



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY: SUSTAINING TRADITIONAL
ARCHITECTURE FOR
TOURISM IN MALAYSIA - A CASE STUDY OF BANGSAR, BUKIT
BINTANG AND
SUNWAY LAGOON RESORT**

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FEM 2004 5

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By

DORIS PADMINI A/P S SELVARATNAM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2004

DEDICATION

Dedicated to:

All working mothers
who pursue higher education;
My husband, Robbert and daughter, Isobelle Anne
who were encouraging and tolerant throughout the years;
My family, relatives and friends
who remained supportive.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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January 2004

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Faculty : Human Ecology

The process of globalisation has both positive (technological advancement, bridging communities, breaking down cultural and political borders) and negative (eroding cultural values, creating standardised cities) impact on the lives of the society be it in the sphere of economy, politics, social or culture. The two most important facets of globalisation are the economy and culture. While the economic growth and development are manifested in terms of tourism development, the thrust of the tourism industry capitalises on the natural and cultural capital of a nation. A nation is greatly challenged to safeguard, preserve and conserve its cultural identity especially as it is also an asset in the tourism industry. The thrust of the thesis is based on the sustainable tourism development policy as advocated by WTO (1996) campaigning for equal power sharing relations between the local authority, private sector and the local community. The researcher relied on the triangulation method to obtain secondary and primary data. Interviews based on semi-structured and structured research schedules helped to obtain the qualitative and quantitative data from the government officers,

local authority officials, private sector (tour and travel agents, hotel owners associations, and car rental associations) and the local community (local tourists, foreign tourists and non-governmental organisations). Data was processed and analysed using SPSS and content analysis methods. The findings indicate that the government plays a major role to shape the local traditional architectural landscape, especially at the study locations of Bangsar, Bukit Bintang and Sunway Lagoon Resort. While the private sector complemented with regular inputs and decorations at hotels, the local community did not play an active role in the planning or decision-making process. The locals were unhappy with the absence of local architectural designs at the study locations, but were satisfied with the presence of a well-managed and modern atmosphere. A suggestion for a Malaysian Sustainable Tourism Development Indicator was made incorporating the social and cultural elements.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KEMAPANAN BUDAYA: KEMAPANAN SENIBINA TRADISIONAL UNTUK
PELANCONGAN DI MALAYSIA – KAJIAN KES DI BANGSAR, BUKIT BINTANG
DAN SUNWAY LAGOON RESORT**

Oleh

DORIS PADMINI A/P S SELVARATNAM

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Proses globalisasi mempunyai impak positif dan negatif terhadap ekonomi, politik, sosial dan budaya masyarakat sesebuah negara. Dua unsur yang penting dalam globalisasi yang dilihat oleh penyelidik adalah aspek ekonomi dan budaya. Pertumbuhan dan pembangunan ekonomi dicerminkan oleh kemajuan dalam sektor pelancongan yang bergantung kepada modal alam semulajadi dan modal budaya sesebuah masyarakat. Budaya adalah khazanah negara dan masyarakat menghadapi cabaran dalam usaha untuk melindungi, mengekalkan dan menjamin kesinambungan keunikan identiti budayanya, yang turut menjadi aset utama dalam industri pelancongan. Tunjang tesis ini berasaskan dasar pembangunan pelancongan mapan yang diutarakan oleh WTO (1996) yang mendorong kerjasama berdasarkan kuasa-sama antara pihak kerajaan setempat, sektor swasta dan masyarakat setempat. Penyelidik bergantung kepada kaedah *triangulation* untuk memperolehi data sekunder dan primer. Temubual dilaksanakan berdasarkan soalan berstruktur dan separa-struktur untuk memperolehi data kualitatif dan kuantitatif dari pihak kerajaan, pegawai

kerajaan setempat, sektor swasta (agen pelancongan, pemilik hotel dan penyewa kereta) dan masyarakat setempat (pelancong tempatan, pelancong asing dan badan-badan bukan kerajaan). Data diolah dan dianalisa dengan menggunakan perisian SPSS dan kaedah analisis kajian. Penemuan tesis adalah: Kerajaan masih memainkan peranan utama dalam membentuk senibina landskap tradisional setempat, khususnya di lokasi kajian, iaitu Bangsar, Bukit Bintang dan Sunway Lagoon Resort. Sektor swasta aktif memberi input kepada kerajaan dan menghias hotel. Kompleks besar milik swasta direkabentuk oleh pihak swasta, sementara masyarakat setempat tidak memainkan peranan yang aktif dalam merancang dan mengambil keputusan dasar yang berkaitan dengan pelancongan. Walaupun penduduk setempat tidak puas hati dengan kurangnya senibina landskap tempatan, namun mereka puas hati dengan adanya persekitaran yang serba moden. Cadangan Indikator Pembangunan Pelancongan Mapan Malaysia telah dibuat dengan memuatkan elemen sosial dan budaya setempat.

