GLOBALISATION, IDENTITY AND HERITAGE TOURISM:
A CASE STUDY OF SINGAPORE’S KAMPONG GLAM

DAVID TANTOW

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
2009
GLOBALISATION, IDENTITY AND HERITAGE TOURISM:
A CASE STUDY OF SINGAPORE’S KAMPONG GLAM

DAVID TANTOW
(B. Sc. and M. Sc.)

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
2009
ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses the impact of ethnic policies on heritage districts in post-colonial nations, through a case study of Malay-Muslim minority heritage in Singapore. The dissertation explores the link between nation building with its “politics of heritage” and tourism-induced cultural changes, and considers these two factors shaping representations of ethnic heritage in combination; a combination that has not been sufficiently discussed in most previous tourism studies. It shows that the Singapore government has not developed an exact definition of the Malay contribution to the social identity of Singaporeans and multicultural nation building. Applying a perspective from urban geography on the consequences of urban renewal on the minority district of Kampong Glam, I argue that the role that Malay-Muslim culture should have played in the representation of ethnic heritage after the end of urban renewal in 1989 was also unclear. Since the government did not define a theme of representation for Kampong Glam’s urban environment, tourism brokers developed their own interpretation of the Malay-Muslim legacy. They displayed a “cosmopolitan” Middle Eastern representation of Muslim heritage, largely neglecting the local Malay minority community. This glamorous and cosmopolitan representation of heritage inaccurately portrays the local Muslim population as an Arab trading caste, emphasising their ancient trade connections with the Middle East. In contrast, the Singapore government’s nation building approach continues to disregard the urban legacy of the local Malay-Muslim community, largely ignoring their prominence as seafarers and explorers, a fact that indicates that “The myth of the lazy native” (Alatas 1977) persists in relation to the Malay community after Singapore’s independence. The analysis is based on one year of ethnographic research in the Malay-Muslim heritage district, combined with an in-depth survey of its business community with a response rate of 64%, 350 multi-lingual questionnaires of Singaporean visitors and tourists and 25 in-depth interviews with selected local stakeholders.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many great people have helped me during the past four years while I was working on this thesis. I am grateful to all of them; they have made my time in Singapore exciting and also contributed to make it an academically enriching experience for me. I hope that I can thank them all:

Thanks to Prof. T.C. Chang, who is indeed a great motivator. He always supported me when things did not go too well and always gave me the freedom for my own accentuations as well as when I was TA-ing. I will always remember our time together fondly.

The other members of my committee, Prof. K.C. Ho of Sociology and Prof. John Miksic of Southeast Asian Studies greatly contributed to my learning process as a PhD student. Thanks, K.C., for your help with my data analysis, and thanks, John, for your first-hand insights about the local history and archaeology.

I also would like to thank all other faculty members who took an interest in my research and gave me tips about relevant literature or fieldwork approaches. Special thanks to Prof. Tim Bunnell for sharing his insights about “Malay modernity” and Prof. Nathalie Oswin for going through my theoretical framework with me.

Old friends and many family members flew halfway across the globe to visit and support me, some of them came on several visits. Thank you, “Mama, Papa und Nora” for bringing me news from home and moral support. Thanks to Eveline, David, Stefan and Caroline for spending time with me in Singapore and helping me to get my PhD started and thanks to Claude for computer support.

Thanks to my new friends in Singapore. Many helped me with my surveys and interviews. Thank you, Mike, Satchko and Yuka for helping me reach out to Asian tourists. Thanks to Brian, Jennifer and Isdino for help with the Malay language and taking the great pictures of Kampong Glam.

Thanks to NUS for the generous and steady financial support that enabled me to concentrate on my research.

David Tantow, Singapore, December 2009
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPG</td>
<td>Corporate Planning Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGBA</td>
<td>Kampong Glam Business Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTA</td>
<td>Land Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC</td>
<td>Malay Heritage Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS</td>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STB</td>
<td>Singapore Tourism Board (successor of the STPB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPB</td>
<td>Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (after 1997 STB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URA</td>
<td>Urban Redevelopment Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW I</td>
<td>World War I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW II</td>
<td>World War II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................................9
LIST OF FIGURES .....................................................................................................................................10

1. Introduction .........................................................................................................................................12
   1.1 The Post-Colonial Crises of Identity and Heritage Tourism .........................................................16
   1.2 Exploring Links between Heritage, Tourism and Post-Colonial Identity .........................................21
       1.2.1 The Commodification of Heritage for Tourism .....................................................................24
       1.2.2 “Politics of Heritage” ............................................................................................................25
       1.2.3 Acceptance or Contestation of Heritage ................................................................................27
       1.2.4 The Tourist Consumption of Heritage .....................................................................................28
   1.3 Kampong Glam: A Timely Case Study on Representation .............................................................30
   1.4 Overview of the Thesis .....................................................................................................................34

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations ...........................................................................38
   2.1 Introduction .....................................................................................................................................38
   2.2 Place Identity and the Representation of Ethnic Heritage ...............................................................41
       2.2.1 Globalisation and Heritage – The Destruction of Local Uniqueness? ..................................41
       2.2.2 Multiple Outcomes of Cultural Globalisation: The Global–Local Nexus ...............................44
       2.2.3 Heritage Landscapes, Nation-Building and Global Tourism ..................................................48
   2.3 A Post-Colonial Perspective on Heritage Tourism in Multi-Ethnic States ......................................54
       2.3.1 A Brief History of Post-Colonialism .......................................................................................54
       2.3.2 The Post-Colonial Perspective and Tourism Studies .................................................................56
       2.3.3 Kampong Glam and the Post-Colonial Discourse ................................................................60
       2.3.4 “Hybridisation” and the Creation of New Place Identities .......................................................63
       2.3.5 Post-Colonial Nation-Building, Multiculturalism and Multiracialism ......................................64
       2.3.6 From Post-Colonial Multiracialism to Cosmopolitanism ........................................................68
   2.4 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................71

3. Methodology .......................................................................................................................................74
   3.1 Introduction .....................................................................................................................................74
   3.2 Methodological Commitment and Conceptual Framework .............................................................74
   3.3 Data Collection ...............................................................................................................................77
       3.3.1 In-depth Interviews ..................................................................................................................78
       3.3.2 Questionnaire Surveys .............................................................................................................80
       3.3.3 Participant Observation ............................................................................................................85
       3.3.4 Secondary Data .......................................................................................................................87
   3.4 Data Analysis ....................................................................................................................................89
4. The Research Locality, Local Policy and the Reshaping of Identity ........................................95
   4.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 95
   4.2 Singapore as a “Colonial Cosmopolis” ............................................................................. 95
     4.2.1 Kampong Glam – The “Hybrid” Culture of an Evolving Maritime Hub ..................... 97
     4.2.2 A Redefinition of Malayness – Self-Essentialising as Village Dwellers ...................... 99
     4.2.3 Kampong Glam as a Centre for Malay Nationalism ...................................................... 102
   4.3 Post-Independence: The CMIO–Scheme and Cultural Heritage ........................................ 104
     4.3.1 The 1970s and Ethnic Heritage: “Race without Space” .............................................. 105
     4.3.2 The 1980s: Enhanced Representation of Heritage against Westernisation .................... 106
     4.3.3 Nation-Building and Spatial Practices: Heritage and the CMIO–Scheme .................... 110
     4.3.4 Ethnic Heritage in Kampong Glam – The Litmus-Test for Nation-Building? ................ 114
   4.4 Recent Developments since the 1990s: Rediscovery of Cosmopolitan Heritage ................ 118
     4.4.1 A Global City-State with Cosmopolitan Heritage – The Underlying Policy ................... 120
     4.4.2 Singapore as a Cosmopolitan “Renaissance City” ....................................................... 122
     4.4.3 Tourism Promotion as the “Hip Hub” ............................................................................ 123
     4.4.4 A Cosmopolitan Kampong Glam – Interconnected Heritage ...................................... 125
     4.4.5 Cosmopolitanism and Malayness – A Mismatch? ........................................................ 130
   4.5 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 135

5. Kampong Glam – The Evolution of Built Heritage ...........................................................139
   5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................ 139
   5.2 Religious Tourism Hub and Trading Centre ................................................................. 140
   5.3 The Fragmentation of Islamic Heritage ............................................................................ 146
     5.3.1 Urban Renewal and an Isolated “Survivor”: Hajjah Fatimah Mosque ......................... 148
     5.3.2 Exclusion II: The Madrasah Al-Junied and the Aristocratic Graveyard ....................... 150
     5.3.3 Maritime Heritage – The Bygone Function as a Maritime Hub .................................... 154
     5.3.4 Pondok Jawa I – A Cultural Centre for Javanese Migrants ........................................ 158
     5.3.5 Pondok Jawa II – A New Approach to Heritage Presentation? .................................... 160
   5.4 Technical Basics of Conservation – Legal Guidelines for Ethnic Space in Singapore ........ 161
   5.5 Sultan Mosque: A Landmark of Rare Continuity ............................................................ 163
     5.5.1 The Preservation of the Mosque ................................................................................... 163
     5.5.2 Limitations of a Single Landmark ............................................................................... 167
   5.6 Recreated Bussorah Street: Ethnic Space Enhanced or Undermined? ............................ 167
     5.6.1 Pre-Conservation Commercial Decline ........................................................................ 167
     5.6.2 The Creation of Bussorah Mall – A “Commercial Flagship” ....................................... 169
6. Malay and Muslim Culture and Heritage Conservation – Reactions to the Re-Engineering of Ethnic Space ................................................................. 198

6.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 198
6.2 Commercial Revitalisation – A Buzzing District of Global Tourism? ................. 199
6.2.1 Basic Facts about Commercial Revitalisation at Kampong Glam .................... 199
6.2.2 The Commercial Flagship – Bussorah Mall and Tourist Satisfaction ............... 203
6.2.3 Local Reactions to Bussorah Mall .................................................................. 206
6.2.4 The Flagship Role: Generating Revitalisation as Intended? ......................... 209
6.2.5 The Limitations of Spillover Effects from Bussorah Mall .............................. 213
6.3 A Cultural Flagship to Complement Bussorah Mall – The MHC ....................... 216
6.3.1 Likely to Disappoint? – A Flagship Project to Meet All Expectations .......... 216
6.3.2 The MHC and the Cultural Flagship Role: A Lack of Spillover ..................... 218
6.3.3 “Reaching the Young” – Mission Unaccomplished ..................................... 222
6.3.4 The MHC – The Latest Ethnic Attraction in a String of Failures? .................. 226
6.3.5 Tourist Attraction and Community Centre – A Tricky Dual Role ................... 230
6.4 Preservation as Rhetoric? Voices from the District’s Periphery ....................... 233
6.4.1 The Social Value of Heritage Preserved? Two Areas Compared .................... 233
6.4.2 Jalan Kecil and the Contestation of Government Plans ............................... 237
6.4.3 Tapping a New Resource – A Commercial Alliance for Cultural Heritage ........ 242
6.4.4 Haji Lane’s Enthusiasm – “Malay” Initiatives from an Unlikely Venue .......... 246
6.4.5 A Venue for Cosmopolitan Malay Culture? – Opportunities and Limits ........ 251
6.5 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 255

7. Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 260

7.1 Synthesis of Findings ....................................................................................... 260
7.2 Research Findings and Implications for Policy ............................................... 268
7.3 Contributions to the Post-Colonial Discourse on Heritage ............................. 271

REFERENCES ...................................................................................................... 281

APPENDIX ........................................................................................................... 317
LIST OF TABLES

Tab. 3.1: Research Strategies – data required and methods used ................................................................. 76
Tab. 3.2: Interview partners and thematic focus of interviews ................................................................. 79
Tab. 3.3: Overview of secondary data sources and research themes ........................................................... 89
Tab. 4.1: Muslim population in Kampong Glam in the early 20th century .................................................. 98
Tab. 4.2: Contrasting attributes of Kampong Glam and Kampung Melayu .................................................. 101
Tab. 4.3: The essentialist perspective of the CMIO scheme and local heritage ........................................... 112
Tab. 4.4: Changing share of locally born and resident population over time ............................................ 121
Tab. 4.5: Textual analysis of Kampong Glam’s heritage - as portrayed in guidebooks .............................. 133
Tab. 5.1: Declining frequentation of the heritage centre ................................................................. 188
Tab. 6.1: Revitalization – voices from Kampong Glam’s periphery ............................................................ 238
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Sultan Mosque surrounded by Shophouses at Kampong Glam</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Ethnic Heritage in the Midst of the Urban Renewal High-Rise Landscape</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Malay-Muslim Heritage in Decay in 2007</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Entrance of the Malay Village in Geylang Serai</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>A Village behind Palace Walls – Kampong House within the MHC in 2006</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Tourism Promotion with “Exciting” Activities in Singapore</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Advertising for Kampong Glam from the Public Affairs Directorate</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Seafaring – Malay Transnational Connections Highlighted</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Medical Examination Centre for Pilgrims in Kampong Glam in 1965</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Jeddah Street Leading to Masjid Bahru</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Arab Mosaic Tiles at Bussorah Mall</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Map of Kampong Glam’s Sub-Zones and Heritage Attractions</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Hajjah Fatimah Mosque after Urban Renewal</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>The Royal Graveyards North of the Kampong Glam Conservation Zone</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>The Madrasah Al-Junied and Family Tombs in the 1990s (left) and today</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Land Reclamation and Beach Road in the 1980s and 1950s</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Maritime Heritage on Display at the MHC</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>The Mosque as a Draw for Locals</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Bussorah Street from 1980s to the Present</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Private Ownership at Various Streets of Kampong Glam</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Public Evaluation of the State of Tangible Heritage</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>From “Istana Kampong Glam” to “Malay Heritage Centre”</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Reactions to the Istana as Location for the MHC</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Visitation of the MHC</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Local Shopowners and their Evaluation of Conservation Efforts</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.2: Tourist Evaluation of Bussorah Mall at Kampong Glam ................................. 205
Figure 6.3: Local and Tourist Perception of Bussorah Mall: A Comparison ........................ 207
Figure 6.4: Evaluation of Revitalisation Efforts by Shopowners – A Vital Business Mix? ........ 211
Figure 6.5: Malay and Muslim Frequentation Based on the Share of Customers .................. 213
Figure 6.6: Turn from the Main Street (right) to the MHC without Signposting ....................... 220
Figure 6.7: The Cultural Landmark – Revitalisation Caused by the MHC Opening? ................. 221
Figure 6.8: The Centre is Well-Restored (Tan 2005) but has Weak Community Integration .......... 222
Figure 6.9: Evaluation of the MHC’s Attractiveness – A Local Perspective ......................... 224
Figure 6.10: Representation of Ethnic Culture in the MHC – A Lack of Variety ...................... 225
Figure 6.11: Tang Dynasty Village in Decay in 2007, a “Failed Dream for Culture”? ................. 227
Figure 6.12: Kampong Glam Sub-Zones as Identified by the Business Survey ....................... 235
Figure 6.13: Record of Malay Ownership at Jalan Kecil ................................................ 240
Figure 6.14: Reasons for Locating Commercial Outlets in Present Location ......................... 245
Figure 6.15: Muslim Street Life on Haji Lane – A Family Resting in Front of their Shop .......... 247
Figure 6.16: Malays Gathering in the Five-foot Walkway ................................................. 249
Figure 6.17: Malay Student Shopping at Haji Lane Boutique ............................................. 250
Figure 6.18: Malay Rock and Pop Music LP-Covers for the Connoisseur ............................. 253
Figure 7.1: North Bridge Road – No Design Elements or Pedestrian Crossing ...................... 269
Chapter 1

Introduction

Singapore tourism has undergone spectacular growth since independence in 1965. In 1964, visitor numbers only amounted to 91,000 arrivals (STB 1995) because of race riots and political unrest. In 2007, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) published a new all-time record – 10.3 million tourists travelled to the city-state (STB 2008). Singapore’s tourism development is a quantitative success story and the steady growth is outstanding even within a booming region (Khan 1998); comparatively, the arrivals into Indonesia, Singapore’s largest ASEAN neighbour, have stagnated at around five million for the past 10 years (Cochrane 2009).

Although positive economic conditions in Asia helped, a key factor for growth is the diversification of tourist attractions over the decades (Chang 1997). An important step for diversification was to identify urban historic areas as heritage assets in the 1980s (Mullins 1999, Yeoh et al. 2001). In 1989, local planning agencies, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), officially declared selected inner-city quarters of the three major ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay and Indian) as conservation districts to showcase Singapore’s multi-cultural heritage to local visitors and foreign tourists. The heritage of “Ethnic Singapore” subsequently became a “tourism theme”, and Chinatown and Little India quickly became key sites for heritage display (STB 1996, p.31).

Local tourism researchers and urban geographers have studied these areas extensively, evaluating the reaction of locals to the integration of their heritage into the global tourism circuit (Yuen and Ng 2001), and the appropriation of heritage districts for nation-building (Chang and Teo 2001, Kong and Yeoh 2003). This dual function of heritage sites as generators of tourism revenues and
as identity markers for the local population has inevitably led to conflicts (McKercher and du Cros 2002). With ever-increasing tourism numbers, tourism increasingly influenced the lives of Singaporeans in heritage districts and thus grew to be a research focus (Chang and Huang 2005a, Henderson 2004).

In January 2006 – I had first arrived in Singapore as a graduate student – the remaking of Chinatown and Little India into heritage attractions was complete. A substantial amount of commentary had evaluated the cultural policy concept behind these revamps and reactions of Singaporeans to the changes in the conservation districts, discussing Little India as a contested landscape between Indian visitors and a Chinese residents on the edge of the district (Begam 1997, Chang 1996 and 1999) and Chinatown in regard to the changing meaning of the heritage landscape to locals, i.e. the loss of many traditional activities which used to “draw” them to the area (Chia et al. 2000, Henderson 2000, Yeoh and Kong 1994 on Chinatown).

One of the field trips I went on during the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) orientation weeks in Spring 2006 was a visit to a lesser known district called Kampong Glam, which houses the new Malay Heritage Centre (MHC). The student committee for the orientation had decided to schedule a dance performance at the new cultural venue. The Malay dance at the centre turned out to be a typical staged performance, incorporating various dances in one show without much explanation, but the ragged streets around the centre triggered my interest. Unlike Chinatown and Little India, Kampong Glam as a heritage tourism district was still in-the-making. There was no ready interpretation of Malay heritage even though the Malay-Muslim character was a very real part of the Singaporean community and a few areas at Kampong Glam had undergone extensive renovations.
Kampong Glam, which represents Malay-Muslim heritage, had been designated as an ethno-historic district along with Chinatown and Little India in 1989. The Singapore government preferred Kampong Glam over the alternative venue Geylang Serai as an official heritage district (section 4.3.4), because the former featured more prominent historic buildings, which could potentially showcase a rich legacy of Malay-Muslim culture (Rahil 2009). Yet, apart from an isolated pioneer project along the Bussorah Street main artery, Kampong Glam lagged behind in restoration works, especially as compared to Chinatown (Smith 1999). As Kampong Glam was a late bloomer as a conservation district, no comprehensive academic study has been done on its heritage. In spite of its official status as the Malay-Muslim ethnic district, Kampong Glam was not mentioned in the initial plan of “Ethnic Singapore” for tourism (STB 1996, p.31). The smallest of the three districts, Kampong Glam covers nine hectares (URA 1991). Despite its size and the delayed implementation of conservation initiatives, the complete conversion of the former Sultan’s palace into the MHC and the centre’s opening in 2005 enhanced Kampong Glam’s tourism potential.

This expansion in heritage attractions was combined with a new attitude towards heritage that matched Kampong Glam’s cultural qualities. Recently, cultural policymakers have begun to emphasise the long tradition of interconnectedness in Singapore as a cosmopolitan colonial maritime hub (Yeoh 2004), arguably to undergird Singapore’s “global city” status and its aspirations to become a regional “tourism capital” (STB 1996). The STB increasingly emphasised Kampong Glam’s diverse heritage as a port settlement and homestead of Malay, Bugis, Javanese and Arab traders, with a focus on the heritage of the Arabs as the local merchant elite (Rahil 2009). Media reports and publications of government agencies, such as a walking guide (URA 2005), have recently boosted the popularity of Kampong Glam, which has previously played no major part in the growth of the tourism industry in Singapore.
Due to the recent enhancement of heritage attractions at Kampong Glam and their increasing popularity, it is timely to investigate heritage tourism and its impact on the identity of this historic district designated to the native ethnic group of the post-colonial nation\(^1\). From the perspective of urban geography, the urban enhancement of Kampong Glam is part of the continuing upgrading process of historic areas in Singapore (Fig. 1.1.), which started with the conservation of Chinatown in the 1990s. For Singapore’s Malay and Muslim community, it is more than this, because Kampong Glam has been their cultural centre for centuries (Imran 2005). A rapid change of the district’s character would take away one of the community’s sanctuaries in “buzzing” Singapore.

\(^1\) In this thesis, the Malays are considered the native ethnic group of Singapore and Malaysia. The Orang Asli, or aboriginal people, of the Malay Peninsula are not the subjects of this work. Also, “indigenous heritage” refers to Malay heritage, not the cultural legacy of Malaysia’s Orang Asli or the heritage of Muslim migrant groups such as the Arabs. When I address heritage which is relevant for both the native Malays and Arabs, I write “Malay-Muslim heritage”.
1.1 The Post-Colonial Crises of Identity and Heritage Tourism

The literature on the “post-colonial crises of identity” (Hall and Tucker 2004, p.12) discusses the problems of nation-building with an emphasis on the global South, where most colonies were located. Those colonies had to make citizens out of colonial subjects and thus needed to construct a national identity that ideally addressed the cultural roots of all major ethnic groups (Krishna 2009, Larsen 2000). I link nation-building with continuing practices of “exoticism” and “Othering” of native ethnic groups in these newly independent nation-states. Formerly grouped together as non-Whites and depicted as the exotic “Other” during colonial rule (Said 1978), the citizens of Asia’s multi-ethnic states2 faced the challenge of defining their diverse heritage more specifically for each ethnic group in accordance with new nationalist objectives.

Conceptually, this research project shows that newly developed countries of Southeast Asia have appropriated practices of seeing the “Other” as “exotic”. Discourses of the “exotic” have been identified as useful for the purposes of nation-building and ethnic tourism by post-colonial states such as Singapore (Hill 2000). Mindful of this change in the practices of “exoticism”, I argue that the Singapore government has taken the initiative to consciously “orientalise” the district of its Malay-Muslim minority community to portray a glamorous and cosmopolitan heritage (Imran 2005) at the cost of inaccurately representing the local Muslim population as an Arab trading caste.

