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## Evaluating Physical Changes for the Conservation Initiatives in the Historic City of Melaka

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### Abstract

The changes in townscape have a significant indication of the urban morphology of the place. It represents changes in society and their way of life. Heritage-led regeneration is introduced in many historic areas and cities in order to bring back life to the place. Recording the changes is important to evaluate how far the site has developed. Townscape evaluation; a townscape survey exercise was carried out in 2010 and 2013 to score the quality of the area. The physical changes recorded in the survey represent the result of the regeneration project and could provide a useful data to be used to project future improvement.

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*Keywords:* Urban morphology; physical changes; townscape analysis

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## 1. Introduction

The growth of townscape happens now and then. Urban pattern changes due to the development requirements and sometimes to cater the needs of the users. The physical changes are a unique testament of civilization and an embedded record of changes in society and their way of life. Historic areas and cities represent a common heritage that represents the identity and sense of belongingness of people in a community (Isidori, 2015). According to Bernardo Secchi in Isidori (2015), historic centers are places where “the history of entire societies and past cultures are expressed tangibly”; this statement does not only imply the possibility of providing a historic evidence to future generations, but most importantly enables creating an essential bond that is typical of any permanent society among men, the community, and the environment (Isidori, 2015).

Heritage-led regeneration, an urban conservation scheme is introduced in many historic areas in order to sustain the vibe of the place. New economic measures were introduced to create a sustainable cycle for its socio-economy. In this scheme, conservation project of historic buildings and improvements of the streetscape in is introduced in order to uplift the image of the place to its former glory. By providing new and modern usage to the buildings, it is hoped that the vibrancy of the place returned. Furthermore, according to Samadi & Mohd Yunus (2012) heritage streets’ liveability acts as a significant indicator in valuing the heritage property and a sustainable economic indicator.

The research looks at Melaka, a well-known historic city in Malaysia to discover how the regeneration initiatives have helped to bring more opportunities to the place. Melaka was listed together with George Town in Penang as World Heritage Sites, The Historic Cities of the Straits of Melaka in 2008. The city was a well-known entrepôt where the East met West, and the buoyancy of its economic activities should be sustained. Nevertheless, many historical events have changed the city, and it is now a well known tourist destination because of the heritage values. Preservation of this tangible and intangible heritage evidence is crucial to sustain the local tourism-based economy. Therefore, many conservation and regeneration project has been carried out. The townscape has changed throughout the years because of the projects. Recording these changes is important to evaluate how far the site has developed. A vibrant place also marks the sense of place of the area.

## 2. Recording changes in townscape-the methodology

Solomon (1966) in Said (2014) explained that to understand the character of a townscape, a detailed analysis of the buildings and their historical context could provide guidelines for the townscape characteristics. The physical changes in an environment reflect the way of life of its occupants. Furthermore, the concept of tracking changes in specific indicators has been continually developed over the last generation in order to evaluate the effects of interventions (Reeve; 2008).

Townscape evaluation is a townscape survey exercise was carried out in 2010 and 2013 to score the quality and changes took place in of the study area (Said, 2014). It is a quantitative data collection methodology used to assess the physical condition of the urban heritage areas and involves a scoring system. Similar assessment has been used to evaluate the effectiveness of Townscape Heritage Initiatives schemes in the UK since 1999.

The physical changes recorded in the survey represent the result of the regeneration project. An improve condition of the place caused by the conservation work carried out is believed to provide opportunities for the area and helps to regenerate the local economy. The assessment method applied is a performance based assessment of the physical characteristics of the area. The scorings were carried out according to what the researcher could see (immediately apparent) in the context of the study. This was to carry out an evaluation of the present condition of the selected historic cities in Malaysia in terms of the conservation of their historic buildings, in relation to redevelopment of the area based on the performance of the area in relation to the criteria designed for the study.

### 2.1. Townscape assessment

The physical assessment was formed under three themes that are the Environmental Quality and Streetscape, Heritage Appreciation and, Social Characteristic and Identity. The themes were formed from an intensive study of the data analysed from the pilot study and first fieldwork carried out in 2010, with the reference to the indicators and

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