
Chapter 3 <i>Contour</i>			
Mapmaking	George Town World Heritage Site (GTWHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate a boundary of intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undecidability and counterevidence of historical archives • Pragmatism of multiculturalism • Cartographic convenience and signification (Clan Jetties vs Seven Streets)
Chapter 4 <i>Content</i>			
Hotel regulation	Hotels in GTWHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legalize illegal hotels • Control and contain hotels • Specify hotel requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements at odd with typology and morphology • Evasion tactics and room for

			illegality
Zoning	Five zones or 'activity-clusters'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascribe thematic identity to each zone • Control and contain activities with each zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State imaginative geographies vs. the mix-used city
Architectural guidelines	Category II buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct the Ideal Shophouse • Cultivate a way of seeing (decorum and impropriety) • Disseminate do's and don'ts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealization and its process of othering • Purism and pragmatism • Weak enforcement, regulating, and monitoring • Limited expertise among the government personnel
Chapter 5 <i>Soul</i>			
Inventory	Traditional trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List traditional occupations, trades, and craftsmanship • Use the inventory as the first step towards safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal politics of recognition (how list is made) • external politics of mobilization (how list is actually employed) • eviction of heritage traders
Walking trail	Traditional trades(selected)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase George Town's traditional trades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • archival exploitation; heritage for curatorial and aesthetic purposes
Annual celebrations	Intangible heritage of GTWHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase George Town's intangible heritage • Impart understand-value-save mission/pedagogy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heritage for curatorial and aesthetic purposes • pedagogical heritage divorced from land context • presentation vs preservation
Chapter 6 <i>Extension</i>			
Mapmaking	Rattanakosin historic district & the Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate a boundary of intervention (cartographic construction of the historic district) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • map as a point of view • cartographic construction of Rattanakosin as Central and as Whole • Relegation of Chinatown as Rattanakosin extension • Chinatown's historical existence as counterevidence • neat geometry and fuzzy geography
Zoning	Rattanakosin historic district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Rattanakosin as the only preservation zone in Bangkok ('light-brown' zone) • Designate landuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problematic use of monochromatic zoning

		codes to support the vision of the historic district'	
Chapter 7 Category			
Zoning	Chinatown zoned as a central business district (CBD) zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Chinatown as one of the 43 CBD zones • Promote growth via high FAR (floor-area ratio) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classic problem of modernist universal zoning that prioritizes functionalist or utilitarian view of land • Other landed particularities are ignored • universal intervention and particular outcome
Chapter 7 Geometry			
500-meter radius of high-density development (upzoning)	Transit-oriented development (TOD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote compact development and sustainable development through TOD • Create TOD nodes around every transit station (future and current) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unintended impact of upzoning • High-density node vs Chinatown's typologies • High-density node vs Chinatown's land tenure (whose density?) • universal intervention and particular outcome
Chapter 8 Past			
Inventory	Relics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officially register the city's heritage sites • Organize heritage sites along two axes: (1) scale (national and city) and (2) value (historical, archaeological, cultural) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sites reflect Hardy's conservative heritage (Hardy, 1988) • Heritage as state socialist ideologies • Absence of vernacular forms
Chapter 9 Future			
Zoning	Growth district and land plots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate growth district • Promote growth and direct development to specific plots • Change landuse code to accommodate new project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vietnamese zoning: zoning not as development control, but as promotion • Community landuse types were eliminated • 'commercial complex' as new typology
Institutional arrangement (DVCI)	Development projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New institutional arrangement to finance development projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state as the active agent of modernization