In contrast, the achievements of the indigenous Malay-Muslim community are largely disregarded, perpetuating “the myth of the lazy native” (Alatas 1977) even after independence. The argument is that the expansion of agency in “exoticism” to post-colonial governments does

---

2 The adjective “multi-ethnic” is occasionally critiqued as being an illegitimate composite of Latin and Greek terms. Alternatives would be either the coherent adjectives “poly-ethnic” (Greek) or “multiracial” (Latin). For this thesis, I use the term “multi-ethnic” to avoid the notion of race (wherever possible), and with the prefix “multi” to underline the logical relation to the concept of multiculturalism.
not equate with a better standing of native people in newly independent states, such as Singapore’s Malays.

This research project offers insights into various aspects of the post-colonial discourse. The research is uniquely conceptualised in terms of positionality. As a newcomer to Asia in 2006, I had no preconceived opinion and cultural affinity to any of Singapore’s ethnic groups. This position of “objective outsideness” is at times described as an asset (Relph 1976), but it has unfortunate precedents in Southeast Asia. In the past, uninformed and rushed travel writing of many neutral but “busy” Western voyagers, i.e. of travelling North Americans or – mostly – Europeans, has reinforced prejudices rather than contributed to the spread of knowledge (Othman 2002, Kahn 2006). Therefore, many recent texts about methodologies in fieldwork denounce the notion of objectivity and neutrality (Rose 1997, Chari 2003, Tembo 2003). Since there is no absolute neutrality, cultural researchers should immerse themselves in the field so as to understand the problems of his research subjects.

A main challenge of such post-positivist3 research is to acknowledge subjectivity, positionality and the limitations to the attainment of a full insider status (Rose 1997). Hence, I would have a long way to go during the familiarisation process with my field site since I had intended to gain insights about the post-colonial representation of heritage coming from a background of European and North American experiences regarding heritage and identity. Despite the difficulty, a Western researcher’s rigorous engagement with the heritage of post-colonial societies is an invaluable

---

3 A “post positivist” research approach emphasizes the need for multiple methods of enquiry, including extensive fieldwork. The approach rejects the existence of only one “objective”, scientifically proven reality, postulating that “reality can be subjective and socially constructed” (Wildemuth 1993, p. 1). It also emphasises the need for ethnographic fieldwork on such “socially constructed” realities, which would otherwise remain unconsidered in the positivist research tradition.
opportunity to foster cross-cultural understanding\textsuperscript{4}. Still, many proponents of the post-colonial approach criticise that many academics involved with post-colonial research themes are actually affiliated with institutions situated in countries that have never been colonised (Gandhi 1998). Even though many of these academics are originally from colonised countries, critics say that post-colonialism is a discipline most prevalent in Anglophone academia in developed countries (Gandhi 1998, Simon 1998, Young 1995).

Robert Young (1995) insists that post-colonial research needs to focus on the struggles for national identity of former colonised societies and should therefore be undertaken in respective locations. As both my field site and academic institution are situated in a former colony, I respond to such critique that post-colonial studies should avoid contributing to a continuing concentration of knowledge in the developed world. Furthermore, because I have been at the field site for four years, my research is deeply embedded in a former colonial society. Hence, I have ample opportunities to explore nation-building, the representation of heritage and tourism \textit{in situ}. It advances the discipline of cultural geography with a fresh perspective. Being at an institution of a former colony enables me as a Western academic to undertake research on a country’s heritage after independence, rather than the more common practice of academic institutions located in the countries of former colonisers hosting researchers from developing countries.

The exceptional setting is related to another special contribution, which I see as a timely response to a flaw in many existing studies, of this research project to the post-colonial discourse. Just as postcolonial researchers are often affiliated with more “resourceful” Western academic institutions (Gandhi 1998, Oswin 2006) it is often assumed that post-colonial studies are the

\textsuperscript{4} In this dissertation, I use the term “Western” researchers/ideas/discourses when referring to individuals, thoughts or dialogues originating from Europe, North America and Australia. Mindful of differences within “Western” cultures, I use “Western” as an umbrella term for cultural influences originating from these continents, for the sake of a pragmatic discussion.
studies of “failed” societies that never overcame the trauma of being colonised. According to Partha Chatterjee, “Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery” (1996, p.216).

Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson noted that even within the post-colonial discourse, the people of “poor”) and hence “very different” post-colonial nations continue to be “subtly nativized” in some subaltern studies while societies with less apparent socio-economic differences are frequently overlooked in the discipline (1992, p.14). Hence, the construct of “post-colonial misery” has limited the range of field sites, excluding former colonial nations with stable societies and a high standard of living from post-colonial analysis. The justification for this exclusion is that activist research is not urgently needed about the subaltern in stable and wealthy post-colonial societies (Ahmad 1995a), but this perspective has been criticised as being too limited (Gandhi 1998).

Such a perspective has impacted the choice of field sites for post-colonial studies and arguably prevented some researchers from undertaking studies in emerging nations (Ahmad 1995b). For instance, the post-colonial framework has rarely been applied to Singapore’s post-independence society; notable exceptions are Joan Henderson’s case studies on heritage preservation and colonial reminiscences (2001 and 2004), Chua Beng-Huat’s study on fashion and the Malay identity (2000), and a recent conference proceeding on the emergence of boutique hotel clusters as “post-colonial landscapes” in Singapore’s heritage district (Teo and Chang 2009, Yeoh 2001)\(^5\).

\(^5\) Yeoh (2001) argues that various studies on Singapore heritage address post-colonial issues of identity negotiation without providing a direct reference to the term ‘post-colonial’.
I argue that this gap in literature is a severe constraint for the understanding of Singapore’s heritage with regard to the ongoing process of nation-building. Hardly any nation has experienced as decisive shifts as Singapore in its demographic composition during the colonial era, except for a few of the less populous, small island-states (Soper 2008). It would be unwise to exclude Singapore from post-colonial analyses of nation-building; the reluctance to apply the post-colonial framework to the city-state’s heritage and tourism discourse is thus inopportune. Colonial interference has strongly influenced Singapore’s ethnic heritage, both tangible and intangible; hence, it is worth discussing the details of the intervention.

In post-colonialism, countries in which an immigrant ethnic group from colonial times, rather than the native inhabitants eventually became the majority of the latter state’s population are called “settling states” or “settling societies”. In Anglophone academia, the “settling societies” of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are often used as examples of colonial marginalisation of the “native” ethnic group/s (Gandhi 1998). Singapore is a special case. In the city-state, the native population has been replaced by an immigrant ethnic group as the major population group. This would be a typical quality of a settling society, except that the new ethnic majority in Singapore are Chinese immigrants, not the offspring of British immigrants who relocated from the former colonial power’s territory. This situation enables this case study to research post-colonial themes of heritage, nation-building and identity renegotiation from a unique perspective.

The case study of Kampong Glam seeks to explain identity renegotiation in the global context of contemporary heritage tourism in a society where the majority and minority ethnic groups were both colonial subjects. At the end of the colonial era in 1965, the indigenous Malay ethnic group represented less than 15 per cent of the population while Chinese immigrant groups formed a three-quarter majority (Haikal and Yahaya 1997). The colonial administration believed in “the
myth of the lazy native‖ (Alatas 1977) and deemed it necessary to rely on migrants to develop Singapore. Even within Singapore’s Muslim population, Arab migrants were preferred over local Malays in an endeavour to make Singapore the regional trading centre under British rule (Freitag 2002).

Today, Singapore’s ethnic heritage stands as witness to history and reflects the interference of the colonial administration. Kampong Glam features the oldest concrete mansion and initial administrative centre of Singapore, the Istana, or Sultan’s palace, yet Chinatown is the biggest and most popular conservation area, clearly representing mainstream heritage compared with the Malay-Muslim niche (STB 2008). After independence in 1965, the Singapore government attempted to correct inaccuracies of the colonial era and reinterpret its ethnic heritage. But not all post-colonial governments act as a corrective force to colonial injustice and intervention. The colonial framework of ethnic categorisation remains largely intact in most post-colonial societies. In Singapore, too, the indigenous Malays remain a marginalised population group; some researchers argue that their relative standing was comparatively better in colonial times than after independence, i.e. their mean income only fell below the average for Singapore after independence (Lee 2006, Rahim 1998)6.

1.2 Exploring Links between Heritage, Tourism and Post-Colonial Identity

When discussing heritage, post-colonial nation-building and its impact on identity, it is crucial to understand how “heritage” is defined and how it is related to tourism. The representation of

---

6 I acknowledge the somewhat special situation in Singapore, where the ethnic heritage of the Malays became increasingly problematic after 1965, due to the perceived danger of the Malay links to Singapore’s initially hostile Muslim neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia. Logically, the Singapore government saw no urgency to uplift the status of Malays within the racial categorisation system inherited from the colonial era (Betts 1975). Despite these particular circumstances, the overall task of nation-building in Singapore is typical of post-colonial multi-ethnic states in Southeast Asia, which had to come to terms with a heterogeneous population whose ethnic composition changed during the colonial era (Kymlicka and Baogang 2005).
heritage has social implications for individual and ethno-collective identity (Moore 2007, McKercher and du Cros 2002, Rahil et al. 2009, Shaw 2007, Waitt 2000). Initially, the term “heritage” meant “an inheritance or a legacy, something which is passed from one generation to the next” (Prentice 1993, p.5). But as heritage has been appropriated for tourism worldwide, the term “has come to mean not only landscapes, natural history, buildings, artefacts, cultural traditions and the like which are either literally or metaphorically passed on from one generation to the other, but those among these things which can be portrayed for promotion as tourism products” (ibid).

There are other definitions, but most are similar and all have two main points in common. First, heritage consists of two components, tangible and intangible heritage. Landscapes and buildings are tangible heritage and have been identified as cultural assets of economic value for several decades (McKercher and du Cros 2002). The preservation of intangible heritage, such as cultural traditions like folk songs and traditional dances, is less straightforward and often considered a more ambitious task than the maintenance of buildings and monuments. From here on in this dissertation, I implicitly address both components when I refer to “heritage”, unless otherwise specified. A sustainable approach to the representations of heritage must address both categories (Garrod and Fyall 2000).

Second, heritage is not history. Regardless of the socio-cultural context, the term “heritage” implies some adjustment to historical developments for the sake of representation to tourists or local sightseers, or to both groups (Ashworth 1994). This thesis implies that representations of heritage should aim to be historically accurate and culturally adequate. In being historically

---

7 Poria, Butler and Airey (2001) argue for another definition, which defines heritage tourists exclusively as tourists to cultural venues of their own culture or to a culture with which they have strong associations. Other tourists to heritage sites would be historical tourists. But this differentiation has not been commonly applied and my study does not differentiate between heritage and historical tourists.
“accurate”, representations seek to display a “truthful” record of history. As there will in many instances be multiple records (McKercher and du Cros 2002), an accurate representation should incorporate elements of those records and display them in a non-biased manner. In being culturally “adequate”, representations seek to display a comprehensive overview of local culture, incorporating the minority cultures and not limiting them only to the display of mainstream culture. As heritage is an interpretation of history and culture, a historically accurate and culturally adequate representation of heritage can only be a goal that planners and tourism brokers should aim for, but ultimately, heritage landscapes will always remain contested (Chang 2000).

A point related to historically/culturally adequate representation is the ambition of cultural researchers to consider “more cogent, credible, realist alternative views (of history and culture), centred on the lived experiences of a wider spectrum of the populace” (Butlin 1987, p.37) with representations of heritage. In this thesis, I refer to those “lived experiences” as the “lived culture” of local actors at my field site, as opposed to the high cultures of urban elites, which is usually represented by regal monuments, such as palaces like Kampong Glam’s Istana (Kong and Yeoh 1994).

The debate on history versus heritage addresses heritage tourism on a global scale and therefore is relevant for the representation of heritage in Singapore’s Kampong Glam. Due to this global relevance and its local impact, it is worth reiterating the key arguments of this debate on the transformation of cultural assets for heritage tourism. Since the scope of the debate is vast, it is useful to structure it and to differentiate between the production and consumption of heritage for the sake of a pragmatic debate. This differentiation is undertaken for heuristic reasons and does not signify a dichotomy, but a dialectic enabled by “processes of negotiated (re)production” (Ateljevic 2000, p.371). The way heritage is produced not only shapes the conduct of its consumption, the way it is preferably consumed also impacts the modes of production. To analyse
the debate on heritage production and consumption, it makes sense to ask “who” produces or consumes. I therefore focus on four sub-debates on the specific aspects of the production and consumption of heritage.

1.2.1 The Commodification of Heritage for Tourism

This first sub-debate on the representation of heritage addresses the “production” side, more specifically issues of “commodification” relating to private developers and their commercially orientated adjustments to cultural assets. Heritage is dynamic in character. Ashworth said, “History is the remembered record of the past: heritage is a contemporary commodity purposefully created to satisfy contemporary consumption. One becomes the other through a process of commodification” (1994, p.16). McKercher and Du Cros (2002, p.8) underline the importance of commodification, stating that this transformation process, “though abhorrent to some” due to the changes inherent in the process, is necessary to shape a cultural asset into a tourism product (Goulding 2000). Although the ideal level of intervention during this process remains contested, heritage has by definition undergone transformation (Walle 1998) since it is meant to be a presentation of history and culture to the public (Puczko 2006). Therefore, heritage tourists will never encounter a raw and purely untouched cultural venue or entirely unspoilt tradition even if they were to desire such encounters in their travels (MacCannell 1976).

Pragmatic tourism practitioners and cultural conservationists debate heatedly about the transformation process of cultural assets to heritage (Stanton 2005). Pollock and Sharp said that “conflict is inherent to the concept of heritage” in academic discourse (2007, p.1063). Still on this perspective of conflict-laden heritage sites, Porter and Salazar (2005) noted that it might be the researcher’s gaze that at times overemphasises problems with commodification at certain locations even though other heritage sites might not experience such problems. Although the latter possibility exists, the commodification of heritage regularly creates challenges for planning
and produces potentially harmful effects on local community life\(^8\). Often, these effects have to be mediated to bring about an acceptable situation, reconciling the interest of locals and tourists (Mooney 2004).

Singapore, as a densely populated city-state, faces a lot of spatial constraints; cultural assets are often expected to make way for “economically sound” land uses (Yeoh and Kong 1995). Hence, the commodification debate is highly relevant for Kampong Glam – a research setting at the fringes of Singapore’s downtown area – which represents Malay minority culture in the country. Kampong Glam has had a low profile but is increasingly facing pressures for development.

1.2.2 “Politics of Heritage”

The “politics of heritage” applied to historic urban environments, a spatially-relevant sub-theme of “cultural policies” targeted at culture and the arts in general (Yeoh and Kong 1996), also addresses the issue of how heritage is produced and presented. The representation of heritage affects self-identification; beyond the individual level, the way ethnic heritage is presented can have vital effects on the self-perception of an ethnic community. A powerful tool in directing identity negotiation processes, “politics of heritage”, according to Ashworth, “has a proven track record of outstanding success in formulating and reinforcing place-identities in support of particular state entities” (1994, p.2). Hence, official bodies, such as nation-states, regional governments or city administrations regularly resort to such “politics of heritage” to make ideological adjustments to cultural assets to steer cultural development and change in a certain

---

\(^8\) In this thesis, I refer to “local” communal life for all aspects of life I detected at my field site, the Kampong Glam heritage district, and to “locals” as the residents, commercial operators and workers of the district. A “local” visitor would be a Singaporean visitor to Kampong Glam; I refer to foreign visitors as tourists. When referring to other case studies, I similarly consider “locals” or “local actors” to be the residents, commercial operators and workers of the neighbourhood around a heritage attraction or from within a heritage district.
direction. In contrast, commodification is mostly applied by the private sector concerned with increasing the marketability of cultural assets\(^9\).

The “politics of heritage” employed by governments thus implement alterations to the way history is seen, besides direct adjustments at heritage places; for instance, through policy guidelines on education and or by influencing public opinion via the media (Kong 2000a). Official interventions lead to “selective memorization” of certain events and places over others that are neglected; administrative bodies in charge thus produce “memorial landscapes” for the officially opportune representation of heritage (Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998, Neil 2004). Although most governments aim to reap economic benefits from the development of heritage tourism, “politics of heritage” usually has a more specific agenda. The “dominant ideology hypothesis” asserts that governments or ruling elites often project “a message legitimating their position” (Ashworth 1994, p.20). The “politics of heritage” are intrinsically linked to discourses of power, which in turn might be reinforced through control over space. Heritage plays a key role in this spatial struggle over control as “representations of space” are instilled with officially appropriated versions of history and culture (Lefebvre 1991). Such heritage tourism sites are built with particular visions of the past, with an intention to steer contemporary society in a certain direction while legitimating the existing socio- and ethno-political hierarchies (Britton 1991).

The “dominant ideology hypothesis”, however, is contested since one can argue that the promotion of selected heritage benefits both minority groups and society. Some ethnic minorities and marginalised people have successfully used heritage tourism as a tool for their empowerment (cf. Rath 2007). Heritage tourism can also be utilised “to reinforce national cohesion” and

\(^9\) Generally, both private and state actors can commodify heritage. For the purpose of this thesis, “commodification” is understood as a process initiated by private developers and tourism brokers to differentiate from state intervention via the “politics of heritage” (Chang and Huang 2005a).
develop national identity and pride (Lanfant 1995, p.33). This case study of Kampong Glam shows how the Singapore government has appropriated cultural assets from the historic Muslim trading legacy to portray the Malay-Muslim community as a fully integrated community in Singapore society. In contrast, the display of Malay and Muslim community heritage enhanced and showcased by grassroots initiatives for the empowerment of the marginalised Malay community, remains an untapped resource of ethnic tourism.

1.2.3 Acceptance or Contestation of Heritage

This sub-debate about “local acceptance or contestation” is linked to issues of accuracy in presentation because locals are considered to be concerned about the “truthful” representation of their heritage (Chia 2001, Desforges 1997). Based on their studies of minority groups in China, Oakes (1997) and Su (2007) observe that in most cases, local ethnic groups would be proud to have their heritage “represented”. Any discontent often arises from the distortions that occur in the hands of developers or state entities. It is crucial to note that “locals” are often a heterogeneous group encompassing different stakeholders rather than a homogeneous community (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). The heterogeneity of stakeholders heightens the complexity of the debate on “local acceptance and contestation” and demonstrates that tensions in the representation of heritage go beyond a global-local dichotomy (Collins 2007). According to particular stakeholders’ positionality, reactions to representation of heritage may range from full acceptance to active resistance against the chosen path.

Maitland and Newman (2008) state that local elites¹⁰ are likely to embrace the representation of heritage as a tourism commodity since their consumption patterns are similar to those of the

---

¹⁰ Elite is defined as “a group or class of persons or a member of such a group or class, enjoying superior intellectual, social, or economic status” (Oxford Dictionary 2004, p.12). In this thesis, I use the term “elite” when referring to a group of persons with superior status in all three criteria, unless otherwise stated.
global cultural tourist. In contrast, indigenous populations or local minorities with lower social status might be at odds with a glamorous representation of heritage, which caters to the demands of the global and cosmopolitan tourist “gaze”. This uneasiness of local non-elites is frequently highlighted in post-colonial studies, and hence, tourism is often considered a tool of imperialism or neo-colonialism (Nash 1989). I agree that a “growth coalition” for tourism development between local elites and tourism practitioners might disregard the interests of ethnic minorities and the marginalised. But it is important to remember that cultural tourists are often characterised as being from “better educated groups” (Hayllar et al. 2008, p.7) and have greater potential for being interested in the niche heritage of minorities. Hence, the struggle by disenfranchised groups for accurate representation can at times be supported by tourism initiatives, depending on tourist interests and the depth of their engagement with the minority cultures.

1.2.4 The Tourist Consumption of Heritage

The overlap of the sub-debates on local reactions and tourist consumption is best demonstrated by common key questions of both sub-debates. Are tourist desires for cultural consumption “shallow” and do they differ from local preferences for an “in-depth” experience? Or, are tourists and locals both involved in the search for authentic representations of heritage? If the latter is the case, do both groups have the same idea about authentic representation of heritage? Adding a further complication, Maitland and Newman (2008) said that most locals and tourists were interested in consuming authentic heritage only if they knew that the experience would be pleasant.

---

11 A “growth coalition” consists of joint actions taken by local elites and external investors (who offer additional capital) for the development of new attractions. For those developments, existing spatial patterns have to be changed, which at times brings about the demolition of historic neighbourhoods (Grogan 2000).
The main gap here is between Boorstin’s (1964) pseudo-events consuming tourist, i.e. individuals easily satisfied with “shallow” staged performances, and MacCanell’s (1976) authenticity-seeking counterpart, searching for a deeply meaningful experience in tourism. To reconcile the different positions, Cohen (1979) formulated a phenomenology of tourist experiences, whereby a tourist can switch between modes and can adapt “recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential perspectives” within a single trip (ibid, p. 192). His concept has been intensely discussed, altered and adopted to various environments (Cole 2007); for instance, John Urry (1990) observed sightseers consume heritage sites by employing a “tourist gaze”. The tourists’ gaze is not only determined by the way heritage is locally represented but also influenced by many factors such as the depictions of a destination’s heritage on TV, cinema and literature. According to Urry (1990), a main quality of the gaze is that it is based on the difference between the heritage landscape at the destination and the tourist’s everyday life. The inherent contradiction is that despite the “gaze” upon the “Other”, tourists tend to expect a somewhat familiar environment (Ooi 2002). The demand for the familiar necessitates the commodification of raw cultural assets into marketable heritage.

In post-colonial studies, commodification of cultures has often been put into context with the neo-colonial economic exploitation of the local population. This economic practice goes hand in hand with the cultural process of “Othering”, stereotyping locals and distorting their history for tourists’ convenient consumption. North America and Europe are commonly thought of as the drivers of this process, which is being imposed on the periphery or “the global South” (Nash 1989). I argue that ruling elites in post-World-War II nation-states in the global South have shaped tourism consumption patterns for purposes of nation-building. Tourism researcher and anthropologist Maribeth Erb (2000) notes that newly independent governments in multi-racial Southeast Asia are not inferior helpers of the global capital as theories on the “internal
colonisation” of the developing world suggest (cf. Britton 1991). These governments appropriated their own cultural assets to become heritage attractions (Oakes 1995). Government planners can blame external forces such as global tourism demands under the pretext of the necessity for changes in the urban fabric, thereby concealing their intention to engage in social and ethnic engineering for nation-building purposes.

The need to present heritage in an attractive package to an external audience, i.e. representations for tourists, and to portray a coherent vision of ethnic history for the domestic sphere, i.e. representations for locals, are often intertwined (Padan 2004). Both representations are believed to require landscaping and refurbishment of historic areas. Although providing pleasant sightseeing experiences for tourists motivates Southeast Asian urban planners to redevelop historic sites, expecting ethnic districts to adhere to a political ideal of post-colonial identity is often the reason for most urban changes (Bunnell 2002).

