

Planning for a Redevelopment of a Traditional Urban Village of Kampong Bharu, Kuala Lumpur: A Challenge for a Sustainable Future

World Bank Group's Report 2015 indicates that the rate of urban population increase in East Asia was at 3 percent while the rate of urban land expansion reached 2.4 percent per year. This trend has caused the disappearance of many places of historical significance. Traditional urban villages have been replaced with modern high-rise buildings that do not respond well to the needs and lifestyles of existing residents. This paper discusses how a Malay community of Kampong Bharu in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia responds to the idea of redevelopment and their aspiration of the future of the urban village. Like many once-rural villages enveloped by growing cities, the 116-year-old 'kampong' sits in the heart of Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan city. Traditional Malay houses, micro-scale businesses, local food, and delicacies have shaped its unique character. Several efforts to redevelop the place have been futile due to land ownership and compensation issues. Face to face interviews with the residents and community leaders of Kampong Bharu revealed their needs for security of ownership and to ensure that new development should bring benefit and positive change to the existing community. The landowners realized the need to improve the socio-economic status of the Malays, but they were not convinced that the development could benefit the community regarding the land value and ownership status. Both landowners and community leaders wanted their interests to be safeguarded and their voices to be heard. They wanted a change that suits their way of life and preserves the identity of the place and the Malay people. Despite the challenge, a sustainable transformation of an urban village is hinged on adapting to change while securing the economic and socio-cultural values of the inhabitants. Giving greater voice to the people in such urban villages could better align city redevelopment objectives with the interests and values of people living in traditional enclaves. A framework for future development should allow for a place to transform naturally according to the needs at the time and the aspirations of the residents.

Keywords: redevelopment; urban village; Malay enclave; sustainable community;
Kuala Lumpur