Table 10.2: the technopolitical unfolding of each planning technique

In this concluding chapter, I venture to explain such departures. The techniques are premised upon not just presence, but absence, not just selection, but also omission. If anything, this

book's sole intention is to reveal how presence is paraded at the price of absence. When I analyzed each planning technique, I did so by analyzing its sanctioned absence: the other side of the fence, the outside of the contour, the unlisted. This goes back to Goody's principle of visibility and abstraction. As Goody argues, the lists 'crystallise problems of classification' by bringing 'greater visibility to categories'. But on the other hand, lists construct a 'conceptual prison' (Goody, 1977, p. 81; 94; 102). Technopolitics takes place when Abstraction is viewed as Truth, when listing the traders is conflated with safeguarding them, when Celebration is done in the name of Protection, when the map is mistaken for the territory. Expertise entails the delimitation of fields of intervention, producing the knowable. However, unlike a piece of cloth, the social world has no knowable ends. Nor does it have a synopsis. Instead, it is full of the unknown, the unlisted, and in the words of political theorist Chantal Mouffe (Chapter 1), the undecidable. In short, limits of expertise take place when representative vocabularies of space are viewed as space itself.

2. Limited expertise

When I practiced as an urban planner for the Thai government between 2009 and 2012, I had the privilege of meeting dozens of municipalities and regional offices across in Thailand. One common complaint I heard from them was *imposition*. The central-government planning agency, for which I worked, imposes upon its local, regional units a plethora of 'planning techniques': planning standards, landuse targets, municipal plans, land-readjustment programs, among others. With its limited budget and expertise, the municipalities often have no choice but to comply. I see this form of imposition, direct or indirect, as a common condition across the three cities in this study. Therefore, what is viewed as the exercise of 'expertise' needs to be qualified. Often, expertise is a vocabulary inherited from someone else, from other sources of authority. In this dissertation, I do not want to depict the familiar figure of the ruthless technocrat. Rather than the ruthless technocrat wielding his geometries of desire, the planner oftentimes adopts his tools of trade from other sources.

A few examples illustrate this point. Penang's flirtation with heritage is more suitably viewed as an experiment than a mission. For one, the government bodies, from GTWHI to MBPP, have adopted the loaded vocabulary from the Unesco - the authoritative producer of international heritage. Penang has 'arrived at' heritage (Robinson, 2015), as an international concept, with much difficulty. It had to sieve through a terrain of heritage's cognate terms, picking ones that not only best describe the site, but also suit their political agenda. While such terms as

'multiculturalism' and 'intangible heritage' are rehearsed in profusion, other terms like 'integrity', 'cultural landscape', and 'cultural right' are absent from the government's day-to-day intervention. Even so, those selected terms are not quite forgiving terms. As I have shown, the producer of planning terms and techniques and the enforcer are not the same entity, amounting to a marked distinction between architectural knowledge and architectural guidelines. The translation from the former to the latter, as I documented in Chapter 2, is fraught with struggles. To realize the vision of the SAP masterplan would call for a more robust institutional capacity, from planning to enforcement, which Penang at present does not have at its disposal.

In Bangkok, the modernist ghost of American-style landuse zoning is bewilderingly persistent. When the forefathers of Thai urban planning commissioned Litchfield and Associates, a Connecticut-based firm, to produce Bangkok's first masterplan in the 1960s, they did not foresee its lasting shelf life. For certain, the plan never got implemented. Yet, it set a precedent as the only correct way to 'do urban planning'. The 'Litchfield Plan', as it came to be known among Thai planners, is what planning theorists today call 'rational planning'. In this planning tradition, the planner identifies problems, analyzes data, and set goals in a linear, rational fashion. Today, even when a novel planning fashion such as TOD zoning is introduced (Chapter 6), it is cast in the rationalist view of planning. The hoped-for density is calculated on the basis of the zoning map — the planners' only tool and thus their limited expertise. In such an impoverished formulation, whether or not the TOD zoning will bring about 'compactness' in Chinatown, we are not sure. But what has happened for sure is the elite's exploitation of the 'density' that is promised but has yet to come. When the governmental program goes off course — when intangible heritage intervention does not protect 'inherited heritage', when 'density' became a matrix of eviction — the planners are but haunted by the vocabularies of their own choosing.

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