1.3 Kampong Glam: A Timely Case Study on Representation

The “Kampong Glam” Malay-Muslim neighbourhood is situated at the eastern part of Singapore’s downtown area. Even though there is no officially recognised “Islamic” quarter in Singapore, Kampong Glam has largely taken on this role since Singapore’s Malays are almost exclusively Muslim (Rahil 2006). Historically, the origin of the district’s name is not certain. All sources agree on the origin of kampong, the Malay term for “village”, which can also be translated as “quarter” or “compound” depending on the context (Kahn 2006). Glam has several interpretations, but is most commonly believed to be derived from the Malay name of the Gelam tree, a sort of rubber tree, which used to grow in abundance on Singapore’s shoreline (Yeoh and Huang 1996).

Today, Kampong Glam is the smallest of Singapore’s three ethnic heritage districts, comprising a range of historic Muslim venues such as the former Sultan’s palace, Islamic places of worships,
traditional schools, burial grounds and a few remaining pilgrim outfitters. The district also houses a mansion and historic shophouses owned by Arab trading families. Besides its role as a homestead for Singapore’s Malays, Kampong Glam was also meant to represent other Singapore Muslims because of its historic role as a stopover for regional Mecca pilgrims in Singapore and the trading legacy of the Arabs merchant elite. I argue that this initial add-on function of the Malay ethnic district has gradually evolved into its main purpose.

Linking the struggles over Kampong Glam’s place identity to the social identity of Singapore’s Malays, I further contend that even though there is some progress, the integration of this population group in a globalised and cosmopolitan urban society as envisioned by the Singapore government remains problematic (Lee 2006). Rather than solving this problem, historic records of Singapore’s Malay-Muslim culture in Kampong Glam have been commodified to selectively enhance Arab heritage. Since the Arab theme allowed for the re-imagining of Singapore’s Muslim community as being commercially successful, which proved profitable for tourism, it was gradually assigned a vital role in the economic revitalisation of the district.

Subsequently, tourism brokers, under the leadership of the Singapore Tourism Board, tried to link these marketing initiatives with the historic role of Kampong Glam as a “pilgrim tourism destination” (STB 2007, p.9), in an attempt to legitimise the interventions. The emphasis on Middle Eastern heritage deliberately altered the image of Kampong Glam and reshaped the identity of the Malay-Muslim neighbourhood. The Singapore government and its tourism agencies had the choice to define Kampong Glam as either a Malay district or an Arab quarter, or as a fusion of various Muslim groups. Although the latter approach was arguably too complex to be marketed as a coherent heritage theme the focus on indigenous Malays, who were “packaged” as peasants and fishermen (AlSayyad 2001), lacked the glamorous potential of the “Arab option” (Freitag 2002). Failing to offer a sufficiently attractive image for local and foreign sightseers, the
indigenous Malay identity was subsequently given low priority as a plausible heritage theme for Kampong Glam.

There are few works on the Malay-Muslim heritage of Singapore’s Kampong Glam. Occasionally, the location is confused with nearby heritage districts or labelled differently. Among existing works on Kampong Glam, Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang (1996) offer an interesting perspective about the exclusion of an adjacent Islamic heritage site from the district and its subsequent destruction, emphasising the selectiveness of representation of heritage. Sim Loo Lee (1996) offers an architectural perspective, focusing on local shophouses and the problems arising from the conservation strategy of adaptive reuse, i.e. from the modification of a building to accommodate a new use (section 5.4). Jane Perkins (1984) gave an overview about the identity of the residential community prior to the official declaration of Kampong Glam as a heritage district.

There are few extensive studies linking conservation and heritage tourism with its influences on the local Malay and Muslim community. Two Bachelor’s honours theses from NUS (Norhayati 1987, Alwiyah 1997) deal with Malay urban life and heritage management in Kampong Glam respectively; another more specifically focuses on the conversion of the Sultan’s Palace into a visitor centre for Malay heritage (Sarina 2001). Most recently, Imran (2005) offers a historical perspective that concentrates on the early years of Kampong Glam, comparing its growth as a coastal settlement with the Islamic legacy of other Southeast Asian port cities. As insightful as these previous works are, none links the respective heritage or architectural themes explicitly to issues of representation, identity negotiation and tourism development.

This thesis studies the implications of representation of heritage on place identity in a historic district of diverse Muslim people. Identity refers “to a social label given to individuals as
members of a group, which may either be assigned by the individuals themselves or by others” (AlSayyad 2001, p.5). The place identity in Kampong Glam has been shaped by its long-standing role as a community centre for Malays and other Muslims in Singapore. Place identity, however, is not static and evolves dynamically over time, influenced internally and externally by a multitude of factors. The selective popularisation of Kampong Glam’s Arab heritage has altered the self-perception of local stakeholders and expectations of local and foreign visitors. Singapore’s Malay minority, representing the majority of the city’s Muslim population, is on the verge of distancing itself from Kampong Glam (Rahil 2009). This is a visible trend because Kampong Glam’s place identity has started to shift from a primarily Malay neighbourhood with influences from other Muslim groups towards a non-descript elitist heritage landscape with cosmopolitan Islamic elements. Global tourism flows to heritage attractions might contribute to the alienation of locals from their historic districts when they become too heavily frequented by tourists, but what brought on the alienation process was the re-interpretation of Kampong Glam’s historic record that emphasised a Middle Eastern heritage for the sake of re-imagining a glorious Malay-Muslim legacy. The recent shift in representation and negative reaction of many Malays is remarkable, because the district had previously maintained a principally Malay-Muslim character despite the complex ethnic heritage and continuous renegotiation of place identity (Kong and Yeoh 1994).

The gradual loss of the Singaporean-Malay ties with Kampong Glam has now prompted a corrective intervention by the Singapore government. A heritage centre for the Malay community had already been conceptualised in the early 1990s, but the plans were only implemented right before the start of this research in 2005. So, this research makes a timely case study on the

---

12 These qualities of identity are well-characterised by Hall and Du Gay (1996): “Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being […], how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (p.4).
cultural representation of Singapore’s Malays. The recent completion of the MHC in Kampong Glam in 2005 can be interpreted as a strategic move to re-adjust representation of heritage, aiming at improving the tattered ties of the Malays with the neighbourhood. Whether the new centre can achieve this objective, its central location in the former Sultan’s palace of Kampong Glam guarantees a comparatively more prominent representation of Malay heritage. Hence, the MHC is expected to increase the local visitation of Kampong Glam by attracting Malays to the area. At the same time, the opening of the new attraction is likely to make tourism a more crucial factor that affects place identity.

The recent opening of the MHC in Kampong Glam does not necessarily mean a balanced equilibrium in representation of heritage; Kampong Glam is likely to remain a contested landscape (Chang 1999). The cultural representation of Malays as the indigenous Muslim community remains problematic, because the construction of Kampong Glam as an Arab-dominated cosmopolitan trading hub is at odds with the insular emphasis of Malay culture at the heritage centre. A balanced representation of heritage in Kampong Glam must reconcile Malay elements with elements of other Muslim migrants, emphasising the contributions of the indigenous Malay community to the economic and cultural development of Singapore, not subordinated to the commercial achievements of Arab and Indian traders. Considering the worldwide struggles over cultural representation, this thesis identifies the link between abstract concepts of heritage and ethnicity, concrete representations of heritage for post-colonial nation-building and how locals and tourists perceive these representations based on the Singapore case study of a newly evolving heritage district.

1.4 Overview of the Thesis

This study examines the impact of the representations of heritage on the identity of an indigenous ethnic group of a post-colonial nation-state. Place, heritage, representation and identity are closely
interconnected in an urban context. This interconnection is especially strong in post-colonial Singapore, where all representations of nationhood and official ethnicities congregate in a limited urban space. Place, as opposed to abstract “space”, is a location or an area instilled with meaningful characteristics for the local population (Relph 1976). Social or ethnic groups identify with particular places if these places represent relevant records of their culture (Hall 1994). These records of culture and history are termed “heritage” whenever they have undergone a process of commodification or when state authorities intervene through “politics of heritage” (McKercher and du Cros 2002). “Un-commodified” cultural assets are rare compared to the more frequent display of commodified heritage, especially in urban context.

This case study of the representation of ethnic minority heritage in a post-colonial city-state is divided into three parts, to address various forms of interconnections between place, heritage, representation and identity. Part I locates Singapore’s Kampong Glam theoretically and methodologically; this part also comprises three chapters, the introduction (Chapter 1), a literature review with the theoretical framework (Chapter 2) and an explanation of research methodologies (Chapter 3).

Part II constitutes the main body of the thesis; it discusses how the representation of minority heritage has been conceptualised, how these conceptualisations have materialised in the physical landscape of Kampong Glam and how various stakeholders received these manifestations. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 address the three research questions. Chapter 4 is chronologically structured and addresses issues of representation from a historical perspective. The chapter examines how Kampong Glam’s ethnic cultures have been interpreted and how their composition have been conceptualised over 200 years. This stocktaking of ideas and conceptualisations about ethnic culture is a preliminary stage that eventually leads to “representations of space” (Lefebvre 1991), i.e. the display of tangible heritage. Thus, Chapter 4 introduces the hegemonic ideas about culture
that lead to specific representations of heritage in Kampong Glam. In the regional context, these post-colonial conceptualisations have been labelled the “imagineering” of heritage landscapes (Teo 2003). For the discourse on post-colonial nation-building, this term is useful as it addresses the realm of ideas and imaginations of culture as well as the subsequently necessary “engineering” to implement these conceptualisations.

Chapter 5 follows up on this discussion and investigates how representations have materialised in the heritage landscape of Kampong Glam. It offers an urban-geographical perspective and divides the fragmented heritage landscape of today into razed historic areas and “survivors” of urban renewal. Hence, the chapter elaborates on representation by analysing which elements of ethnic culture have made it into official representations of heritage and which elements have been erased, neglected and subsequently “forgotten”. Chapter 6 furthers this point and examines how different stakeholders consume and interpret representations of official heritage. It differentiates between the reactions to two “survivors” of urban renewal, Bussorah Mall and the MHC, a commercial and a cultural flagship project of representation of heritage. The chapter also offers a perspective from the “periphery” of Kampong Glam, that is, local stakeholders who critically evaluate these representations in the newly landscaped core of the district and offer a comparative perspective with the situation on their “own” streets. Connecting the self-perception of local commercial operators, Malay visitors and residents to the landscaped attractions of Malay-Muslim heritage, the chapter links the representation of heritage with issues of ethnic identity. Thus, the main part offers a comprehensive review of post-colonial nation-building in progress, from ideas of cultural representation in multi-ethnic societies to their manifestations in space and subsequent reactions.

Part III discusses the research work; it summarises key findings in the thesis and links the empirical findings to discussions on the politics of post-colonial nation-building and ethnic
representation. I contend that the reshaping of cultural assets of the indigenous Malay population into cosmopolitan Muslim heritage has resulted in the gradual alienation of the local Malay community district. The Singapore government has so far not seized the opportunity to readjust the Middle Eastern focus with the opening of the Malay Heritage Centre, since its outreach to the Malay community remains limited due to financial constraints. From a theoretical perspective, I re-examine the argument that nation-building necessarily compensates for colonial history’s injustice to minority groups (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

I emphasise the agency of newly independent nations in enhancing local heritage, but I also argue that post-independence multi-ethnic states are not fully appreciative of minority heritage, especially if it is at odds with an imagined idealised racial arithmetic and ethno-cultural balance. By introducing this case study of Kampong Glam to the post-colonial discourse on tourism, I contend that global tourism flows are not the underlying reason for distortions in representations of heritage even though they might at times broach on issues of (mis)representations. My research concept applies a spatial perspective on representations of heritage and emphasises the in-depth evaluation of local reactions to changes in heritage landscapes.
Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review (section 2.2) and elaborates on the theoretical framework for the analysis of post-colonial nation-building (section 2.3). First, it links local representations of heritage with global trends in tourism. Tourism studies have long been entrenched in the positivist research tradition, which sought to quantify the effects of tourism in mainly economic terms (Squire 1994). Globalisation is often reduced to the question of whether the world economy’s new neo-liberal order would be detrimental for tourism destinations or whether it would constitute an opportunity for growth. Regardless of the take on this question, the positivist perspective considered heritage an asset for the cultural economy, the ultimate achievement of which is to maximise revenues of tourism earnings. In the context of the representations of heritage, this implies that every-day practices of local cultures can be “sacrificed” for the market-driven version of local uniqueness (section 2.2.1).

The positivist perspective, however, falls short of explaining the cultural impact of globalisation except for the phenomenon’s indefinite destructiveness to the uniqueness of particular places; its proponents rarely make detailed assertions about cultural effects (Nash 1989). If so, the unidirectional influence of the global on the local some proponents of positivist tourism research had detected for economic activities is equally applied to explain directions of cultural diffusion. This approach is insufficient since the transformation of raw cultural assets into heritage attractions usually includes other factors apart from capital-driven commodification. For instance, governments of destination countries, actively engage in “politics of heritage” as part of their
nation building, to portray a particular image of their nations’ cultures, which may or may not be beneficial for tourism development (Meethan 2004).

Globalisation shapes representations of heritage not only through economic interdependencies but also through the dialectical interactions of host and visitor cultures. Intercultural contact may not be a new phenomenon, but the current era of globalisation has led to “increases in both the geographical reach and intensity of interconnectedness” (Shaw and Williams 2004, p.4). The discourse on the global-local nexus advanced the idea of dialectical interactions (as opposed to uni-directional influences) between host and visitor cultures (Milne and Ateljevic 2001). This discourse on the global-local nexus gives considerably more room to discussing the cultural effects of globalisation; case studies about local responses to the demands of global tourism mushroomed in tourism studies during this period (Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998, Chang 1996, Graham 1994, Oakes 1997), parallel to the evolution of the “cultural turn” in geography (section 2.2.2).

Although the global-local nexus is a fruitful perspective for considering how globalisation has influenced local culture, the discourse generally analyses local initiatives for accurate representations of heritage as responses to global influences. Many such representations are actually state-constructed and initiated, using “politics of heritage” for nation building purposes, and not even triggered by those global influences. I present several case studies, which show that such state constructions of heritage can also be at odds with prevailing global tourist expectations. Hence, these representations and their local contestations cannot be categorised as responses to global trends (Bunnell 2002). This proves the point that the discourse on the global-local nexus

---

13 The cultural turn is a critical perspective in contemporary human geography which stresses that the categories used to describe the cultural, economic, and political aspects of human groups are socially constructed and place-specific (Barnett 1998).
does not adequately address the proactive politics of heritage, which is prevalent in post-colonial exercises of nation-building because the construction of a national identity requires the re-interpretation of history and cultural assets (McKercher and Du Cros 2002). Also, local actions do not always respond to global tourism demands. Therefore, this thesis scrutinises the agency of post-colonial governments and their nation-building agendas as well as its impact on representations of heritage (section 2.2.3).

The next part of the chapter introduces post-colonialism as the theoretical framework for analysing representations of heritage (section 2.3.1). It elaborates on how post-colonial insights about identity, ethnicities and representation can inform tourism studies (section 2.3.2). Since post-colonial states in the global South have emerged as major tourist destination countries, empirical insights from tourism studies about changes in local identity at those sites contribute clearer insights on the post-colonial framework as well (Hall and Tucker 2004). I also highlight the usefulness of the post-colonial approach for Singapore’s Kampong Glam (2.3.3) for it offers a variety of useful discourses on the negotiation of ethnic identities in the context of nation-building. I then present three post-colonial discourses on hybridity, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism – each linked to representations of heritage in multi-ethnic states. For the global South, the chapter concludes that a shift in preference for nation-building frameworks has occurred. Cosmopolitan aspirations have replaced multiculturalism, displaying international connections in a locally rooted and culturally sophisticated society (Yeoh 2004) – the new favourite concept for cultural politics (section 2.3.6). This is exemplified by the changes in the representation of Malay and Muslim heritage in Singapore’s Kampong Glam.
2.2 Place Identity and the Representation of Ethnic Heritage

The next three sections introduce two schools of thought concerning cultural globalisation as well as an overview of post-colonial literature on nation-building, heritage and tourism. Proponents who see cultural globalisation as “destructive” (section 2.2.1) consider tourism destination countries in the global South as powerless in the wake of globalisation’s mighty homogenising force (Nash 1989) and categorise increased tourism flows as a component of the “destruction of local uniqueness”. In contrast, the global-local nexus (section 2.2.2) postulates place-specific outcomes of cultural globalisation because host societies react differently to cultural contacts with foreign visitors. Both schools of thought, however, consider host societies to be in a reactive role to changes brought on by globalisation in the representations of heritage and culture. In contrast, recent cultural and tourism studies of post-colonial societies in the global South have identified “politics of heritage” as a major factor shaping heritage tourism landscapes, albeit with a weak consideration of the link between tourism, on the one hand, and nation-building as the underlying reason for such “politics of heritage”, on the other hand (section 2.2.3). The literature review concludes that a synthesis of the findings from post-colonial cultural studies and tourism research is required to advance the discourse on the representation of heritage in the global South.

2.2.1 Globalisation and Heritage – the Destruction of Local Uniqueness?

Since there is no consensus among academics as to when globalisation started to influence representations of heritage, the end of the “Cold War” in 1989 and the emergence of the “Washington consensus”14 serve as useful markers to identify profound changes in the global economic order. It was around this period that studies on the effects of globalisation entered

---

14 The Washington consensus is defined as the agreement of policy leaders on the productivity of market-based economies and the principle advantages of free movement of capital and goods after 1989 (Hall 2004). As I am writing, the Washington consensus has been increasingly questioned due to critiques of its neo-liberal focus. Despite these critiques, the consensus remains an important marker since the dichotomy between capitalist societies and the Communist bloc is unlikely to re-emerge.
geographic discourse, starting from the field of economic geography (Meethan 2004, Terkenli 2002). Tourism geography, which was initially preoccupied with the economic and quantitative changes brought on by globalisation, began to address the cultural effects comprehensively in the 1990s (Shaw and Williams 2004). Inspired by the economic geographer’s analysis of increased transnational flows of capital and consumer goods, tourism geography focused on such economic phenomena as well (Hall 2004).

The new findings of the tourism perspective focused on the argument that the flow of goods and capital cannot be considered in isolation from the increased movement of people across borders in the 1990s, whether as migrants or tourists (Dwyer 1999, Hall and Tucker 2004). The impact on culture and heritage in specific locations was still a minor consideration (AlSayyad 2001, Jaakson 2004). Early discourses on globalisation and tourism stopped short of place-specific analysis, depicting global forces as generally opposed to local uniqueness and hence sought to erase place-specific particularities (Crick 1989, Sadler 1993). Nash said that few researchers “found tourism to be a benign and possibly beneficial agent of change” (1996, p.22). When they did consider the impact of globalisation on local culture, they often evaluate adjustments to cultural assets as a detrimental commodification of heritage for tourist consumption. Researchers identified the dynamic character as rendering representations of heritage vulnerable to the influences of globalisation, which then enables the nimble transformation of culture for financial returns (Castells 2003, Greenwood 1989, Hall and Du Gay 1996; Savage et al. 2004).

Stephen Britton (1991) emphasised that successful approaches in commodification are perpetually reproduced across the globe. The increase in commodified tourism landscapes causes a global lack of attention for local particularities of heritage attractions, particularly in urban environments. Globalisation is thus responsible for a “heritage tourism product” that manifests itself in the uniformity of landscapes via a “metropolitan-dictated development” (Nash 1989,
p.49), which result in standard copies of waterfronts or “festival marketplaces” such as the Baltimore Inner Harbour sprouting up all over the world (Buck 1993, Hannigan 1998, Zukin 1995).

From this perspective, globalisation is detrimental to the local cultures of tourism destination countries. Small and underdeveloped countries at the global periphery are especially vulnerable to negative effects resulting from the dictates of global capital due to their own limited resources (Britton and Clarke 1987, Brohmann 1996, Bruner 1991, Lundberg 1990, Millman 1991). Numerous case studies argue along these lines, claiming that globalisation results in the erosion of locality-specific place identities. In a case study of Denpasar on the Indonesian island of Bali, Townsend (1994) reported the demise of Balinese community life in the city centre and along its coastal strips, the “tourism suburbs” of Kuta and Legian. In the capital city region of Bali, the tourism theme of “sun and sand” has sidelined the local Hindu culture (Acciaioli 1985, Backhaus 1996 and 1997). We can see the widespread application of commodification from the opening of theme parks in many countries of the global South, especially in Southeast Asia (Teo and Yeoh 1997). In such venues, a “pleasant display of artefacts” is preferred to the portrayal of an accurate image of local or regional heritage (Dallen and Prideaux 2004, Goss 2005, Kim 2008).

The debate on commodification and the destruction of local uniqueness offers valuable insights about the homogenising tendencies of globalisation. Further research contributions to the debate, however, made it apparent that equating globalisation with the destruction of uniqueness was one-sided, portraying locals in destination countries as “helpless” subjects of the invasion of tourism (Pearce 1999, Picard 1995, Scheyvens 2002). They argued that the bias towards homogenising tendencies precludes the possibility of the nurturing of local culture by the governments of these destination countries. Proponents of this biased viewpoint would hence ignore the possibility that these governments, in partnership with tourism brokers, sincerely want to promote local culture
and present an accurate representation of heritage. However, the possibility exists and
governments in the global South do have agency in tourism development and representation of
local heritage (Milne 1997). There is no clear evidence that these governments ally with global
capital against the interest of the local population. Granted, tourist consumption requires the
interpretation of culture and this interpretation is achieved by commodifying cultural assets
(McKercher and Du Cros 2002). Commodification across the globe does not necessarily bring
about globally homogeneous representations of heritage. In the 1990s, a different conceptual
approach, the “global-local” nexus, emerged to address these fundamental problems.