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Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to friends and colleagues who contributed directly or indirectly for the completion of this thesis.

I certify that an Examination Committee met on 26 January 2004 to conduct the final examination of Doris Padmini a/p S Selvaratnam on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Cultural Sustainability: Sustaining Traditional Architecture for Tourism in Malaysia – A Case Study of Bangsar, Bukit Bintang and Sunway Lagoon Resort" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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I hereby declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that to the best of my knowledge it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

DORIS PADMINI A/P S SELVARATNAM

Date : 01 September 2004

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BWM	-	Badan Warisan Malaysia
CRAM	-	Car Rental Association of Malaysia
DBKL	-	Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur
FT	-	Foreign Tourists
G	-	Government Officers
KTMB	-	Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad
KLTGA	-	Kuala Lumpur Travel Guide Association
LA	-	Local Authority
LC	-	Local Community
CBO	-	Local Community Based Organisations
MARA	-	Majlis Amanah Rakyat Malaysia
MPPJ	-	Majlis Perbandaran Petaling Jaya
MPSJ	-	Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya
MAHO	-	Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners
MATTA	-	Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents
MOCAT	-	Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism
KPKT	-	Ministry of Local Government and Housing
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
PS	-	Private Sector
TTO	-	Tour and Travel Agents
UNEP	-	United Nations Environment Programme
WCED	-	World Commission on Environment and Development
WTO	-	World Tourism Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The thrust of this thesis is focused on the equal-power relations between the local authority, private sector and the local community as advocated by the world tourism organisation (wto)'s (1996) sustainable tourism development policy. In this light, the researcher realises that the tourism industry, which thrives on the sustainability of the natural and cultural resources of a nation, also needs to strike a balance on the various natural and cultural resources to be capitalised by the local authority, private sector and the local community. Keeping in mind the changes being brought forth in socio-cultural, political, technological and economic sphere of society by the universal phenomena known as globalisation, a nation is greatly challenged to safeguard, preserve and conserve its cultural identity especially as it is also an asset in the tourism industry. A holistic approach adopted by the sustainable tourism development concept advocates a balance between the economic, social and cultural, technological and the natural environment will generate significant contribution for a balanced development of a country (wto, 1994). All the various stakeholders involved in the tourism industry are thus challenged to play an active role in participating in planning and decision-making of the tourism policy. The

researcher notes that elements of social and cultural aspects are important and cannot be left out of development plans, as social and cultural elements are crucial elements of the policy for implementation.

Meta narratives have been advocated for eradicating poverty and enhancing economic growth in many developing countries. Industrialisation, the green revolution and modernisation are all said to help move the developing countries' economies to a higher level in the hierarchy of income-based classification of the world economies (kendall, 2000). Nevertheless, these strategies although managing to alleviate poverty to a certain extent and helping to generate income for the local communities, they also created dual economies, social and political cleavages that continue to suppress the marginally poor and the economically disadvantaged in the society. Shiva (1993) concurs with this line of thought, noting that in the name of development process, the capitalist society exploits the natural resources of the developing countries while impoverishing the local people. Improved health, increased longevity and growing number of population, environmental catastrophes coupled with growing recognition of the natural environments' limitations led to serious discussions of alleviating these problems.

As a solution to development strategies, sustainable development was outlined in the 1987 brundtland report. This report aimed at formulating an equal framework for a balanced development plan that encapsulates the

environmental, economic, socio-cultural and political issues (hall, jenkins and kearsley, 1997; aronsson, 2000). Although the plan is worldly, its principles are necessary to be adopted for varying localised situations pertaining to developmental strategies outlined (inskeep, 1991). The agenda 21 is a comprehensive action plan agreed and adopted by 178 countries to implement sustainable development in every area that receives the impact of human activities upon the environment. The world summit on sustainable development (wssd) held in johannesburg, south africa from 26 august to 4 september 2002 reaffirmed the full implementation of agenda 21, the programme for further implementation of agenda 21 and the commitments to the rio principles (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm>).