2.2.2 Multiple Outcomes of Cultural Globalisation: The Global–Local Nexus

From the reconciliatory idea of the “global-local nexus”, we can see how the global impact on
local ways of life is negotiated culturally and that the outcomes of negotiation are place-specific.
Milne and Ateljevic noted that the impact of globalisation can be comprehensively evaluated by
“embedding our understanding of the tourism economy in its broader cultural context” (2001,
p.370). Here, they accuse scholars of the previously identified antagonism between authentic
local culture and the “destructive” tourism industry of reductionism. There is a fresh emphasis on
opportunities for successful cooperation between the global and local, possibly creating accurate
representations of heritage by balancing the interests of global investments in cultural tourism and
the agency of the local community (Degen 2004, Desforges 1997, Hall and Rath 2007, King
credited considerably more agency to the resiliency of the local cultures, so that place-specific
outcomes of global-local negotiation help maintain “local uniqueness in the global village”
(Chang 1996, p.1). The discourse on the global-local nexus argues against globalisation being the
cause of cultural homogenisation as “different destinations tend to accentuate themes peculiar to
their culture and location as a way to differentiate themselves” (Chang et al. 1996, p. 287).
Asian studies scholar Maurizio Peleggi (1996) notes that Thailand, as a very heavily frequented tourism destination, enhanced its heritage for domestic visitors and even repatriated some religious and cultural artefacts which were sold to America in the 1960s to restore distinctly local settings. Many other pioneering works on the global-local nexus revisit field sites previously assessed as “suffering” from tourism-inflicted cultural homogenisation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Bruner 1994, Milne 1997, Picard 1997). Picard (1997) revisited one of Southeast Asia’s most frequented resort islands and said that Balinese culture has become exposed to global tourist demands and that the Balinese speak of their own culture as a “tourist culture” (Barker et al. 2006). But Picard concluded that the Balinese were consciously emphasising their “tourism culture” as marketable and valuable – as opposed to being prompted by global influences – to reinforce their position in multicultural Indonesia. Similarly, tourism researcher Simon Milne (1997) revisited the South Pacific islands, which had been the field site of Britton’s work on tourism dependency ten years earlier (Britton and Clarke 1987). He argues that this dependency on the strong economies of tourism generating countries, traditionally those of North America, Europe, Australia and Japan, has to be qualified for each particular island-state. This is because local strategies to mitigate global cultural influences, such as building community centres from tourism revenues, exist and have been applied with varying success (cf. Van der Duim et al. 2006).

An example of the deconstruction of the “local” is offered by Chang (2000), who examined the impact of global tourism trends on and local reactions to Singapore’s Little India (cf. Begam 1997). Chang identified residents, Singaporean visitors, business operators and government agencies of the city-state as local forces. His case study showed that the “local” is not a homogeneous entity and that local community life is not always antagonistic towards global tourism and foreign visitors.
Cultural geographer Timothy Oakes (1993, 1997) also differentiates between local stakeholders by ethnicity and led a pioneering study of the Dong minority of Guizhou province in southwestern China. He argued that ethnic minorities can quickly learn how to appropriate influences from global tourism for their own agenda in claiming place and cultural identities (Alonso 2007, de Vidas 1995, Halter 2007). Global tourism is but one agent of change in Guizhou, and after an initial period of perplexity at the speed of new developments, the local Dong people were able to strategically incorporate tourism into their struggle for cultural representation in a majority Han-Chinese context. Using tourism demand for heritage attractions to support their argument to receive development grants, the Dong people were able to fund the rebuilding of historic drum towers and bridges. The ultimate goal was to strengthen place identity, i.e. to ensure that the younger generations can identify with their home region and have a strong attachment to their local culture (Oakes 1997), contributing to the enhancement of minority heritage in China in the 1990s (Sofield and Li 1998).

However, proponents of the global-local nexus occasionally overestimate local agency. At times, local resistance is believed to be tantamount to a successful contestation of globalisation-generated developments. Concerning Muslim heritage in Asia, LeVine (2001) provides an example from Old-Jaffa in Tel Aviv, Israel, where local residents, comprising predominantly of Palestinian Muslims, opposed the redevelopment of their fishing port into an upmarket leisure complex. They feared that their unique minority culture would be sacrificed in the construction of a globalised waterfront heritage landscape, which portrays an affluent Israel at the expense of ethnic particularities. Although the city administration ultimately implemented a few demands, such as bilingual signposting in Arab and Hebrew, the community could not prevent the construction of the yachting complex and the changing of the entire harbour zone from a fishing port to a leisure landscapes for water sports. The case study of Israel showed that local people
have a say in the way heritage is represented, but their input is often limited in the face of powerful processes such as gentrification\(^\text{15}\). Singaporean tourism researcher Peggy Teo (2003) had similar conclusions about the limited impact of local contestations in Penang, a Malaysian state, where the Chinese are the majority ethnic group. The case study reported the futile struggle of local Chinese residents for the representation of vernacular Chinese culture in the face of tourism development. The study showed that although the city administration initially encouraged residents to start cultural projects, governments are often reluctant to provide continuing support for those projects (Black and Wall 2001, Breglia 2005, Marques and Da Costa 2007).

The case studies above demonstrate both strengths and shortcomings of the global-local discourse. By acknowledging the agency of the locals and deconstructing the “local”, the global-local focus enriches our understanding of globalisation. This more nuanced understanding of local actors and their interests has minimised the “Othering” of local people in tourism destinations. Host societies and cultures are no longer seen as passive recipients of tourism-generated changes (Chang 2000). Despite this progress in the understanding of the local, proponents of the global-local nexus base the idea of the need to balance global developments on the initial discourse on the destruction of local uniqueness. With the global-local nexus, tourism development and the representation of heritage continue to be considered as ultimately driven by global forces. Despite their bargaining power, local stakeholders tend to be defensive and their initiatives are mainly a reaction to the effects of globalisation. This perspective falls short of explaining specific qualities of heritage landscapes in post-colonial nations. Post-colonial heritage sites portray a particular

\(^{15}\) Urban geographer Chris Hamnett (1984) sums up the impacts of gentrification as changing the physical environment of a neighbourhood, changing the social make-up of its residents from low-income groups to middle class or high-income groups, changing the economic value of the area with increasing real estate prices, and, last but not least, changes in the culture of the remaining local community.

\(^{16}\) Beyond the government’s ideological focus on Malay achievements, there is historical evidence for a strong role of Muslim traders in Georgetown, who were mostly Arabs who intermarried with local Malays (Freitag 2002).
image of the independent nations for local citizens and global audiences. National or regional governments carefully plan these landscapes, and tourism is only one factor in designated representations of heritage. Many such landscapes are also designed to advance the goals of nation-building and in multiracial states, to promote a particular model of ethnic representation.

2.2.3 Heritage Landscapes, Nation-Building and Global Tourism

This section explores the link between nation-building, representations of heritage and cultural globalisation in tourism literature. Many previous studies have either focused on the negative impact of globalisation or victimised locals, holding globalisation responsible for “the destruction of local uniqueness” (section 2.2.1), or assumed that locals can adjust globalisation-induced distortions in the representation of heritage by means of finding a “global-local nexus” between tourism and local interests (section 2.2.2). The exact link between nation-building, representations of heritage and tourism is often not discussed in detail. This section discusses existing studies in this research field, arguing that spatially relevant “politics of heritage”, as an integrated part of nation-building efforts, are a more crucial factor in the representation of heritage than commonly acknowledged.

Many countries continuously engage in nation-building, and in most parts of the post-colonial global South, it remains a relevant process. In the course of nation-building, existing lived culture, such as practices, values and tradition go through a selection process, during which governments choose certain elements as being representative of national heritage (Graham 1994). Before focusing on post-colonial societies, this section discusses the representation of heritage worldwide. The selection process of what constitutes “heritage” applies to every country (Turnbridge 1994). Even long-developed nations continue to re-adjust their heritage to the contemporary “needs” of politics and society. In Europe, the emergence of a supranational
organisation, the European Union (EU), has caused some member states to redefine their national heritage. Previously, nations at the European periphery occasionally focused on cultural connections with other continents rather than their ties within central Europe; constructing a coherent European heritage has thus been a challenge for the EU (Ashworth 1994, Brooks 2008, Claval 2007, Fernandes and Carvolho 2007, Goulding 2000, Hague and Jenkins 2005, Hobsbawm 1996, Van Gorp and Renes 2007).

In Europe and elsewhere, representations of heritage are subject to re-interpretations of history by national governments. Independent states perpetually redefine their national identities. An interesting example is Ireland, a European country that was colonised by Great Britain for centuries. Niamh Moore (2007) analyses representations of Irish heritage during the past decade and detects changes from the immediate “post-colonial” era. The first national heritage legislation in the 1930s defined Irish heritage as characterised by Catholic monuments in a rural pastoral setting (O’Conner 1993, Graham 1994). This attitude changed in the 1970s as Ireland was fully integrated in the global economy as a “Celtic tiger” characterised by modern industry and international commerce (Moore 2007, Kelly 2006). Irish policymakers no longer regard quays of commercial ports and other tangible heritage of Ireland’s trading legacy as an unwelcome reminder of the British Empire but a sign of Ireland’s modernisation. Moore (2007) said the slow but steady change in the national definition of “heritage” was the main reason for the physical preservation of remaining quaysides and harbourfronts, a more important factor than tourism considerations. This Irish example shares parallels with representations of Malays in Singapore, which will be discussed later in this section.

At the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Istanbul also faces its own cultural politics in the representation of heritage. Bartu (2001) examined how rising support for Islamisation in Turkey has affected Western-influenced heritage in the Beyoglu district of Istanbul. Plans to erect a new
mosque in this inner-city commercial quarter, which involved the destruction of historic houses, meant that representations of heritage were inclined towards a more religiously rooted culture. These plans caused outrage among the city’s intellectuals and parts of the business community. Critics argued that the 19th-century Western-style Turkish architecture was an important asset for tourism development (Aytar 2007, Zandi-Sayek 2001). The pro-Islamic city administration, however, dismissed the argument and insisted on building the mosque and a new central square as landmarks of Muslim culture. Many local residents and shopowners subsequently accepted this emphasis on Islamic heritage. The example demonstrates that “politics of heritage” are not necessarily caused by the dictates of globalisation and its increasing flow of international visitors. Instead, such re-interpretations of history shape representations of heritage according to specific nation building agendas, which may or may not be concerned about tourism development (Long and Sweet 2006, Mitchell 2001).

In Southeast Asia, researchers have focused on nation-building and heritage tourism in multi-ethnic societies where governments struggle to construct a national unity out of the diversity of existing cultural heritage (Carr 2008, Cheung 1999, Imran 2007; Rahil, Ooi and Shaw 2009, Lim 1994). These governments have to find components of ethnic culture that represent the particular ethnicity as accurately as possible while also allowing for social cohesion. For Myanmar’s cultural heritage, Philp and Mercer (1999) state that its recent enhancement is related to both the desire to conserve and deepen the nation state according to “politics of heritage” and an economically-driven phenomenon designed to meet the demands of global tourism, hence providing a nexus between global cultural influences and national identity enhancement targeting particular local sites. The authors uncover that Buddhism serves a dual function as a tourism theme communicating the heritage of the ‘land of the pagodas’ to a global audience (p. 39) while simultaneously being utilized as a national unifier to create a mainstream cultural identity for the
country’s citizens, even though many local minority heritage sites do not relate to Buddhism but to other confessions.

Grasping the full complexity of post-colonial heritage sites, cultural geographer Carolyn Cartier (1998) introduced her Malaysian case study stating that “neither global economic trends nor local conditions [alone] are a sufficient explanatory basis from which to examine the formation of tourist landscapes” (p. 153). Similarly researching tourism in Malaysia, anthropologist Joel Kahn (1997) investigated the dynamic relationship between “politics of heritage”, tourism and globalisation for Penang’s capital, Georgetown. A high-tech manufacturing hub (Teo 2003), Penang’s rapid modernisation has prompted calls for the preservation of remaining cultural heritage. Many Malaysians credited the steady economic rise of Penang mainly to the administrative abilities of the British colonisers and the trading skills of the Chinese settlers. Such records were clearly at odds with the ideals of the Malaysian central government, which struggled to portray an image of specifically Malay modernity after independence in 1963 (Bunnell 1999, 2002 and 2004; Chong 2005, Worden 2003)16.

Joel Kahn (1997) analyses how federal government planning initiatives selectively enhanced memories of the Arab-Malay trading legacy to strengthen the track record of Malay contributions to commercial activities in Penang. The re-adjustments were aimed at enhancing Malay-Muslim heritage since visitors to the booming state might see Malaysia as a nation dominated by the Chinese (Henderson 2003b). Malaysia’s bumiputra policy, a comprehensive package of special privileges for local Malays, had been in place when more people became interested to visit Penang. Thus, promoting a “more attractive” version of an enterprising Malay culture was a

16 Beyond the government’s ideological focus on Malay achievements, there is historical evidence for a strong role of Muslim traders in Georgetown, who were mostly Arabs who intermarried with local Malays (Freitag 2002).
feature of Malaysia’s post-colonial nation-building efforts. Related adjustments in representations of heritage were thus not primarily influenced by global tourism forces.  

A common feature of most post-colonial nations is that they engage in a process to minimise the persistence of colonial stereotypes with the engineering of their national culture. Like the Irish, the Malays in Singapore and Malaysia were colonised by the British and remained marginalised in political representation and in the economy. Urbanisation, considered an ill-fitting element in Malay (and Irish) culture, benefitted the British as colonisers, and in the case of Singapore and Malaysia, the Chinese as settlers (Kahn 2006, Alatas 1977). While the British and subsequently the Chinese were believed to be “naturally” talented for trade and business, the Malays retreated to the religious sphere and identified themselves as belonging to the rural, non-commercialised settings on the periphery (Barr and Skrbis 2008, Betts 1975, Imran 2007, Kamaludeen 2007, Rahim 1998).

A difference between native culture in Ireland and Singapore is that Irish culture (and Malay culture in Malaysia) has gone through modernisation since the 1970s and 1980s, whereas the presumption of Singapore Malays as other-worldly and non-competitive persists. Essentialist categorisations such as “enterprising” Chinese settlers or Muslim migrants like Kampong Glam’s Arabs versus native “rural” Malays are still employed in tourism marketing today (Rahil 2009). According to persisting colonial stereotypes in Singapore, official representations of the Malay-built heritage in the city-state continue to be dominated by religious buildings, such as mosques, and re-erected rumah kampong (village-style houses). Such essentialisms are the root of the

17 They were partially a response to global impacts. In Malaysia and across Southeast Asia, the new prominence of former colonial nations as a destination for global tourists, migrants or temporary guest workers increased the need to engage in “politics of heritage” to portray a coherent picture of nationhood. In the case of Malaysia, this meant to emphasize the contribution of the bumiputra Malays to nation building by underlining their historic role for development in Malaysia.
underlying problems pertaining to representations of heritage in Singapore, as exemplified by the failure of the “Malay Village” project in Geylang. The “Malay Village” was a theme park-like replica of a rural Malay settlement. It opened its doors in 1985 and closed down in 2008, struggling with low visitation rates (section 4.3.4).

Many post-colonial countries, such as Singapore or Malaysia, developed increasing interconnections with the global economy. A surging inflow of visitors has prompted regional governments to alter their representations of heritage (Yeoh and Kong 1996, Soper 2008, Porter and Salazar 2005, Spitzer 2009). These adjustments aimed to educate visitors, who are unaware of the cultural heritage and ethnic composition of their destination country, on the official rhetoric of nation-building. Such rhetoric had long been familiar to the local population, spreading through the national media and education system (Baildon 2009).

Despite the existence of such external global factors as increased tourism and mobility, locally employed re-interpretations of history, shaping urban space with “politics of heritage”, are not merely reactions to global trends, but an extension of the ongoing project of nation-building. Unfortunately, many existing culture studies consider nation-building and representations of heritage largely in isolation from tourism – the latter is then regarded as a residual and potentially distorting factor. Tourism studies, on the other hand, often focus on tourism and commodification, assuming that particular representations of heritage are engineered for tourists, with nation-building and its “politics of heritage” occasionally taking a backseat. This thesis, however, seeks to analyse the findings from culture and tourism studies and to advance the discourse with insights from heritage tourism and ethnic representation in post-colonial Singapore.
2.3 A Post-Colonial Perspective on Heritage Tourism in Multi-Ethnic States

2.3.1 A Brief History of Post-Colonialism

Hamza Alavi (1972) was the first to use the term “post-colonial perspective” in a political science essay on nation-building in Bangladesh and Pakistan. For Alavi, the term was self-explanatory and should be understood as geographically demarcating countries that had been colonised. Because of this vague definition, the first authoritative text on post-colonialism was only published six years later. Today, Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism*, located in the field of literary studies, is commonly regarded as the pioneering work in post-colonialism. Said critiqued the superficial portrayal of former colonised nations, particularly Islamic countries in the Middle East, in Western intellectual discourse as inferior and potentially violent. This Western-centric discourse, Said argues, is interwoven with colonial presumptions about the Orient, especially the Middle East; which perpetuate subjective facts about the region as well as Western dominance in the academic and intellectual realms.

Other seminal works include Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Gayatri Spivak’s essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1995). *The Location of Culture* is an important work for its geographical perspective on post-colonial conditions because it develops a concept of place identity as a reaction to the colonial encounter, i.e. as a reaction to colonial era migration (see section 2.3.4). Critics such as political scientist Sankaran Krishna (2009), however, question the dense prose in *The Location of Culture*, and the focus on lofty theoretical discourses. These shortcomings exposed a disregard for “real-life issues” such as underdevelopment in most former colonial nations. According to Krishna, such post-colonial literary studies ultimately jeopardise the goal of giving voice to a non-Western perspective.
Beyond literary studies, however, a reasonable amount of post-colonial research works has been published across disciplines in the humanities (Yeoh 2001). James Sidaway (2000) said that this continuing relevance of post-colonial themes outside literary studies is because of the broad scope of questions asked across disciplines, enabling researchers to engage in holistic perspectives instead of cookie-cutter approaches within narrow disciplinary boundaries. But according to Hall and Tucker, “a concept such as post-colonial never ends a discussion, it begins it” (2004, p.3). For my thesis on Singapore’s post-colonial heritage, I offer an overview of key definitions below.

Bill Ashcroft (1989) broadly defines the term “post-colonial”, without specifying national or regional limitations, “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (p.2). In 2000, Sidaway suggests that post-colonial theory can be narrowed to “hearing or recovering the experiences of the colonised” (p.594). Such a definition excludes former colonial powers from analysis, hence focusing the post-colonial discourse on the global South. Garth Myers (2006) limits the scope even further, arguing that many African countries, for instance, cannot be labelled “post-colonial” since they are still affected by neo-colonial influences such as disadvantages in economic relations to former colonisers. I would argue that those countries affected are nonetheless post-colonial since they are independent despite facing unequal “terms of trade”. In contrast to Myers’ exclusionary perspective, some cultural researchers expand the scope of post-colonialism, suggesting that it should include colonising countries in its theoretical scope because their societies have also been deeply impacted by colonialism (Gandhi 1998, Sleman 1991).

Aijaz Ahmad (1995a) criticises this spatial expansion of post-colonial research, which also often backtracks the “first contact period” of cultures to as early as 1492. He argues that this conceptual

---

18 This, however, includes a few colonised European states. Ireland has been discussed as an example because of its continuing struggle of defining national heritage (Moore 2007).
stretching of post-colonialism renders the approach meaningless since it loses its focus on nation-building after independence. Nation-building is a key endeavour of post-colonial nations, but we should note that European countries, which make up the bulk of former coloniser societies, also struggle with post-colonial conditions such as the integration of migrants of former colonies (Marques and Da Costa 2007). Many European countries may feel the need to redefine their national identity because of their increasingly multicultural demographics (Kalra 2005). Despite the possible pressures, such redefinitions are ultimately optional for former coloniser societies (Bunnell 2007). In contrast, previously colonised countries have to engage in nation-building to survive as independent entities; hence, it is imperative for them to inculcate a sense of national identity, often among a multiracial population. Ania Loomba (2005) offers a comparative perspective, emphasising that nation-building condition is a central issue for colonised countries, whereas it is one aspect among many socio-cultural dynamics for former coloniser countries. Therefore, I limit my discussion to former colonies in the global South.

2.3.2 The Post-Colonial Perspective and Tourism Studies

Hall and Tucker (2004) affirmed the importance of the post-colonial discourse for tourism studies while emphasising tourism studies’ contribution to the post-colonial discourse. Since the 1990s, many geographers and tourism researchers have incorporated post-colonial themes of identity, place and representation into global tourism issues (Clark 1999, Pratt 1992). Former colonies have emerged as popular travel destinations for visitors from former colonial societies (Hall and Tucker 2004). Anthropologists embarking on tourism research, for instance Dennison Nash (1989), have occasionally interpreted the tourists’ practices of gazing at the “Other” – that is, the hosts – in destination countries as the persistence of a colonial mentality. Conversely, the representation of heritage for tourism as conceptualised by leaders of the host society is selective and tends to show the post-colonial society as independent and as a coherent entity, comprising of
citizens loyal to the new nation state (Hill and Lian 1995). The particular images portrayed of a tourism destination country are useful for the post-colonial study of a newly independent society and its ambitions. A study of heritage tourism, for example the appraisal of particular traits of heritage and a possible preference over those of other cultural groups, usually provides insightful material for analysing post-colonial nation-building (Bunnell 1999).

As for how post-colonial discourse informs tourism studies, Ashcroft (1989) emphasises the process of identity renegotiation arising from nation-building. This is frequently discussed in post-colonial literature as part of the “special post-colonial crises of identity” (cited in Hall and Tucker 2004, p.12), arising out of the need to speedily create a national vision and shared identity when colonial subjects become citizens with independence from former colonies. The difficulty of that task is often aggravated by migration and the changing demographic composition during colonial times. The post-colonial focus on identity renegotiation in postcolonial studies and the understanding of the dynamic character of identity (Hall and du Gay 1996) is a valuable insight for tourism studies, which initially considered “local identities” as static and unchanging. Despite the rejection of such “timelessness” in anthropological texts on tourism (Nash 1989, 1996), local hosts were frequently depicted as victims of globalisation in tourism studies. Unable to adapt to changes brought on by external influences, host societies were regarded as passive recipients of global trends such that the tourism encounter was basically considered a diffusion of Western ideas worldwide.

Arguably, it was the post-colonial discourse that first touched on a dialectical relationship in cultural encounters (Ashcroft et al. 1989), giving rise to the global-local nexus in tourism analysis. Post-colonial insights about the dynamic character of local identity helped define the agency of the locals/residents in tourism studies, when scholars of the discipline were struggling with the evaluation of global-local power relationships in host-guest encounters. Giving the local
people in post-colonial societies a voice is hence a main ambition of post-colonial studies (Katz 2001). In the context of tourism, this statement means that the discipline aims to evaluate local reactions to tourism projects in detail, giving rise to a ‘Critical Turn’ in tourism studies (Bianchi 2009, p. 484). The emphasis on local reactions is tightly linked to the idea of the global-local nexus, since most tourism projects are either prompted by global forces, commodifying cultural assets for a global audience, or by national policies, initiating “politics of heritage” for the sake of nation building; hence in most cases determined by factors external to the local community (Joseph and Kavoori 2001).

Proponents of most post-colonial studies argue that an asymmetric power relationship between the local level and hegemonic global forces have to be taken into account when evaluating community reactions to development initiatives such as tourism projects (Bianchi 2009, Hampton 2005, Katz 2005). Mighty forces of capital or powerful state actors in the pursuit of tourism projects prompt local reactions, in many cases ‘resistance’ – which can be articulated in a multitude of ways. Resistance as one possible form of a local reaction to ‘global’ hegemony, however, begs to be defined. Political scientist James Scott (1990) argued that a comprehensive definition should account for the fact that ‘outright’ resistance is one of the least common reactions of local communities, and that many other less prominent nuances of resistance exist but had hitherto remained unconsidered.

Tackling the shortcoming, post-colonial theorist and feminist geographer Cindy Katz (2004) deconstructs the buzzword ‘local resistance’. She differentiates between actual ‘resistance’ that involves an “oppositional consciousness” and ultimately achieves an “emancipatory change” (cited in Sparke 2008, p. 424) and a less fundamental ‘reworking’ that somewhat alters the organization but not the basic polarization of the global-local power relations. As a third category, Katz (2004) introduces ‘resilience’, a reaction that enables local people to get by “without really changing the circumstances” that make their situation difficult in the first place (cited in Sparke
This terminology is useful because it provides a structure for the spectre of local reactions. For post-colonial tourism studies in particular, the terminology helps to focus on the nuances of the voices commenting and possibly contesting the changes in the representation of local heritage. In context, the post-colonial discourse and its elaboration on ‘local resistance’ thus serve to determine the exact reactions of the local community to tourism developments. Its proponents highlight continuously asymmetric power relations between the global and the local (Bianchi 2009), but without constructing a simplistic dichotomy; as the discourse seeks a detailed understanding of the realistic options available to local communities.

The post-colonial approach is also useful because it focuses on nation-building, which frequently involves reconciling various races within multi-ethnic newly independent states. The diverse ethnic heritage concentrated in the urban centres of “new” nation states serves as a key resource for tourism. In the global South, ethnic heritage is often the major tourist attraction of a destination country. Multi-ethnic former colonies may use social engineering to ensure that the different ethnicities conform to the agenda of nation-building and portray a coherent picture of the new national culture for tourists. Conrad William Watson (2000) argues that post-colonial countries such as Malaysia have capitalised on their multi-ethnic societies “well before a similar phenomenon became common in the North” (p.22), i.e. in North America and Europe. The post-colonial analysis of nation-building accounts for the cultural aspect of heritage representation. It can thus serve to theorise selective representations of ethno-cultural heritage for nation-building, for which tourism studies can provide empirical findings from various destinations.

---

19 Recently, major cities in Northern countries have also started to highlight ethnic heritage, capitalising on the multicultural influences of immigrant communities, but in those cases, ethnic heritage is complementary to a set of standard attractions (Rath 2007).
2.3.3 Kampong Glam and the Post-Colonial Discourse

Singapore’s Kampong Glam is a good example of the connections between post-colonial nation-building and tourism. The Malay and Muslim heritage district represents the mainstream culture in the wider regional context as Singapore is an enclave in the “Malay World” of Southeast Asia (Kahn 2006). The British-instigated massive immigration of Chinese labourers during the 19th century continued until independence and gradually lowered the demographic share of the native Malays, so that the Malays were finally a minority in independent Singapore when Malaysia and the city state went separate ways in 1965. Kampong Glam subsequently became a centre for the minority culture of Malays and other Muslims in an essentially Chinese city, i.e. a city-state in which three quarters of the population were Chinese. Colonial migration policies also led to a presence of Middle Eastern communities in Kampong Glam. The Arab community became a minority within the local Muslim minority after Singapore’s independence. Malay cultural heritage is thus highly complex because it is intertwined with the legacies of other Muslim migrant groups. This scenario also applies to Penang and Melaka in Malaysia.

The difficulties of defining “Malay heritage” in Singapore’s Kampong Glam are therefore understandable. However, it is wrong to say that the Malays can only be enterprising when paired with other Muslim migrant groups (Freitag 2002); the same applies to the assumption that the Malays would necessarily constitute the rural and locally-rooted element when interacting with other more mobile Muslim groups. Due to the complex interaction of Malays and Muslim migrants for centuries, it is impossible to assign rigid characteristics and racial labels to heritage districts such as Kampong Glam, even though the national initiative for heritage conservation

---

20 Stamford Raffles, the founder of colonial Singapore, had invited Arabs from other outposts of the British Empire to the city (see chapter 4 for a more detailed record of Muslim migration to Singapore). Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula shared similar, but by no means identical, customs and beliefs with the local Malays (Freitag 2002).
endeavoured to do so in the 1980s (Tay 1988). I argue that such nation-building initiatives are problematic approaches of social engineering (section 2.3.5).

Tourists today can witness the results of these colonial shifts in demographic composition and the coexistence of diverse cultures in Kampong Glam. The area’s combination of Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian/Malay heritage is fascinating albeit complex; this sort of complex heritage is at times problematic to display (Tuan 1976). The former Istana Kampong Glam\(^\text{21}\) has lost the “everyday connection” of Singapore’s Malay heritage with Malay culture in Malaysia when the descendants of the Johor Sultan were evicted from the compound in 1999 (Imran 2007). The Istana was subsequently transformed into a cultural centre for tourists and the local Malay minority\(^\text{22}\). Of two historic Madrasahs (Islamic religious schools) founded by Arab trading families, one was demolished as late as the 1990s. Excluded from the conservation district, it was torn down; the other remains untouched (Yeoh and Huang 1996).

Hence, the conservation of cultural assets in Kampong Glam is incoherent as the lived culture of remaining Malay residents in the Istana had to make way for the symbolic landscape of a museum and cultural centre. Similarly for the case of the two Madrasahs, it remains unclear why a historic building was preserved and not the other. But since the demolished Madrasah was rebuilt further away from the conservation zone, this gave rise to the suggestion that two religious schools were an undue concentration of Islamic educational institutions in one place (Hamzah 2002). The only landmark in Kampong Glam’s core conservation zone that remained unchanged in terms of usage is the Sultan Mosque. As other tangible components of Malay-Muslim culture (such as educational institutions, cultural venues or traditional handicraft outlets) were only preserved

---

\(^{21}\) The palace was the seat of the Malay royalty of Singapore and southern Johor in Malaysia.

\(^{22}\) The special status of Malays is acknowledged in the Singapore constitution, which states that “The Government shall exercise its functions in such manner as to recognize the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore” (Part XIII, section 152, 2).
partially or vanished completely, the Sultan Mosque evolved as a major landmark in Kampong Glam. This is in line with Singapore’s common representation of Malay heritage as otherworldly and spiritual (Rahim 1998). The diversity of Kampong Glam’s Malay and Muslim cultures and the selectiveness of their representation of heritage thus made it difficult to understand the district’s identity and character.

The post-colonial framework offers a variety of concepts to disentangle these complex and subsequent “politics of heritage” and the local reactions to them. For Kampong Glam, Cindy Katz’s (2004) concept of ‘resilience’ will be discussed as the predominant local reaction to external interventions in the heritage district (see Chapter 6). Resilience means that the local commercial and residential community tried to accommodate state intervention without actively resisting or attempting to rework underlying power relations. Even though there are different degrees of engagement with recent developments in the heritage landscape in Kampong Glam, the overall picture is that the local community reacts passively to externally pre-determined concepts of heritage tourism. The decisive role of government-related agents, i.e. of statutory boards such as the STB with its idea of Singapore as a `global tourism hub´ (STB 1996), overrode most local initiatives on heritage enhancement or, in most cases, prevented such initiatives from surfacing in the first place (see section 6.4.). Verbally expressed dissatisfaction on shortcoming of the designated heritage conservation approach did not translate into local initiatives for the change of development approaches in Kampong Glam. The post-colonial framework of the case study hence demonstrates the limits of local agency, empirically supported by means of detailed and ‘grounded’ observations in combinations with surveys and interviews in the heritage district.

Besides the nuanced understanding of local reactions in the post-colonial discourse, the post-colonial framework also provides the useful notions of “hybridity”, “multiracialism” and “cosmopolitanism”, which can serve to explain the complexities of cultures and the resulting
struggles in representations of heritage in Singapore’s Kampong Glam and in heritage districts in other post-colonial nation states.

2.3.4 “Hybridisation” and the Creation of New Place Identities

The post-colonial discourse on identity indicates that the interplay of global cultural processes and locally defined place identity often gives rise to identity formations. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) argues that these post-colonial identity formations are not necessarily a reflection of the dominance of the former coloniser’s culture. Instead, the “third space”, a new hybrid creation of place identity, is often a result of interactions and renegotiations of identity. The “third space” is a representation of culture “in-between” colonial cultural influence and the colonised’s local identity, an “in-between” space constantly in flux and meant to be a counternarrative to essentialisms (Bhabha 1994). Robert Young (1995) said that “hybridity” is difficult to define because of this highly changing character of hybrid space. Furthermore, he adds, the term is problematic because of its origins as a derogatory notion in social Darwinism subsequently.

Despite these shortcomings, hybridity is a useful term for the post-colonial perspective on nation-building and the representation of ethnic heritage (Sharp 2009). In post-colonialism, hybridity stresses the rootless and floating components of identity (AlSayyad 2001). The interaction between cultures is emphasised. Since the outcomes of cultural interaction are not predetermined by a hegemonic force, outcomes differ locally. Conceptually, theorists of hybridity reject the notion of globalisation as a homogenising force (Hollinshead 1998). Instead, they endorse the idea of a global-local nexus, highlighting possible reconciliation between global and local interests and hence the need to view globalisation contextually. A hybrid analysis of the post-colonial condition in the global South is thus a fresh perspective on locally specific realities of cultural interaction that helps to overcome rigid racial categorisations borrowed from the colonial
legacy (Pieterse 2003). Two qualifications apply to post-colonial analysis in this context. First, hybrid cultures existed before post-World War II decolonisation, as historian Anthony Reid (2004) shows in his essay on the British Straits Settlements in Southeast Asia. As such, hybridity is also a useful concept for historic studies on cultures of the colonial period (Zandi-Sayek 2001). Second, post-independence governments do not necessarily embrace hybridity as an opportunity to acknowledge cultural diversity after decolonisation. Often, post-colonial administrations continue to work with colonial categories and at times even reinforce such categories (Betts 1975). Even so, hybridity is a useful concept to understand the effects of cultural interaction as it occurs with or without official approval.

For this case study, hybridity aptly emphasises the multi-faceted cultural influences on the history of Kampong Glam. The influx of mainly Islamic, yet pluralistic, cultural influences to Kampong Glam during the colonial era are a cultural asset and an opportunity for the representation of a complex and diverse Muslim heritage. Hybridity in the context of Kampong Glam therefore refers mainly to a hybrid culture derived from indigenous Malay and migrant Muslim heritage. Yet, the district’s hybrid heritage defies easy categories and essentialist descriptions. Representing a complex and diverse Malay-Muslim heritage in Kampong Glam is a challenging task, but the result would be enlightening for many visitors because Islamic communities, whether past or present, tend to be seen as monolithic (AlSayyad 2001). I will question whether the Singapore government has taken on this task in collaboration with local stakeholders or whether a simplified version of representation of heritage was deemed more fruitful for the purpose of nation-building and tourism marketing.

2.3.5 Post-Colonial Nation-Building, Multiculturalism and Multiracialism

During the 1960s, multiculturalism as a concept evolved during decolonisation, when most former colonies became independent. The spatial origins of the concept are interesting with
regard to post-colonialism since it first evolved in “white settler societies”, that is, countries that were British colonies but became independent earlier than most territories in the global South. The settlers, mostly British, eventually became the majority of the population. They took over the majority of the land from the native inhabitants, pushing the natives to the geographical margins of these countries. Thus, the concept of multiculturalism is inevitably linked to demographic shifts of the colonial period. For instance, multiculturalism was officially recognised in Canada in 1971 as an act of reconciliation between the descendants of two separate “coloniser” cultures, namely those of the settlers from France and from Britain (Taylor 1992).

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor developed the concept drawing from earlier discussions on “plural societies”. As “plural” and “multi” suggest, multiculturalism acknowledges distinct cultures within a nation. The key point is that members of various cultures, also as citizens of the same nation, have different ideas about the “good life”. They subscribe to different sets of cultural meanings and structure their lives differently (Blum 1998). This conceptual difference to liberal universalism, which applies a shared set of values to all cultures, is important in the post-colonial context because liberalism has been accused of a Western bias (Parekh 2006). Occasionally, cultural theorists have tried to bridge the fundamental discrepancy between liberal universalism and particularistic multiculturalism (Kymlicka 2005), but few believe the two ideologies to be truly compatible (Gress 1998). Tim Bunnell (2008) evaluated attempts to bridge the discrepancies as unfruitful, especially for the global South where Western concepts of liberalism are not necessarily central to nation-building. The accepted version of multiculturalism is that within a country, there is a plurality of separate cultures whose distinct sets of values may not overlap (Parekh 2006).

23 Some researchers argue that we should include Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S. in post-colonial studies as their indigenous populations suffered from colonial displacement (Krishna 2009). However, the demographic compositions of these countries are profoundly different from former colonies in the global South.
In most of Asia’s multi-ethnic post-colonial states, the government assigns every citizen a racial category and cultural affiliation according to his or her ethnic origins (that is, instead of choosing a culture with which to identify oneself). This regional derivative of multiculturalism is termed “multiracialism”. In Singapore, ethnic identity is also strictly defined along the lines of the post-independence policy of “multiracialism”\(^24\). Racial tensions in the 1960s were the historical impetus for introducing “multiracialism” as an official ethnic policy. When the island declared its independence in 1965 against a background of racial unrest, the new state government considered “floating relations” between races, that is, the acknowledgement of hybrid identities, as a risky approach (Tae 1973).

The strategy to fight racial unrest was to keep Singapore’s ethnicities culturally and spatially apart even as the government preached loyalty to the nation, with the aim of “de-politicising” ethnicity. To implement multiracialism, the Singapore government introduced the rigid CMIO (Chinese–Malay–Indian–Others\(^25\)) scheme as a tool. The scheme constitutes a clear differentiation of the “four races”, acknowledging their equal status, but simultaneously putting up obstacles for ethnic or cultural mixing, as every citizen inherits a racial “label” from his or her parents, which assigns him or her to a particular ethnic group (Chua 1995, Chua and Kuo 1991, Lai 2004). This process is crucial for understanding Singapore’s re-engineering of historic neighbourhoods through “politics of heritage”, because the CMIO scheme was applied to virtually all aspects of social and cultural life. This scheme also affected the tourism industry because representations of heritage had to adhere to the multiracial ideology of the “four races”.

\(^{24}\) In the Singapore government’s ethnic policy discourse, the terms “multiracialism” and “multiculturalism” are used synonymously. I follow this practice in this proposal.

\(^{25}\) The “Others” of the CMIO scheme are people who do not “fit” into the three main categories, i.e. the Chinese, Malay and Indian categories of the scheme. They are thus Singapore citizens for whom the government constructed an additional category. The Singapore administrative policy of having parts of the population labelled as the “Other”, in CMIO context, is of course completely separate from tourism discourse, where the “exotic Other” refers to the local population in a destination country from a tourist perspective, as differentiated from fellow tourists (MacCannell 1976).
On the other hand, the legacy of hybrid identities is played down in official representations. Applied to Singapore, hybrid space can be understood as antagonistic to the official representations of ethnic heritage. Conceptually, the Singapore government emphasised the distinctiveness of “four races” and allocated historical districts, museums and heritage centres in accordance with the CMIO categories. Laurence Leong (1997) said that the diversity and complexity within the ethnic categories have been simplified to allow for a commodification of heritage for leisure consumption. The emphasis of Singapore’s multiracialism, he argues, is on the categorisation of separate “races” with distinct characteristics and their peaceful coexistence, not on bridging the cultural gaps. Nevertheless, homogenising tendencies within each recognised cultural group of a multicultural society are a universal trait of multiculturalism, not a Singaporean particularity (Kymlicka 2005).

But Singapore is no different when it comes to the tendencies of multiculturalism and multiracialism to present simplified versions of cultures. Essentialist representations of heritage are paramount in the city-state, but most obvious in the clearly demarcated “ethnic” districts. Initial attempts conceptualised Kampong Glam as exclusively representing Malay heritage for tourists and local visitors26 as it was believed that Chinese and Indian heritage were sufficiently “covered” by displays in Chinatown and Little India. We have discussed how alternative historical interpretations suggest a more multi-faceted legacy of “hybrid” heritage in the area (section 1.3). On a conceptual level, the government has two conflicting policy options for re- shaping heritage landscapes. Either the government would have to modulate representations of heritage according to specifications of the multiracial CMIO scheme, ensuring a simple way to align cultural policies with nation-building. Alternatively, hybrid identities would have to be

26 This draft on a Malay focus in representation was not implemented when conservation projects started in Kampong Glam. The adjustment process to another concept is discussed in the next section.
acknowledged as integrated parts of Kampong Glam’s heritage. This approach would avoid distortions in representations of heritage, but at the cost of dealing with complexities of hybrid identities. Arguably, the Singapore government sought a way out of this dilemma with a third option, with which a gradual acknowledgement of hybridity could be combined with a general multiracial scheme for representations of heritage. The recent focus of government announcements and media reports on global connections highlights “cosmopolitan” and hybrid elements extending beyond local and regional Malay heritage (Yeoh 2004). The concept of cosmopolitanism now appears to be a last resort to ease the tensions between hybrid and multiracial representations.

2.3.6 From Post-Colonial Multiracialism to Cosmopolitanism

The term “cosmopolitan” is a compound word of Greek origin, meaning “citizen of the world”. Cosmopolitans do not identify themselves with any nation and see themselves as human beings whose cultural sense of attachment goes beyond the framework of nation states. In Western philosophy, the concept has also developed a strong moral dimension, as “the one thought that cosmopolitans share is that no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other” (Appiah 2006, p. XVI). The foundation of cosmopolitanism on such moral grounds has made the concept vulnerable to criticism, questioning its global relevance and legitimacy (Pieterse 2006). Critics argue that cosmopolitanism, such as liberalism, is another “thinly disguised” Western-centric conceptualisation. The “universal” values proclaimed to be essential for all human beings are in fact derived from a particular philosophical tradition, the history of Western thought beginning with the Greek philosophers before Christ and stretching to the Enlightenment and present-day Western-centricity in political and academic discourse (Pieterse 2003). The title of David Gress’s work on Western universalism, “From PLATO to NATO”, epitomises the irrelevance of the cosmopolitan discourse for the global South. Gress
(1998) introduces two alternatives to Western “cosmopolitan” universalism, which are of interest for the Southeast Asian post-colonial context. First, he discusses the Singapore school of thought that attempts to conceptually reconcile the economic liberalism of the East-Asian “tiger states” with political authoritarianism. Second, he discusses the Islamic umma, a cultural universalism that claims global applicability for Islamic values.

Despite intense academic criticism of the Western bias of conventional cosmopolitanism and the existence of numerous alternatives, a Western-centric version of cosmopolitanism has evolved into a key theme of place marketing and consumer culture across the world. Especially in urban contexts, cosmopolitanism does not stop at influencing the cultural economies of post-colonial societies. Developing post-colonial nation-states are proud to position their capitals or major economic centres as cosmopolitan “global” cities, for example as “hubs” for arts and culture (Ooi 2001) and attractive centres for transnational migration (Yeoh and Chang 2001). This cosmopolitan character of post-colonial agglomerations often subscribe to Western ideas of vibrant urban centres replete with “talent”, a “creative class” and a “cosmopolitan” population of diverse origins (Yeoh 2004). This engagement with Western-inspired cosmopolitan ideas for global city formation has occasionally led to conflicts with particularistic approaches to nation-building, such as the struggle over the Singapore river zone, to be represented either as an upmarket nightlife venue for cosmopolitan elites or as an extension of Chinatown, being a homestead for local Chinese (Chang and Huang 2005b). Hence, post-colonial nations have started to develop strategies to reconcile cosmopolitan influences with other ideologies of nation-building.

Singapore is an excellent case study because it embodies the cosmopolitan aspirations as well as the nation-building efforts of a post-colonial state, concentrated in limited space. Hybridisation, or organic cultural interaction, and state-engineered multiracialism contrast each other sharply.
For the Singapore government’s “insistence on ‘cosmopolising’ Singapore” (Yeoh 2004, p. 2435), i.e. the call for an influx of “transnational people” to make the country “cosmopolitan”, it sought to do so without undermining multiracialism as the cultural framework of nation-building (Yeoh and Chang 2001, p. 1031). Subtle shifts in policy are required to balance both tendencies. In the course of the balancing efforts, the Singapore government has taken advantage of the elitist tendencies of cosmopolitanism (Pieterse 2003). These elitist and exclusionary tendencies, the selective application of the framework to well-educated, wealthy and globally mobile elites are seen worldwide, and cultural researchers have labelled such tendencies “McCosmopolitanism” (Pieterse 2006) or “selective cosmopolitanism” (Yeoh and Huang 2004). The global presence of exclusionary tendencies has made it easy for the Singapore government to institute its own tailor-made version of selective cosmopolitanism, picking foreign talents with university degrees as the only group of migrants allowed to “put down roots in Singapore” (Yeoh 2004, p.2438).

The Singapore government hopes that the integration of select highly skilled immigrants into Singapore society will not challenge the multiracial CMIO-scheme because they are relatively limited in numbers (Yeoh and Chang 2001), yet they are expected to contribute decisively to “cosmopolising”. This way, nation-building and cultural policy may proceed with minor adjustments, precluding a more prominent resistance to government interventions in heritage landscapes by means of emphasizing the indisputability of the basic policies (Bianchi 2009). The government’s attempt to hold on to multiracialism in nation-building while experimenting with selective integration of foreign talent to Singapore, has raised many concerns about this social experiment (Yeoh and Huang 2004). Yeoh and Chang (2001) said, “It is… unclear how notions of the ‘global citizen’ and ‘cosmopolitan living’ will dovetail with the ongoing project of nation-building based on the racial arithmetic of the four foundation ‘races’ as closed categories, a formula with little room for foreign others” (p.1040-1041).
The key relevance to tourism and representation of heritage in Kampong Glam is the re-adjustment of ethnic policy to include select “transnational people”. In line with welcoming high-skilled migrants, the government has also promoted arts and culture to attract “sophisticated tourists” (Yeoh and Chang 2001, p.1036). Thus, in branding itself as cosmopolitan, Singapore portrays itself as a global city to a carefully selected audience of highly skilled migrants and sophisticated tourists, experienced travellers who are ideally well-educated high spenders (Yeoh 2004). For example, the government envisions Singapore as a “tourism capital”. As part of the enhancement process, the STB identified eleven “experiential themes”, one of which is “Ethnic Singapore” (STB 1996, p.30-31). “Ethnic Singapore” emphasises the importance of cultural interaction and the diversity and complexity of ethnic heritage, which are at odds with the multiracial ideology of nation-building. In the case of Kampong Glam, Muslim cultures beyond those originating from Singapore are represented as heritage. Cosmopolitanism influences heritage, allowing for deviations from the multiracial CMIO scheme. But the strict ethnic categories continue to be a central aspect of cultural policy and nation-building. The cosmopolitan deviations and subsequent tensions concerning Malay-Muslim heritage will be discussed in this research.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing literature on heritage tourism and cultural globalisation, and contextualised the analysis within the post-colonial discourse in the global South. Concerning the homogenising tendencies of global tourism, the literature review elaborates on how critical voices caution against the “destruction” of locally unique cultures by cultural globalisation and increased tourism flows. On the other hand, proponents of the global-local nexus look at place-specific outcomes of the tourism encounter, but they continue to consider the local population in the destination country as reacting to global trends. Hence, they portray tourism destination sites as
lacking initiative in representing heritage to a global audience. For the purpose of nation-building in newly independent multi-ethnic states, Southeast Asian governments have used heritage as a resource to display a coherent and prosperous picture of nationhood before Western countries developed a comparable utilisation of heritage (Watson 2000).