The four fundamental elements of sustainable development (Sofield and Fung, 1998) are

1. ecological sustainability – development must be compatible with sustaining ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources;
 2. economic sustainability and intergenerational equity – development must be economically efficient and equitable within and between generations;
 3. social sustainability – development must be designed to increase people's control over their lives and, maintain and strengthen community identity;
- and

4. cultural sustainability – development must be compatible with culture and the values of the people affected by it.

Central to this thesis is the emphasis on issues pertaining to cultural sustainability, especially local cultural architecture. One of the manifestations of culture in society is the local architecture. Considering the threat and challenges of the process of globalisation, which can either be a stimulus, or an intimidation to the local culture that is an asset to the tourism industry, the local people are faced with the challenge of not falling into the trap of universalisation. Cities that are universal in character and architectural designs created in replica of the western designs (Mohamad Tajuddin, 1999) to pamper and suit the more affluent members of society (Mommaas and van de Poel, 1989) and cater for the comfort of tourists (Nash, 1989) can lose their appeal in the tourism market.

The local architecture may not be the central focus of tourism, nevertheless, Malaysia having a rich pool of historical, ethnic and religious background can emphasise these aspects in the local architectural designs. Having a unique architectural setting will definitely be a plus point in creating a niche in the tourism market. Pusat Budaya Pasir Salak, Perak, Sarawak Cultural Centre, Pusat Kebudayaan Pulau Pinang, Historical City of Malacca, Penang City, San Poh Tong Cave Temple in Ipoh, Perak and the oldest mosque in Perak are some of the locations that boast of local architecture, and market locally produced goods and souvenirs for the tourism industry.

In sociology, globalisation is referred to as compression of the world and global consciousness intensification, time and space compression, and time and space distancing (Robertson, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1998; Albrow, 1990; Waters, 1995; Polanyi, 1957 cited by Mittelman, 1999). The main concern is with the emergence of the 'world society' and associated with terms like one world order, global society and global village. In cultural studies, globalisation's focus is on global communications or cultural homogenisation (Kessler, 1996; Sklair, 1991; Parsons, 1979). These are a few facets of globalisation, but the two most relevant ones are those of economy and culture. Globalisation in these two areas are considered as a 'borderless' phenomenon where the compression of time and space of social relations has enabled the economy, politics, culture and ideology to interact and penetrate other states (Khondker, 1997; Mittelman, 1996a; Cox, 1987). Globalisation is an impetus for tourism, bringing various cultures into close proximities.

The recent decades have witnessed an immense acceleration in the process of globalisation. Globalisation in the area of economy and culture is considered as 'borderless' phenomenon where the flow of capital and culture pose challenges to most countries. Globalisation process has given new meaning to the word time and space. Time could be segmented and enable one to have various activities for each of the segments created. Time for work can be separated from time for domestic activities, which are not very taxing, and this is termed as leisure time. In short, one does not necessarily need a traditional

ritual or holy celebration to have a travel holiday. In the olden days, leisure or recreational activity only occurs during festivities, holy celebrations and rituals, which are completely separated from working time. Space, on the other hand took a new meaning with the introduction of modern transportation, which is fast, less risky and reasonably priced for the distance and time travelled (Waters, 1995). The compression of time and space has been a boost for the trade industry and also facilitated travel and migration. Travel for pleasure became a fad with the inaugural grand tour in the eighteenth century. Today people travel individually or by the masses.

The collapse of spatial barriers has increased international tourism (Urry, 1999), itself an important aspect of globalisation. Tourism has been seen to offer solutions to problems associated with economic decline as in the case of developing countries like Thailand, Indonesia and the Caribbean Islands (refer to De Kadt, 1990; Bianchini, 1990 cited by Richards, 1995). One of the manifestations of globalisation is in the form of tourism development in a society. Globalisation is an impetus for tourism development and this in turn is a contributor to the economic development of a country. According to Urry, (1999) international tourism accounts for more than one-twelfth of world trade, while international and domestic tourism together account for 10 % of global employment and global GDP. Theobald (1995) concurs that travel and tourism industry are the world's largest employer and also the world's main contributor to world gross national product and responsible for capital investment and