The agency of post-colonial governments in advancing particular representations of heritage has often been misinterpreted as a reaction to global tourism trends. In fact, the “politics of heritage” of those governments can be initiated independently of global tourism developments. Yet, these “politic of heritage” also constitute an external pressure for a particular representation of local heritage. With its emphasis on giving local people a voice, many previously discussed critical post-colonial studies uncover cases of critical reactions (‘resistance’, ‘reworking’ or ’resilience’) to such government policies, i.e. the studies detect local alienation with official representations of heritage (Bunnell 2002, Cheung 1999). Grasping the nuances in local reaction to the agendas of a central governments and “mainstream” representations of heritage is crucial for an understanding of the global-local relations in heritage tourism. This is a point that has been stressed throughout the literature review and that provides the link to my research conceptualisation, which emphasises the in-depth evaluation of local reactions to changes in heritage landscapes.

Providing a second key applicability of the theoretical framework of this thesis, post-colonialism engages in depth with the task of constructing a nation with a coherent record of history and heritage out of a diversity of cultures. With the post-colonial discourse on hybridity, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism the ethnic composition of formerly colonised societies can be strongly linked to representation of heritage for local sightseers and tourists. The ethnic policy for nation-building will often be reflected in the representation of heritage as a part of cultural policy. For the purposes of tourism and place-marketing, some post-colonial governments have
been tempted to portray a different image of the nation to a global audience compared to what they have portrayed to locals. Subsequent tensions are reflected in and affect the policies and decisions about representations of heritage; since tangible heritage (or its absence) functions as a spatial record of national cultural developments, and therefore captures the discrepancies of cultural policies.
Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Introduction
Based on the case study of Singapore’s Kampong Glam, this project aims to understand post-colonial identity negotiation in an ethnic heritage district. I conceptualized my methodological framework according to this post-colonial “crises of identity” (Hall and Tucker 2004, p. 12) and its emphasis on representation. Representations of heritage materialise in public space and local visitors or tourists interpret them variably upon contact. But local stakeholders, residents and commercial operators also shape these representations through their daily activities in the heritage district. A comprehensive inquiry must thus include all these actors to uncover the various perspectives on ethnic representation of heritage in the multi-ethnic societies of former colonies. This chapter links post-colonial theory to my methodological approach (section 3.2), explains the process of data collection from the perspective of various stakeholders (section 3.3) and how the collected data was analysed (section 3.4). Finally, I reflect on issues of positionality and research ethics in section 3.5.

3.2 Methodological Commitment and Conceptual Framework
Contemporary post-colonial studies do not subscribe to any particular method of inquiry for academic analysis. As the field is interdisciplinary and eclectic, the methodologies applied depend on the specific nature of the research problem. Many post-colonial researchers, however, identify with the “cultural turn” in Geography, i.e. they considered the human environment as a socially constructed reality and emphasised qualitative research methods and extensive fieldwork to uncover the place-specific constructs of “reality”. Post-colonial studies thus began to engage more rigorously in fieldwork, focusing on collecting and analysing primary data usually from in-
depth interviews with various stakeholders and from participant observation on site. Since I locate my research work on heritage in the tradition of the cultural turn within Geography, my methodology incorporated qualitative methods from recent post-colonial traditions besides my surveys of shopowners, tourists and local visitors. First, I gained a basic understanding of processes at the field site from an analysis of secondary data. Having learned these basic facts about the history of local ethnic representation, I then focused on collecting primary data in Kampong Glam.

Having established this general strategy, I had to account for place-specific limitations that surfaced during the course of research, which meant I had to fine-tune my initial methodology. Adjustments to local particularities are permitted and common in social science research, but the applied methods should be consistent with the specific theme and not predetermined by general research traditions (Cloke et al. 2004). I re-adjusted the qualitative focus and ultimately decided to use a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to gain as much information as possible from the encounters with various stakeholders during my fieldwork. This adjustment was triggered by observations during pre-tests, when I realised that a few potential informants were unwilling to provide substantial information during in-depth interviews. In contrast, all informants said they were willing to share their insights about Kampong Glam’s heritage in a detailed survey. So, I designed an additional survey to accommodate the preferences of informant stakeholders (section 3.3).

Thus, there has been a gradual shift from qualitative to quantitative data collection techniques due to a higher degree of responsiveness for the latter. However, the surveys as quantitative elements were carefully designed to include room for qualitative comments. In addition to the survey, I also conducted in-depth interviews with informants. I applied two approaches of reaching out to local stakeholders, through surveys and interviews. Such a combination of several research
methods in the study of the same research problem is useful to cross-examine the accuracy of data. To analyse post-colonial representations of ethnic heritage, I thus used a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches of primary data collection, including research notes from participant observation during field work. Conceptually, this combination of data from different sources enables the cross-examination of results and therefore ensures a strong basis for data analysis (Table 3.1). During the analysis stage, I cross-examined the data and compared the results from surveys, interviews and participant observation and found them to be similar.

Table 3.1: Research Strategies – Data required and Methods used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Information Requirement</th>
<th>Methods to be Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To examine how Kampong Glam has been represented and marketed as a heritage district | • Knowledge of the history of tourism in the district  
• Familiarity with relevant literature | • Detailed interviews with representatives of relevant agencies such as the URA and the STB  
• Analysis of official plans, literature and newspaper reports  
• Textual analysis of publications over an extended time period |
| To analyse how marketing representations have materialised in the physical landscape of Kampong Glam | • Knowledge of recent global trends in tourism  
• Understanding of long-term, Singapore-specific tourism issues | • Participant observation  
• Landuse mapping  
• Archival research to determine change over time |
| To evaluate how different people consume and interpret representations of Kampong Glam | Knowledge of local cultural developments in order to comment on two issues:  
• Are the representations in various publications about the district apt or oversimplified?  
• Does the built environment represent heritage accurately or does it exclude certain groups of people? | • Surveys of tourists and locals  
• Interviews with shopowners and tourism brokers |
3.3 Data Collection

In the early works of post-colonial studies, issues of representation and heritage were usually researched through the textual analysis of promotional campaigns and written explanatory material (Robinson 2003). Feminist researchers such as Cindy Katz (1994) identified the shortcomings of this perspective, particularly a backlash to mere “armchair research” of interpreting secondary data with a lack of onsite observations. This call of feminist researchers for more extensive fieldwork was subsequently incorporated into post-colonial and cultural studies. South African feminist geographer Jenny Robinson (2003) argues for the application of the new perspective in cultural geography, saying that it is crucial to understand what people make out of heritage spaces and how they ascribe meaning to the heritage attractions by planners and cultural brokers. She adds that such information can only be gathered through methods beyond textual analysis as its collection requires direct outreach to stakeholders on site.

For this thesis on the representations of heritage, it was important to study the spatial practices through which people, local visitors and tourists involve themselves in heritage tourism. The preferred method of observation is through fieldwork. I carried out in-depth interviews, surveys and participant observation to learn more about the meaning of Kampong Glam’s heritage for various stakeholders.

The interviews were held from January 2008 to March 2009 to reach out to previously identified informants. The three surveys were carried out continuously – each taking about two months. The first, completed in March 2008, surveyed local business owners. The second surveyed tourists and was done in April and May 2008. The third, an additional survey of local visitors, was postponed for several months to capture the atmosphere of the Islamic festive season around Hari Raya Puasa (end of the fasting month), and was therefore done in September and October 2008. Participant observation in the district started in December 2007 and continued until mid-2009.
3.3.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews about the post-colonial representation of heritage with stakeholders ranging from planning experts to local residents played a key role in the collection of primary data. Interviewees were chosen through “purposive sampling” (Cloke et al. 2004), based on their potential contribution to the research. I identified official representatives of relevant organisations through Internet research or recommendations by colleagues from NUS who had worked on similar topics. Other individuals were identified as potential informants at the field site and asked to participate in the research process due to their unofficial roles as community leaders of the residents of Kampong Glam\textsuperscript{27}.

Interviewees were directly at the field site, or by telephone or Email to seek permission for the interview. I arranged the time and venue of the interviews according to interviewees’ convenience. All informants were briefed about the interview topic and asked to spare around 30 minutes so that I might gain valuable insights from the session. Table 3.2 gives an overview of the background of interviewees and the aspects of information they provided.

\textsuperscript{27} The population of Kampong Glam decreased after its rezoning for commercial land use in 1989 (Imran 2007), the effects on the district are discussed in chapter 5.
Table 3.2: Interview Participants and Thematic Focus of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background/Affiliation</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Travel Agent</td>
<td>Changing tourism market, the “packaging” of Kampong Glam for tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Official (at the STB)</td>
<td>Strategies to represent Kampong Glam’s heritage for tourists, guidelines for conserving the heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Singaporean Visitors</td>
<td>Attachment to the district, responses to changes in Kampong Glam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Tourists</td>
<td>Impressions of Kampong Glam -- which aspects of ethnic heritage do tourists think were represented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Shopkeepers</td>
<td>Kampong Glam as a business location, changes of the commercial environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of a Business Association</td>
<td>Image of Kampong Glam as a heritage district and business location, place-marketing targeted at locals and tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of Civic societies (Heritage Society)</td>
<td>Kampong Glam in context with other ethnic heritage districts, initiatives to preserve ethnic particularities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planner at the URA</td>
<td>Balancing and accurate display of tourism development and conservation; attempts to inform about the district’s heritage and initiatives to display its complexity accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of Malay/Muslim Associations</td>
<td>The culturally adequate representation of Malay/Muslim heritage for tourism, identification of Malays and Muslims with the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents of the District</td>
<td>The changing landscapes of Kampong Glam, reactions to the re-zoning of the heritage district as commercial land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)</td>
<td>Malay/Muslim heritage and its representation for tourism inside and outside of the heritage centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most interviews were tape-recorded, as per a prior agreement with interviewees. The interviews typically lasted around 30 minutes. Government officials and chief executives of organisations were sent prospective questions via Email. This smoothened the course of the interviews and in some instances, interviewees requested to be informed about interview details beforehand, beyond the standard introduction to the research theme. Most interviews were done in English with the occasional usage of Malay phrases. A few interviews with tourists were done in French and German. For the interviewees who did not agree to the tape-recording, I noted down the key words they used and took extensive notes after the interview. I offered all respondents interviewed, except for the tourists, the chance to check the transcripts of their interview to ensure them that their answers were accurately transcribed.
3.3.2 Questionnaire Surveys

All surveys took place in Kampong Glam. The first survey was the business survey and covered all businesses within the Kampong Glam conservation district as designated in 1989. The overall response rate was 64%; however, it ranged from high in the core conservation zone to low to the east of the MHC. The results from informants at a peripheral street, Aliwal Street, were subsequently discarded, because a low response rate along this street did not allow for cross-examination of the ethnicity of owners, branches of shops and other relevant criteria with those of other streets. Akbar Kader, vice president of the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce, estimates that there are 200 shops and restaurant owners at Kampong Glam (25 February 2008), of which I surveyed 128. I approached the employees of all the shops or restaurants with the questionnaire and asked to speak to the shopowner or the general manager of the outlet. If the contact partner was available and could spare 10 minutes, I asked to go through the questionnaire directly. Upon agreement, I would read the question and fill in the answers for the convenience of the person surveyed. If the contact partner was busy, I briefly explained the background of the research in addition to the resume provided in the questionnaire and asked the contact partner to answer the questionnaire within one day so that I could collect the next morning. Most people appreciated this suggestion and I had no problems collecting the completed questionnaires, save for a few respondents who had to be reminded to complete the survey form.

I identified the late morning and early afternoon hours as ideal to get in touch with shop and restaurant owners or managers. It was certainly helpful that Kampong Glam is a fairly quiet district, except for a short busy period at lunchtime and a second peak period from 5 p.m. to around 8 p.m. The light patronage of shops and restaurant apart from the short peak periods allowed for conversations with contact partners. It was most important for the future course of research for me to become acquainted with those commercial operators as contact partners. Since
Kampong Glam has been re-zoned as a commercial area in 1989, commercial operators, compared with other actors, spend the most time in the heritage district and constitute a major part of Kampong Glam’s “local community”\textsuperscript{28}. The following chapters pay the most attention to the voices of commercial operators and their take on representations of Malay and Muslim heritage. Since the contact with commercial operators had been established at the beginning of fieldwork, the subsequent familiarity with many operators helped to gain access to local viewpoints on conservation and tourism policies that went beyond a business perspective.

The second survey was the tourism survey conducted between April and May 2008. The survey was carried out at Bussorah Mall, the main tourism strip of Kampong Glam, and at the northern end of the two neighbouring streets, Kandahar Street and Arab Street. All respondents were approached near Sultan Mosque, one of the main landmarks of the area. For the tourism survey, helpers were recruited among my circle of friends and among undergraduate geography students of the NUS. The tourism survey questionnaire was translated into Mandarin, Japanese and Malay to ensure an optimal outreach to Asian tourists. Regarding Western tourists, the questionnaire was not translated into other European languages, since North Americans, Australians and to a lesser degree Europeans were expected to have a sufficient command of English. I was able to help German, Austrian, Swiss and French tourists with translations on site. Hence, the sample of European tourists was not limited to travellers from Great Britain and Ireland, which has frequently been the case in previous tourism studies on Singapore.

\textsuperscript{28} Sociologist K.C. Ho (2006) says that “community” presupposes a feeling of togetherness within a particular group of people as well as the maintenance of a boundary to non-community groups. I speak of “the Kampong Glam community” in this thesis mindful of these criteria. Whenever I address a sub-group of its community, I specify, for instance “Kampong Glam’s Malay community”. Furthermore, I discuss contested issues within the “Kampong Glam community” in detail in section 5.7.
The tourism survey was based on an availability sample, hence all tourists at the centre of Kampong Glam were asked for their participation and all responses were included in the analysis. The exceptions to that rule were the days when no Japanese- or Chinese-speaking helpers were present, non-English questionnaires were not given out and East-Asian tourists were consequently not approached on those days. Despite the decision for an availability sample, I double-checked the representativeness of responses as compared to the anticipated totality of tourists at Kampong Glam during the course of the survey. I did not take the overall profile of travellers to Singapore (73% Asian, 27% Western\textsuperscript{29}, according to STB 2007) as a reference since the city’s heritage districts in general and Kampong Glam in particular is disproportionately popular with Western tourists compared with Asian visitors (STB 2007). Instead, I referred to the data derived from the business survey.

I took estimations of commercial operators about the share of their tourist customers as requested in the business survey as a suitable point of reference (51% Western tourists, 49% Asian tourists). The share of the 170 respondents surveyed is similar -- 53% are Western tourists, 47% Asian visitors. Female respondents accounted for 60% of the sample while male respondents accounted for 40%. The age of respondents was categorised in 10-year intervals (e.g. 31-40, 41-50), except for young adults who were termed as “below 21 years of age” and seniors as “61 and above”. There were at least 10 respondents for every age group to ensure comparability. Regarding the origin of the tourists surveyed, the aforementioned reference to the share of tourist customers as estimated by commercial operators helped make the survey an adequate sample of the tourism crowd in the research area. Gender and age were also fairly evenly distributed so that the

\textsuperscript{29} Western tourists are defined by the STB as visitors from Europe (including Russia), Australia and the Americas. The sum of Western and Asian tourists constitutes a 100% of total tourists because the share of African visitors is below 1% for Singapore in total (STB 2007) as well as for the tourist sample of my survey.
availability sample provides valuable insights into the tourist’s perception of Malay-Muslim heritage in Kampong Glam.

The third survey was the survey of local visitors conducted between September and October 2008. Initially, I planned to approach selected local sightseers on site and request for interviews about their impressions of Kampong Glam. But many visitors initially declined to be interviewed but said they preferred to answer standardised survey about their impressions of Kampong Glam. Therefore, I designed a survey of local visitors to accommodate their preference. The survey was similar to the tourism survey to allow a comparative perspective on the representations of heritage. The survey was identical with the tourism survey regarding scope (170 respondents) and its content in the main section. But the survey of local visitors featured additional questions in the introductory and the final sections. For the introduction, locals were asked whether their patronage of Kampong Glam was motivated by a daily or weekly routine or whether it constituted leisure-oriented sightseeing or a cultural experience. For the concluding bio-data section, respondents were asked about their ethnic origin.

Similar to my cross-reference with the tourism survey, I compared the ethnic origin of local respondents with the estimation of commercial operators about the ethnic ratios of their local customers. Since the survey was again based on an availability sample, there is a discrepancy between the ratio of Malay respondents surveyed (56%) and the estimated ratio of Malay customers (41%). Two facts can explain that discrepancy: first, the non-Malays, among potential respondents, more frequently declined to be surveyed because they said they were unfamiliar with Kampong Glam. Second, many Malays surveyed did not list “shopping” as a leisure activity at Kampong Glam as many frequented the mosque and to a lesser degree the MHC or to simply socialise in public space. Hence, their presence would not be reflected in the estimated customer share of commercial operators. I believe the ratio of 56% of Singaporean-Malay respondents
compared with 44% non-Malays adequately represents the ethnic composition of the crowd in Kampong Glam. In Chapters 5-7, I present separate categories for ethnicities when the responses are vitally different depending on the ethnic origins of the locals surveyed.

The survey was held just before, during and right after the Islamic festive season of Ramadan to capture an impression of Kampong Glam’s traditional Malay and Muslim character. This character has been described as largely limited to festive occasions as Kampong Glam would constitute a “seasonal space” for the bulk of Singapore’s Malays and Muslims. The district would be most appreciated around Hari Raya Puasa, the Malay celebration for the completion of Ramadan (Rahil 2006). But previous studies did not support underlying observations about a strengthening of the Malay and Muslim character of Kampong Glam during the Islamic festive seasons with empirical evidence. For this research project, however, I scheduled the survey around this holiday period to collect empirical evidence about the alleged seasonality.

Nevertheless, I note that mere observations about seasonality can be deceptive. It is plausible that the festive lighting during Ramadan and the Malay-food street stalls, like all mobile hawkers outlawed for the rest of the year, evokes a special feeling of belonging to Kampong Glam among Malay and Muslim visitors. However, the lively atmosphere not only draws Malays and Muslims to the heritage district, it is likely to entice all Singaporeans to visit the district. Rather than say that Kampong Glam is “more” Malay-Muslim in character around Hari Raya Puasa, it would be more apt to say the Muslim character of Singapore as a whole is strengthened during the time of the festivities. This note on the limited validity of casual observations demonstrates the importance of a multi-faceted methodological approach. Empirical evidence from surveys can validate the “impressions” gained from participant observation. On the other hand, statistical data gained from the visitor survey about representation of heritage and tourism trends in Kampong
Glam can be complemented by qualitative insights derived from participant observation in the area.

3.3.3 Participant Observation

From May 2007 until October 2008, I frequented Kampong Glam on various weekdays and weekends. For my daily excursions, I was careful to stay at the field site at different times of the day to get a feel for the rhythm of life at Kampong Glam. I regularly spent several hours in the field observing the tourists’ and locals’ activities. In addition, my frequent presence in the district helped me identify additional contacts, mostly residents who agreed to share insights about life in the heritage district through interviews. Spending time as a participant observer at the field site is a vital component of gaining an insider point of view. But how can a researcher reach a stage of familiarisation or “empathetic insideness” (Relph 1976) within the researched community?

Familiarisation does not come as a result of geographic proximity to the field site from home or working place (Katz 1994) nor is it guaranteed when the researcher shares a common ethnic origin with the researched (Tembo 2003). Hence, Relph’s (1976) “empathetic insideness” has been criticised as an over-optimistic take on the results of the familiarisation process with the field site in general and with participant observation. Feminist geographer Kim England (1994), for instance, said that the participant observer remains an observer rather than becoming a participant in local activities. Regarding this dilemma, participant observation has been subdivided into four categories, ranging from “complete participant” and “participant as observer” to “observer as participant” and “complete observer” (Gold 1969). This fine-tuning of names helps map the degree of the researcher’s community involvement, but it does not tackle the underlying problem, namely that much of the participant observation process would fall into the “observing” half of this scale (Su 2007).
Initially, my own experience was little different from this critical perspective as real participation in local activities was hard to initiate. The routine procedure at the field site involved walking through all the streets and taking pictures of local and tourist activities as well as of the material landscape. All photographs illustrating this thesis, unless otherwise stated, have been taken by me or a helper during the fieldwork period. Since Kampong Glam is a relatively quiet yet established heritage tourism attraction, local residents and commercial operators are generally not wary of having pictures taken of their shophouse units and goods on display. Some even volunteered to pose for pictures. The pictures helped me identify distinct sub-zones of Kampong Glam. I identified sub-zones heavily frequented by tourists; others were dominated by Singaporean visitors, some specifically by Singaporean-Malays. I frequently took a shot of the street sign first and then strolled down along the street taking more pictures of what I deemed to be of interest. Although I took little research notes at the field site, I wrote down extensive notes upon my return home after I uploaded the pictures taken to my hard disk. The notes and pictures helped me to better understand the function of Kampong Glam as a heritage district. It gave me a sense of which representations of heritage were preferred by tourists and which features of the district were appreciated by locals or by tourists and locals alike.

Perhaps ironic in terms of positionality and “going native”, I started the non-observing element of participant observation in May 2008 as a “tourist” participant of a guided walking tour through Kampong Glam. After the tour, I identified myself as a researcher for the fellow participants and inquired about their views on Kampong Glam and the presentation of its attractions. I repeated this procedure several times with various guided walking tours, also with a special Ramadan information tour, which included a visit to Sultan Mosque and was offered free of charge by the STB for interested tourists during the Muslim festivity. Apart from my participation in tourist activities, I became more intimately involved in the local community towards the end of my field
work period. As some stakeholders had became aware of my research on Kampong Glam’s Malay and Muslim heritage and community life, I was invited to join a focus group to redesign the MHC. A team of professional exhibition designers, local community leaders and Malay artists had been brought together for the planning of the revamp. Subsequently, I regularly participated in brainstorming sessions to come up with innovative ways of representing Malay and Muslim heritage in Kampong Glam. The participation also gave me the opportunity to identify additional informants for my research.

3.3.4 Secondary Data

In addition to the primary data, I evaluated secondary data to gain insight into officially endorsed representations of heritage and tourism policy guidelines in Singapore. Statistical data from the STB’s tourism reports served as basic information to understand tourism trends in Singapore. Although Kampong Glam was not discussed in detail, the district was included in the ranking of Singapore’s “unpaid tourism attractions” (STB 2006b, p.33). Kampong Glam ranked 12th (or second-last) in the tourism report of the year 2005, but it fared better subsequently and was ranked 6th in 2006. I had to consult other sources for possible explanations for these statistical trends.

Based on a productive body of relevant literature, many academics have analysed ethnic heritage in multicultural Southeast Asia and how this heritage has been represented for tourism during the past decades and today. Their texts helped me to understand the development of heritage tourism in Southeast Asia and the problems with cultural representations of ethnic minorities. Compared with the abundance of literature on general socio-cultural issues of the Malay minority in Singapore, however, there is little research work on the representation of Malay and Muslim heritage, such as in Kampong Glam. Hence, I had to source for material other than academic resources from the university library to learn more about the cultural heritage of Singapore’s Malay community (see Table 3). I checked Singapore’s National Archives and the URA archives.
At the National Archives, I focused the search on pictures of Kampong Glam as well as speeches and reports about the district. To put the study of Kampong Glam in context with other historical Malay and Muslim strongholds, I also looked at reports and photographic resources on Geylang and Singapore’s south-western coastal strip (Pasir Panjang area). The URA archives provided detailed visuals of Kampong Glam’s heritage landscape before, during and after urban renewal.

Apart from an evaluation of academic literature and archival material, I did a textual analysis of brochures and internet presentations of Kampong Glam. The post-colonial perspective of my research calls for a detailed analysis of textual representations of culture and heritage. To learn more about the representation of Kampong Glam in guidebooks, I counted the ethnicity or cultural affiliation to which the heritage district was linked in the guides’ explanatory texts. I compiled a list of the most mentioned cultural attributes and deduced that Kampong Glam is introduced very differently in various guidebooks and that ‘Malay’ culture is often not highlighted as the district’s main attribute (see Table 4.5). Other researchers have also used textual data such as those found in destination brochures and official Internet portals. It is common practice to differentiate between the self-representation of post-colonial nations and the perspective of external observers on the cultural qualities of these nations. The views of external observers can be accessed in the “Sightseeing” sections of international travel guides on Southeast Asia or via the Internet, in online reviews published by foreign visitors. Even though marketing materials published by tourism boards of the destination countries in the global South and travel literature by Western publishers portray a generally positive image of the destination, their take on the representation of ethnic heritage as tourism attractions is often somewhat different from the official representations. Therefore, I considered a variety of promotional material from Singaporean and international sources (Table 3.3). The findings from textual analysis constituted the basis of my findings about the representation of heritage in Singapore’s Kampong Glam (Chapter 4).
### Table 3.3: Overview of Secondary Data Sources and Research Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>Various newspapers, derived from the database Factiva</td>
<td>The images of Kampong Glam portrayed in the domestic and international press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports and Photographs</td>
<td>National Archives, URA Archives</td>
<td>The changing landscape of Kampong Glam, community life from the 1960s to 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government’s Tourism Statistics</td>
<td>STB</td>
<td>Explore tourist attraction development and the changing tourism market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Reports</td>
<td>URA</td>
<td>The role of ethnic heritage conservation in urban development, Kampong Glam’s role as Muslim quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Research Publications</td>
<td>NUS Library</td>
<td>Representation of heritage in Southeast Asia and Singapore, nation-building and ethnic heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures, Internet Portals, Travel Guides</td>
<td>STB, NUS Library, Bookshops</td>
<td>Information of ethnic heritage for tourists, interpretations of culture or a global audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Different kinds of data analyses were used due to the nature of the collected data. The quantitative data gained from the surveys were analysed with Microsoft Excel. The data was coded and then evaluated with the regular functions of the program. Measures of central tendency such as mean, median and mode were used, wherever possible, to detect underlying trends in tourism and visitation of Kampong Glam. Basic information such as tourist origin, the ethnicities of local frequenters and the share of tourism customers in shops and restaurants was collected. I also designed diagrams to demonstrate the opinions of local commercial operators and of Singaporean customers regarding the representation of heritage brought about by conservation efforts since 1989.

For the display of insights from participant observation, I manually drew maps of Kampong Glam and located eight sub-zones of different characteristics, based on my observations about the nature of trespassers and activities. Together with the pictures and field notes, I identified eight sub-zones. During the later stages of my fieldwork, when I acted as an “observer as participant”, I
presented those maps to the focus group for the redesigning of the MHC. With the graphic program “Coreldraw”, members of the group enhanced my manually drawn maps by overlaying my primary data with the official conservation zoning plan of the URA from 1989. The result were two comprehensive maps (finalised by employees of the university’s geo-lab) showing the officially designated landuse and the “real” character of Kampong Glam’s distinct sub-zones (see Fig. 5.4 and 6.12).

All in-depth interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word. For the analysis of the interviews, I highlighted keywords according to different categories and themes. When I subsequently examined the interviews, I could identify themes and compare what different stakeholders said about similar issues. My main categories were comments on the “representation of heritage”, “Malay identity”, “Arab influence”, “heritage conservation” and “preservation of traditional activities”. This categorisation helped me identify shared opinions and divergences among stakeholders. I could, for instance, see the familiar alliances between planning agencies and business organisation (Grogan 2000), but I could also pinpoint the themes that members of this alliance had different opinions.

Lastly, the analysis involved synthesising the findings from quantitative data analysis, the textual analysis of transcribed interviews and factoring in the fieldwork impressions, which became documented in the sub-zone map of Kampong Glam. I compared the findings derived from the different methods of inquiry and usually found to be in accordance with one another. Where the results from quantitative data were contested or ambiguous, I contacted interview partners again and asked them to clarify what they said.
3.5 Research Ethics and Researcher Positionality

I was conscious of research ethics throughout the research process, but I believe that it is most crucial to comply with ethical standards during fieldwork because it constitutes the direct “contact period” with the researched community (Rose 1997). The researcher at the field site should be truthful about his identity and his research agenda. Another general issue, relating to the post-fieldwork process of data analysis, is the accurate portrayal of the researched community through a balanced representation in the subsequently written reports (Cupples and Kindon 2003).

For my case, I honoured these two basic principles, as I disclosed my research-based affiliation with NUS whenever I approached a potential informant. I briefed all contact partners on my research agenda in addition to the introductory lines on my survey and interview forms. The exceptions were when I initially concealed my identity as an “observer as participant” “tourist” in a tour group in order not to interfere with the usual course of the guided tour. After the tour, however, when I asked about the impressions of the tour route and the sights spotted along the way from participants, I did the usual briefing. In terms of representing Kampong Glam accurately, I did my best to learn about the overall real ratios of the district’s local and foreign patronage and stratified my survey samples accordingly. To gain such information, I approached shop and restaurant owners in Kampong Glam.

I would also like to reflect on researcher positionality and the research’s impact on the field site and its stakeholders. Issues of positionality have been extensively discussed in the social sciences, referring to the characteristics of the researcher and the effects on the research perspective (England 1994). What does the researcher represent? How does his or her personal angle on culturally subjective issues affect the perspective of the research discipline as a whole? In the context of post-colonial studies, feminist commentators on positionality have detected a continuing masculine and Western bias in perspective (Ghandi 1998). My research activities as a
white European male researcher in Southeast Asian regional context warrant a reflection on issues of positionality, “empathetic insideness” and “objective outsideness” (Relph 1976). A graduate student workshop on methodology gave me the opportunity to learn about the challenges of positionality from senior student researchers. Prompted by their reports, I reflected on the pitfalls of positionality in fieldwork and the endeavour for insider connections as discussed in the literature on feminist geography.

Feminist literature has good reason to stress the importance of the researcher having close ties with the researched. First, ethnographic research requires personal involvement, so there can be no real objectivity throughout the research process as postulated by positivist research agendas (Rose 1997). Second, the ambition for gaining insider status can be useful because it enables and to a certain degree enforces a deeper understanding of the researched. For Southeast Asia’s British Malaya, for instance, Syed Alatas’s “The Lazy Native” (1977) talks about the persistence of colonial assumptions about Malay people and their “other-worldly” emphasis on religion and Islamic culture as opposed to business and work after the independence of Singapore. Reacting to Western-centric ethnographic works of the colonial era, post-colonial discourse has incorporated insiderisation, that is, “empathetic insideness”, as a crucial endeavour during fieldwork.

In my experience, the focus on insiderisation is now deeply embedded in Southeast Asian academia. Upon giving a methodological presentation on possible assets of an outsider perspective, I was confronted with critiques highlighting the ability of local academics to do rigorous research in their own surrounding. Although this point is well-justified, I would argue against requiring the researcher to have an insider-like status at the onset of research activities. Instead, I believe it is the motivation to become an “empathetic insider” that makes the difference between superficial travel writing and sincere engagement with foreign cultures through insiderisation even though becoming full insiders remains a utopian ideal. Therefore, we should
not discriminate against researchers who have to bridge a wider cultural gap and whose pathway to “empathetic insideness” is not as smooth as that of local academics. For my own research, I aimed for “empathetic insideness” by learning the Malay language and attending forums on Malay culture in Singapore. I was at the field site almost every day, collecting information from commercial operators, tourists and local visitors. Despite these efforts, I only engaged in real participatory research towards the end of the fieldwork period. It was only then that I became “a familiar sight” in the heritage district, so that I was trusted with a role in the committee for the refurbishment of the MHC. Simultaneously, some business owners who had repeatedly seen me in the streets and taken interest in my survey approached me to contribute to my research. Some of them agreed to in-depth interviews and became additional informants.

To gain a variety of perspectives in research, it is necessary to enable researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage in fieldwork. This would include research done by cultural “outsiders” on “subjects” and localities previously considered a domain of a particular local university or department. Given researchers’ willingness to identify with an area of research and people in subsequent stages of fieldwork, the “objective outsideness” of a foreign researcher can be a valid starting point for research. During these subsequent stages, it is important that the outsider perspective is complemented by “empathetic insideness”. Earnest steps towards the community being studied through participatory research methods should be undertaken to complement initial objectiveness with first-hand experiences and knowledge.

3.6 Conclusion

The semantic analysis of text material on the representation of heritage is important to understand the agendas of marketing and planning agencies as well as the reaction of international tourism brokers. I analyse these perspectives in Chapter 4. However, it is equally important to go beyond this textual level of analysis to recognise heritage as it is presented in urban open space and
determine how concepts of cultural policy have contributed to particular ways of representations through participant observation on site (Chapter 5). Finally, reactions of the local community to these representations of heritage have to be integrated into a comprehensive analysis. Such responses can either be derived from in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders, questionnaire surveys of locals, or a combination of both approaches. This multi-faceted methodological approach has been pursued for the purpose of this research. I introduce the views of different stakeholders in different sub-zones of Kampong Glam in Chapter 6.

By cross-examining the data derived from surveys, interviews and participant observation, along with the analysis of secondary data from academic texts and promotional material, I discuss how the representation of heritage for a local audience and global tourism circuits have influenced local Malay and Muslim identity in the heritage landscape of Kampong Glam. The main research purpose is to analyse the representation of indigenous heritage in post-colonial societies. The analysis is structured into three research questions: the inquiry about ideas and official concepts about heritage representation; a stocktaking of the tangible heritage in urban space; and an investigation into the interpretations of ethnic heritage by local and foreign visitors and the self-identification of local stakeholders.
Chapter 4
The Research Locality, Local Policy and the Reshaping of Identity

4.1 Introduction
This chapter provides an overview of the research area’s history and changes in place identity. An understanding of these historic developments is crucial when discussing ways of maintaining a unique identity while representing local culture as a heritage attraction for tourists and local sightseers. The influx of visitors, however, is not the only factor shaping place identity and local culture. For decades, the changing self-perception of Kampong Glam’s Malay community has been linked to particular representations of its heritage for purposes of nation-building. In this post-colonial context, the Singapore government’s URA designated Kampong Glam as a conservation zone to offer a perspective on the ethnic heritage of Singapore’s Malays and Muslims. After a historical review (section 4.2), the chapter uncovers the underlying and perpetually changing cultural policies of representation, that is, “politics of heritage” since independence (section 4.3). It concludes with an overview of how the area is represented and marketed today (section 4.4).

4.2 Singapore as a “Colonial Cosmopolis”
During the colonial era until World War I, Singapore can be referred to as a “cosmopolis”. In this historical context, “cosmopolis” refers to city-states inhabited by plural communities and governed by leaders who do not discourage racial mingling (Ho 2002). Anthony Reid (2004) noted that Singapore as one of the colonial Straits Settlements was “open virtually to anyone, and attracted a diverse population” (p.10). The interactions among cultures in terms of “hybridisation”

30 The qualities of the colonial “cosmopolis” are different from the qualities envisioned by the topical cosmopolitanism discourse in present-day Singapore. I will clarify this difference in this section and the following sections.
were an important feature of the migrant society of Singapore. A special case of a settling society, Singapore was a colony where settlers outnumbered the native population. Most settlers also did not originate from the British Isles, that is, not from the colonial homeland. In other British settling societies such as the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, white settlers form the majority. For centuries, the Chinese had settled in Southeast Asian port cities and some Chinese traders married local Malay women, subsequently establishing a hybrid way of life known as the Peranakan culture (Henderson 2003a). Thus, colonial rule did not initiate the hybrid mingling of cultures in the Malaysian Peninsula, but it increased the scale of labour migration from various regions to Malaya’s entrepot cities, contributing to the spread of hybrid cultures.

The British colonial administration allocated each major ethnic group a designated ethnic quarter in the city-area but stopped short of strictly enforcing racial segregation. Subsequently, native Malays interacted with a diverse mix of migrants in Kampong Glam, mostly from other Muslim societies. This interaction of cultures in the colonial cosmopolis is an important distinction from the present-day practice of “selective cosmopolitanism” (Yeoh 2004), which legally forbids aspects of mingling of migrant groups with Singaporeans by law (see section 4.4). Reid emphasised the stark contrast between the hybridisation of cultures during the colonial era and post-independence nation-building efforts, arguing that “the ports on the Peninsula side of the Straits became the archetype of cosmopolis in the 19th and 20th century, perhaps more resistant to the contrary needs of nation than any other corner of the globe” (2004, p.10). The British colonial administration did not intervene against the mingling of migrant and native cultures, and even intentionally advanced the cultural diversity as part of its agenda to dominate local politics (De Jonge and Kapte in 2002). According to its plans, it became impossible to clearly distinguish

---

31 The exception was the colonizer’s concern over interactions of others with their race, which would allegedly lead to the colonizer’s racial degradation (Young 1995). The coloniser’s culture had to be kept pure and dominant in terms of power relationships.

96
cultures, and henceforth unattainable to determine which Asian culture was the leading one in the melting pot of the colonial cosmopolis of Singapore, except the culture of the “colonial Masters” (Young 1995). In contrast to this mingling of cultures during colonial times, Singapore and Malaysia today group their citizens in rigid categories and practise cosmopolitanism selectively with strict laws regulating migration patterns.

4.2.1 Kampong Glam – The “Hybrid” Culture of an Evolving Maritime Hub

Within the colonial port city of Singapore, Kampong Glam became the centre of the predominantly Malay-Muslim community. The city’s colonial founding father Raffles was keen to attract Arab migrants, whom he considered capable traders (Freitag 2002). His open-door policy for immigration subsequently prompted interregional Muslim migration to the “little racial melting pot of Singapore” in the early 19th century (Perkins 1984, p.13). For the purpose of channelling migrants into city areas with culturally similar population groups, Raffles’ town plan laid out the Kampong Glam Muslim district around the Malay Sultan’s Istana in 1820, a year after Raffles first arrived in Singapore. Allegedly pirates and “dubious” traders, the Bugis, whom the Dutch evicted from Indonesia, quickly dominated the Muslim migrant population of the area. Arab migrants also settled in Kampong Glam in modest numbers and quickly became successful as merchants (Freitag 2002). Another important group was the Javanese whose legacy was exemplified by the Pondok Jawa community centre until its demolition in 2004 (Imran 2005, section 5.3.4).

Despite the vast scope of Muslim migration, the “local” Malay community continued to outnumber other Muslim groups by 1911 even almost after 100 years of open-door immigration.

32 According to other authors Raffles disliked the Arabs. For instance, cultural researcher Redzuan Othman (2002) says that Raffles only reluctantly accepted them as immigrants because of their commercial abilities (Othman 2002). In any case, immigration was not restricted because local Malays were deemed to lack “competitive spirit” to boost the colonial economy (Alatas 1977).
policy (Table 4.1). A reason for the continuing local dominance of the Malays was the quick incorporation of many regional Muslim migrants into the Malay community (Barnard 2004). The census of 1911, for instance, included migrants from nearby Sumatra and the Riau Islands in the category of “local Malays” as the colonial administration deemed these migrant groups indistinguishable from the local Malay population (Perkins 1984). This placed the 11,000 Muslims from the centre and East of Dutch-East India (modern-day Indonesia) – an aggregation of Boyanese, Bugis and Javanese people – as second in rank in the overall Muslim population. The Malays, as the indigenous Muslim group, remain clearly ahead of the Arabs and other groups in terms of numbers (Ho 2002).

Table 4.1: Muslim Population in Kampong Glam in the Early 20th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>Number in 1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malays (including Malays from Sumatra)</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyanese, Bugis, Javanese</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabs</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Perkins 1984

Despite the quantitative dominance of the Malays in Kampong Glam, the area was still a melting pot of various Muslim cultures. Conceptually, cultural developments in Kampong Glam exemplified the evolution of hybrid cultures with local and global elements before the current era of globalisation (Zandi-Sayek 2001). Widespread hybridisation helped enlarge the local Malay community with the integration of some regional Muslim migrant groups, temporarily establishing “Malay” as an umbrella term for most Muslims in Kampong Glam (Freitag 2002)33.

33 According to Ho (2002), the Arabs as the merchant elite remained clearly distinguishable from other Muslim people such as the local Malays. Apart from this, “becoming” Malay, i.e. integrating other Muslim groups into the “Malay” category, was a common practice until the 1920s. The practice is well-captured by its local description *masuk Melayu* (enter Malayness).
The cultural diversity of the colonial cosmopolis, as seen at Kampong Glam, can be understood as a “kind of antithesis” to the familiar modern idea of nation (Reid 2004, p.2). Singapore is a prime example of a “hybridised” cosmopolis. In the context of Kampong Glam as a Southeast Asian coastal settlement, anthropologist Engseng Ho (2002) detects maritime networks of hybrid trading communities throughout the 19th century. Today, the legacy of hybrid interactions has largely diminished because of a gradual shift towards the non-acceptance of Muslim migrants as part of the Malay community after the First World War. The legacy of hybrid mingling of various cultures, however, lives on in Kampong Glam’s street names, which continue to hint at the pan-Islamic cultural connections of Kampong Glam.

4.2.2 A Redefinition of Malayness – Self-Essentialising as Village Dwellers

The self-perception of the Malays as the dominant Muslim population group started to change gradually from the 1920s. Initially, the indigenous Malay population of Singapore and Malay migrants from within Southeast Asia that “became Malay” or masuk Melayu tended to look up to immigrants from the Middle East as “descendants from the homeland of the prophet” (Freitag 2002, p.113). Reports showed that the Arabs not only ranked high in the social hierarchy but were also greatly respected as religious leaders (Norhayati 1987). Apart from the Arabs, Indian-Muslim migrants also played a prominent role in Kampong Glam’s Muslim community (Perkins 1984). Generally, the indigenous Malay community accepted that fellow Muslim groups spoke on behalf of them on economic, political and religious matters during the 19th century and beyond. In the 1920s, however, Malay reformist movements with Eunos Abdullah as the leading figure started to call for a bigger share of Malay representation in politics, the economy and religious life. The movement also depicts rising Malay resentment of the “status consciousness” of the Arabs (Rahman 2006, p.252).
But two factors hindered the Malay emancipation from Arab and Indian leaders. Politically, the implementation of increased Malay representation faced great difficulties as the colonial administration had already established Arab, Indian and Chinese urban elites as “prime-mediators” for governance issues. Neither the colonial administration, with its perspective on “the lazy native” (Alatas 1977) nor their established mediators had any interest in the increased participation of the Malays in political decision-making. Regarding economic empowerment, the Malay community, similar to other marginalised communities, struggled to overcome the lack of capital needed to engage in large-scale commercial activities (Rahman 2006). In 1920s’ Kampong Glam, soaring property prices and rents worsened the situation. Running a business in the boom decade after the First World War required increased investments in the letting or maintenance of commercial space. Numerous small Malay family businesses could not afford the necessary investments in their Kampong Glam properties, which resulted in financially potent Arab trading families acquiring substantial real estate (Freitag 2002).

These circumstances caused further marginalisation of the indigenous Malay community in Kampong Glam at the time of its proposed emancipation from their Arab and Indian-Muslim leaders. Because of the dire situation, increased Malay participation in the urban economy was deemed a failure (Abdullah 2006). This perception resulted in the belief that an “authentic” Malay lifestyle was only achievable out of urbanised areas in the countryside. Kahn (2006) elaborated that village-dwelling signified more than a choice of location for Malays; their term kampong34 would include notions of togetherness and community-life.

In contrast to the positive qualities attributed to village life, Malay reformers saw urban-dwelling as fundamentally incongruent with Malay identity because it would perpetuate their social

---

34 The new Malay orthography is “kampung”. I follow the old spelling because the district’s name “Kampong Glam” has remained unchanged.
marginalisation. Hence, reformers around Eunos Abdullah initiated a Malay model settlement on the Eastern periphery of Singapore. Within this rural area of Kampong Melayu (“village of the Malays”), they tried to put into practice their ideals about Malay community life (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Contrasting attributes of Kampong Glam and Kampung Melayu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kampong Glam – Inner City Quarter</th>
<th>Kampung Melayu – A Malay Homestead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationally Connected</td>
<td>Self-Sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan Outlook, Trading Hub</td>
<td>Communitarian, Inward-Looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterogeneous, Diverse</td>
<td>Culturally Homogeneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim District, but “Hybrid” Landscape</td>
<td>“Race Space” for Ethnic Malays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Like the English term, “village”, *kampong* has a pastoral ring to it, even when describing an urban settlement. Imran (2005) suggested that *kampong* in the urban context can be translated as “compound”, that is, a sub-division of a city district in which individuals are acquainted with one another. Similarly, Yeoh and Huang (1996) affirmed the urban character of some local Malay settlements labelled *kampong*. Specifically referring to Kampong Glam, they said “the area was characterised by the rapid growth of immigrant communities, leading to the mushrooming of *kampongs* (urban villages) such as Kampong Java, Kampong Melaka and Kampong Bugis in the vicinity” (1996, p. 415, original emphasis). An urban area such as Kampong Glam was considered an inaccurate reflection of Malay heritage and identity as they were best represented in truly rural Kampong Melayu – at least according to Malay nationalists and reformists around Eunos. However, we should note that rurality represents an exclusionary definition of Malayness; Kampong Melayu was not open to Muslim migrant families that had “become Malay”; as locally born Malays were preferred (Table 4.2).
The number of relocations of Kampong Glam-Malays to the Kampong Melayu model settlement was insignificant quantitatively (Kahn 2006). Yet, the idea of the rural model settlement has since deeply impacted the representations of Malay heritage. Kampong Melayu, with its orchestrated village-dwelling, became an imaginary homestead to many Singapore-Malays and a counter model to the urban heritage of the ethnically “other-dominated” city (Kahn 2006). Previously, a perspective that would not regard urbanised Kampong Glam as the centre of Malay culture in Singapore was unimaginable (Perkins 1984). But since the 1920s reformist movement the idealised concept of a rural homestead for Malays emerged and has since persisted. In Singapore, especially, government constructions of Malay ethnic culture have stuck with this rural and “pure” ideal of Malay heritage. In contrast to neighbouring Malaysia, where the urban emphasis is of “Malay modernity” (Bunnell 2002 and 2004), Singapore’s persistence on the rural ideal shapes representations of Malay heritage today, at times with rather bizarre results (section 4.3.4).

4.2.3 Kampong Glam as a Centre for Malay Nationalism

After World War II and the Japanese occupation, the trend to “racialise differences” between local Malays and Muslim migrants intensified. The mainstream Singaporean Malay community after the war became preoccupied with the takrif issue, that is, the question of what constitutes “Malayness” (Djamour 1959, Iskander 2006). A substantial number of “Singapore Malays in the 1950s shared the view that their community was separate and discrete” (Kahn 2006, p.116) for the first time in history. A result of this change in self-perception was that one had to be born on the Malay Peninsula to be considered “true Malay”. Religious affiliation to Islam and command of the Malay language were no longer considered sufficient for inclusion into the community. It would no longer be as easy as in the 19th century for Muslim migrants to integrate themselves into Singapore’s Malay society and Kampong Glam’s Malay-Muslim community (Perkins 1984).
After a period of neglect following the Kampong Melayu experiment, Kampong Glam was rediscovered by part of the Malay elite for the purposes of constructing “Malayness” in the 1950s. This was done mostly out of necessity because of British political repression on the mainland of the Malaysian peninsula. Malay nationalists, calling for an independent Malaya, subsequently gathered in Singapore, particularly around Kampong Glam as it was still a stronghold of the Malay community (Kahn 2006). The central location of the district was instrumental in the evolution of a Malay press and publishing scene, fighting for independence. Kampong Glam’s heritage featured prominently in the building of Malay identity but with a different emphasis from the 19th century cosmopolitan outlook. The area’s heritage was now interpreted as a home for a racially defined and homogeneous Malay community, de-emphasising diversity and cultural interactions with other Muslim communities. Hence, Kampong Glam played a pivotal role in “preparatory” nation-building (for an independent Malay nation) in the immediate post-war era:

In the 1950s Singapore became the centre of an often highly politicized Malay artistic and literary scene. For example, the palace of the Sultan of Singapore at Kampong Glam became ‘the nerve centre of Malay political activities both openly and under the guise of promoting Malay language and literature’. The so-called Kota Raja Klab (Royal City Club) at Kampung Glam was an important venue for cultural performances, most notably of a Malayan music hall [...]  

(Firdaus cited in Kahn 2006, p. 114)

This change in attitude towards an exclusive re-definition of Malayness is important. The redefinition already had vital components, that is, rigid racial categories, of what would later become known as the Singapore’s government policy of multiracialism. This definition of Malays as a homogeneous group along racial lines, set off by their nationalist leaders, facilitated their integration into the post-independence CMIO-scheme. The new racial definitions of Malayness and the prominence of Malay activism in Kampong Glam meant that the district was increasingly linked with Malay nationalist ideas as opposed to its more cosmopolitan character of the 19th century (Hanna 1966). Against a background of race riots between the Chinese and Malays in the
1960s, the short-lived revival of Kampong Glam as a centre for urban Malay culture was overshadowed by the exclusion of many inhabitants from the community initiatives due to racial qualifiers. This association with Malay communalism (and occasionally radicalism) still haunts the representation of Kampong Glam’s Malay heritage (Narayanan 2004).

4.3 Post-Independence: The CMIO–Scheme and Cultural Heritage

Singapore’s diverse ethnic heritage was emphasised for tourism purposes after independence. But it was often presented at central locations in purposefully created themed attractions, featuring selected components, such as handicraft and multicultural cuisine, of the ethnic groups (section 4.3.1). Compared to these “instant” attractions, the stories of the heritage districts were relatively more challenging to relate. These traditional ethnic districts were only highlighted when the Singapore government believed the relevance of Asian culture to the younger generation to be threatened (section 4.3.2). Singapore became more confident in publicly displaying local ethnic heritage in its original surroundings, mostly as a means to uphold traditional Asian values – which emphasised communal interests over individual concerns and, in the Singapore case, makes allusions to Confucianism as a Chinese philosophy (Hill 2000)35.

Prompted by fears of increasing Westernisation, the government created heritage districts at the end of the 1980s, to showcase the various ethnicities and their cultures for tourists and locals alike (section 4.2.3). Special adjustments had to be undertaken to display the heritage of traditional ethnic sites, particularly so with Kampong Glam, a former centre for Malay Nationalism. Although the Singapore government adheres to the CMIO scheme today, the scheme has been

35 Sociologist Michael Hill (2000) says that in regional context, Asian values are a social construction of the 1980s, engineered by Singapore’s and Malaysia’s leadership; historically, there is no distinct set of values for Southeast Asia due to the many cultural influences. Today, however, Singapore has five pledges of “shared values”, the first of which is “Nation before community and society before self”, establishing the priority of communal interest in opposition to “Western” preferences for individualism (Chua 1998).
applied differently over the decades. These minor changes in government policy have prompted a fine-tuning of the representation of heritage in Kampong Glam.

4.3.1 The 1970s and Ethnic Heritage: “Race without Space”

The marketing of ethnic heritage districts were not featured prominently in the 1970s when “the emphasis in tourism was on the development of garden attractions and modern hotels” (Chang and Yeoh 1999, p.104). After independence in 1965, Singapore tourism planners believed that the city had few attractions and should therefore capitalise on its role as an entry point into Asia that offered up-to-date amenities in a clean environment. The lack of attractions, however, remained a problem because it affected the tourist’s length of stay adversely. The forerunner of the Singapore Tourism Board (the STPB) eventually got a mandate to plan and created new human-made attractions throughout the 1970s. Despite this anticipated enhancement of possible visitor activities, tourism promotions around the 1970s had to rely on the existing potential to draw tourists (Lim 1979). Hence, Singapore’s multi-ethnic society was highlighted for tourism purposes. The multi-ethnic composition was proudly presented to tourists to showcase the peaceful coexistence of various ethnic groups and the opportunity to explore the multitude of cultures located conveniently in one city. This idea was accurately formulated in Singapore’s “Instant Asia” tourism slogan, which promised tourists (mostly from Western countries) a glance of the many “exotic” cultures of Asia (Chang 1997). The “Instant Asia” theme was included frequently in the Singapore Travel News, “44 times in various ways ranging from the more predictable aspects of ethnic festivals and cuisines to the more arcane images of multicultural fashion, street trades, and wedding customs” (Chang 1997, p.550).

Although multiracialism was emphasised in the 1970s, its actual spatial manifestation, particularly the ethnic heritage sites, was not highlighted. This situation remained unchanged when the STPB’s human-made cultural attractions opened their doors for visitors. Chang and
Yeoh (1999) said that virtually all new cultural or ethnic attractions “were housed in modern buildings rather than at historic sites” (ibid, p.104). Examples include the 1970 “Asia Cultural Show” featuring multi-racial dances, the 1976 Singapore Handicraft Centre, which showcased Asian artefacts and artisans and the 1978 Rasa Singapura Food Centre, which boasted “the best of” Singaporean cuisines. All locations were racially “neutral” since they presented selected cultural practices of various ethnicities at a single location, i.e. in indoor exhibition spaces. These “Instant Asia” attractions displayed one particular theme of ethnic heritage for each location; sorted according to “activities” (e.g. dancing) or “aspects of life” (e.g. cuisine), but they did not present all components of one ethnicity’s heritage in one place. This practice allowed for selective representations, thereby excluding aspects of ethnic heritage (Leong 1997).

Some researchers focus on the convenience of centralising representations of heritage in newly erected edifices as the cause for the “Instant” approach (Chang and Yeoh, 1999). This study focuses on another cause, namely the uneasiness towards displaying ethnic culture in open urban space as opposed to holding staged performances in indoor exhibition spaces. Before culture could be presented to visitors in public spaces, those prospective cultural venues had to undergo a transformation process into heritage attractions in compliance with Singapore’s nation-building efforts. During the transformation, planners would enhance elements of ethnic harmony and conceal divisive factors. Venues such as Kampong Glam, with extensive records of former communalist activities, first required historical re-interpretation and were thus only belatedly incorporated into conservation efforts to highlight ethnic heritage.

4.3.2 The 1980s: Enhanced Representation of Heritage against Westernisation

In the 1980s, nation-building and tourism promotion became more closely intertwined than ever in Singapore (Chang and Teo 2001, Henderson 2003a). In the early 1980s, the city-state looked back on a decade of economic success without obvious racial tensions. Thus, racial conflict, while
remaining high on the national agenda, was no longer a pressing concern for the government. In contrast, “Westernisation”, as a consequence of rapid economic development, was now seen to be a newly evolving threat to the nation’s Asian values and identity (Ooi 2005). The Singapore government reacted by introducing policy changes. Cultural differences between races could now be highlighted in the media and in popular discourse as long as they did not reflect negatively on each other and did not compromise national unity (Tay 1988). In April 1988, the Singapore government set up a special committee, aiming at “encouraging Singaporeans to be more widely informed and appreciative of their multi-cultural heritage” (Perry et al. 1997, p.255). According to the government, the heritage of every CMIO culture provided a reference point for the nation’s Asian values, safeguarding Singaporeans against “Westoxification” (Yeoh 2004, p.2437). The government used such statements against Western influences to emphasise the importance of ethnic heritage for the discourse on Asian values.

Hill (2000) contextualised this post-colonial discourse on heritage and Asian identity in Singapore, arguing that the 1980s saw the beginning of a process he terms “self-orientalisation” resulting in “reverse Orientalism”. This means that Southeast Asian governments started to consciously orientalise their culture by clearly differentiating between Western and Asian societies. In a somewhat ironic turn on Said’s Orientalism (1978), regional governments, with Singapore and Malaysia at the forefront, attributed negative qualities such as “excessive individualism”, immorality and social discord to the Occident while praising their own societies as coherent and solidly united. Applying “reverse Orientalism” in a local tourism study, Ooi

---

36 For instance, school curricula were changed in terms of language selection and the inclusion of religious education, which started to be taught in the 1980s to inculcate Asian values in young Singaporeans to protect them against “Westernisation”. Singapore’s then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew praised Asian values as an antidote against “infection” by Westernisation or, in short, “Westoxification” (Yeoh 2004, p.2437). Lee Kuan Yew said that the “antidote” would work because it prescribed “individual subordination to the community so as to counteract the disruptive individualism of western liberalism” (cited in Berger 1997, p.270).

37 Cultural researcher Can-Seng Ooi (2002) elaborates that “self-orientalisation” also includes a highlighting of the superiority of Asian cultures in overcoming challenges, due to the Western “handicap” of excessive individualism.
(2005) discusses the portrayal of regional cultures at Singapore’s Asian Civilisation Museum. Each of Singapore’s main cultures (Chinese, Indian and Malay) is traced back to its origins in China, India, and for the Malays, to the Middle East as well as to Malaya and the Indonesian archipelago. The museum celebrates the “ancestral heritages” of the three ethnicities, implying that the cultural values embedded in the exhibited artefacts are still relevant for contemporary Singapore. Ooi (2005) concluded with a message that “Asia has a glorious and rich history, and is superior to the West in many ways” (p.15).

Using these insinuations about Asian values as the basis for tangible cultural policies, a new advisory board, the “Committee on Heritage”, began to explore the value of ethnic culture for national identity in post-colonial Singapore. It was cautious when highlighting the spatial manifestation of ethnic heritage during its first initiative for the promotion of ethnic culture. Its formulations are rather defensive at times, yet there seems to be a generally optimistic tone about future opportunities for the representation of ethnic heritage:

We have spent, and still expend time and resources reconciling the conflicting pulls of our multi-cultural ethnic heritage. Active promotion of our multi-cultural heritage, the Committee recognised, can heighten awareness of particular cultural identities. The Committee on Heritage believes that there are common grounds within the core values of the diverse cultures in Singapore [...] (Tay 1988, p.41)

The newfound confidence in peaceful racial relations spurred a variety of initiatives for the conservation of ethnic heritage in Singapore’s urban fabric, as opposed to the creation of single-purpose heritage attractions for tourism a decade earlier. The URA quickly formalised the conservation of ethnic heritage sites in conservation manuals for particular areas (URA 1988, 1989, 1991). Twenty years after independence, the time was ripe to showcase tangible ethnic heritage on its original locations, in principle including Singapore’s Malay and Muslim legacy (Lou 1985, Figure 4.1). The “showcasing” of the different ethnic cultures at their “real” locations
outside of indoor exhibition spaces was identified as a tool to bolster an Asian identity among Singaporeans (Chang et al., 1996). This change in attitude was partly based on reassuring demographic facts since urban renewal had diminished the potential for ethnic violence by dispersion of the ethnically clustered inner-city population (Lai 1995).

Figure 4.1: Ethnic Heritage in the Midst of the Urban Renewal High-Rise Landscape

Kampong Glam’s Sultan Mosque and surrounding shophouses photographed from the Singapore Flyer

As the bulk of Singapore’s population had already been resettled to racially mixed Housing and Development Board (HDB) estates by the mid-1980s, by then, the government considered the display of a particular culture in the traditional environment of an ethnic district as less fundamentally divisive. The resettlement policies were so comprehensive that the demographic composition of inner-city districts transformed completely, erasing all ethnic enclaves\(^{38}\). Hence, a

\(^{38}\) Taken literally, the term “ethnic district” for historic areas such as Kampong Glam would thus be inaccurate in the Singapore context since the ethnic composition of their inhabitants increasingly reflected the racial arithmetic of Singapore’s overall population (Dale 1999). I use the term “ethnic district” mindful of these Singapore-specific qualities.
unique ethnic character of “ethnic” historic areas after urban renewal could not be defined by demographic composition, but only by its cultural life and commercial offerings. Ironically, it was exactly this change in residential patterns that finally prompted Singapore government agencies to designate “ethnic heritage districts” for tourism promotion and cultural awareness in 1989 (Chua 1998). “Ghettoisation”, i.e. the concentration of one ethnicity in a particular area and the resulting potential for communalist action, was by then a minor threat. The government’s urban renewal resettlement scheme had levelled Singapore’s ethno-demographic composition across the country; with the possible local dominance of any particular population group precluded by strict racial quotas incorporated in the resettlement policies (Chih 2003). With the threat of communalist agitation eliminated, the conservation of ethnic heritage was believed to complement nation-building for the first time since independence.

4.3.3 Nation-Building and Spatial Practices: Heritage and the CMIO–Scheme

Having identified ethnic districts as an asset for nation-building, the Singapore government focused on the conservation and revitalisation of historic inner-city areas (Yuen 2004). These areas had faced widespread disinvestment throughout the 1970s and 1980s, especially the rows of rent-controlled shophouses. As the government agency in charge, the URA drafted detailed “Conservation Manuals”, i.e. plans for the preservation of architectural heritage, for each heritage district. The manuals sketched out a detailed pathway to incorporate both adequate restoration and commercial viability in the conservation of ethnic heritage (URA 1988, 1989, 1991).

What the conservation manuals did not regulate was the preservation of the existing ethnic character of the historic areas with a control of land use (for instance, traditional businesses with rent subsidies). The designated “adaptive reuse strategy” meant that market forces would determine the use of shophouse units (URA 1991), an approach which would subsequently lead to the problem of ruptures in place identity. Usually, the URA initiated a commercial flagship
project with particular ethnic design elements to lead the way for revitalisation, intending to lure private investments and to have those investments adhere to the particular “ethnic theme”. For Chinatown and Kampong Glam (see section 5.5.2), a main artery was converted into a “pedestrian mall”. The approach was also quite similar in Little India, where a block of shophouses was converted into an “arcade” for shopping. In Chinatown (Yeoh and Kong 1994) and Little India (Chang 2000), these commercial flagships contributed to revitalisation but also to rapid modernisation. In both cases, the new shops did not enhance the ethnic characteristics, i.e. the local ethnic composition and prevalent commercial activities, and the conservation efforts received criticism for overemphasising competitiveness (Chia et al. 2000, Yeo 1998).

The sudden pressure to compete with commercial flagships resulted in the demise of many traditional businesses in Chinatown. In smaller and less affluent historic quarters such as Kampong Glam, some trades such as rattan goods or Islamic headwares were depleted even more rapidly. Thus, the well-intended flagship projects worsened the impact of post-conservation gentrification. The projects accelerated the influx of high-income individuals as new commercial operators and, simultaneously, the displacement of local residents and traditional shops. Especially in the low-income environment of the Malay and Muslim heritage districts, the impact was severe (Chapter 6). Regarding the original mission to enhance ethnic heritage for nation-building, the totally unregulated free-market approach to landuse in conservation areas proved counter-productive in many locations.

A second problem arising from engineered nation-building was the simplification in the display of ethnic heritage to tourists and local visitors. Strictly sticking to the CMIO scheme, the STB projected idealised versions of reality with their inherent inaccuracies in representations to correspond to official rhetoric. To adhere to the scheme, the STB created ethnic heritage districts (Chinatown, Kampong Glam and Little India) for the three major population groups with colonial
architecture arguably representing the heritage of the “Other”-group of the CMIO scheme (Henderson 2001). Major tourism sites in Chinatown were presented as “Chinese” and attractions in Little India as “Indian”. In response to the essentialist representation of heritage, cultural researchers subsequently accused tourism and urban planners from the STB and URA of “commodifying ethnicity” (Leong 1997). Table 4.3 demonstrates the transformation process of particular cultural venues into heritage attractions located in designated ethnic districts, symbolizing a broader ethnic group for nation building.

Table 4.3: The Essentialist Perspective of the CMIO Scheme and Local Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Cultural Heritage</th>
<th>Landmark/Sight</th>
<th>Ethnic District</th>
<th>Simplified CMIO Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>Thian Hock Keng Temple</td>
<td>Chinatown</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim in General</td>
<td>Sultan Mosque</td>
<td>Kampong Glam</td>
<td>Malay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Sri Veerama Kaliaman Temple</td>
<td>Little India</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial, actually attended by Diverse Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>St. Andrew’s Cathedral</td>
<td>None, &quot;Civic District“</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Leong (1997)

The third problem is that the theoretical foundation of such ethnic heritage enhancement initiatives does not correspond to reality or history. To provide a moral reference point against Westernisation, the Singapore government promoted the idea of “Asian values” as the basis of the Chinese, Indian and Malay cultures. But the government did not define particular cultural components of the “Asian values” system – other than using particular tenets of Confucianism as its foundation. Regarding the representation of ethnic heritage in Singapore’s museums, Ooi (2005) said, “Confucian values have equivocally come to mean Asian values in Singapore, as the emphasis on Confucianism will privilege the Chinese and marginalize the Malays and Indians”
As opposed to government-defined Confucian-Chinese culture, which is grounded in ideas supporting a strong work ethic, “social solidarity and community responsibility” (ibid), it was unclear how Indians and Malays – as non-Confucian cultures – can contribute to national identity.

In the 1980s, the government-initiated process of self-orientalisation took place, i.e. the Confucian-Chinese culture was constructed as a useful “antidote to Westernisation” (Hill 2000). This Confucian focus left the Indian and Malay culture without major contribution to national identity. This underlying conceptual problem surfaced when the plans for the enhancement of ethnic heritage entered the implementation phase of conservation efforts. In the case of Kampong Glam, which represents Malay and Muslim culture, it was unclear as to what to highlight exactly and which aspects of culture to enhance for representation. Little India faced similar problems as well (Chang 1996, 2000). For the Kampong Glam of the 1980s, the puzzling question of what to represent took precedence over the problem of simplifying the representations of heritage for tourism.

The majority population in Singapore is Chinese hence there is a great emphasis on promoting Chinese heritage (Ooi 2005). The Chinese legacy, while also weakened during urban renewal, remained substantial as compared to the minority heritage of the Malays or Indians (Yeoh and Kong 1994), so that Chinese heritage has been easier for the STB to market for tourism. For instance, a heritage centre inaugurated in 2002 now informs visitors about the origins of the various Chinese ethnic groups who migrated to Singapore as opposed to considering them as a monolithic group. Even though in Chinatown too, urban renewal has caused ruptures, the area is

Confucianism exists not only in China, but also in Korea and Japan. Hence, Confucianism is not a synonym for Chinese culture, but one aspect of the history of Chinese culture. However, for the purpose of nation building, the Singapore government identified Confucianism as the basis of Chinese culture (Hill 2000).
able to cater to tourism demands while remaining a meeting place for many Singaporean Chinese (Henderson 2000). In comparison, tourism geographer T.C. Chang (2000) identifies the representation of heritage in Little India as more problematic as the district constitutes a contested landscape between majority and minority cultures (Begam 1997, Yeo 1998). But it was the legacy of the Malay-Muslims – considered by the Singapore government to be prone to communalist agitation and as having a weak work ethic (Narayanan 2004) – which was most challenging to represent in the context of nation-building.

4.3.4 Ethnic Heritage in Kampong Glam – the Litmus-Test for Nation-Building?

When Kampong Glam was officially designated to be the Malay heritage district in 1989, the URA did not enhance the historic shophouses for some years while the refurbishment of Chinatown’s tangible heritage was already underway (Yeoh and Kong 1994). Instead, activities to enhance Singapore’s Malay heritage initially concentrated on the Geylang Serai area 5 km to the east of Kampong Glam, half the distance of the Kampong Melayu settlement of the 1920s. Here, a complete Malay village was rebuilt in 1985 (section 6.6.4). In 1989, this new “Malay Village” was now being revamped because its management, supported by the Singapore government, had entered a contest for the Aga Khan architectural award for heritage attractions (Eriyanti 1998). Meanwhile, Kampong Glam’s historic shophouses, which are evidence of Malay-Muslim trading activities, were not adequately maintained (Figure 4.2). The particular role Kampong Glam had in the struggle for independence explains this situation. The district’s prior role as a venue for emerging Malay nationalism and communalism was not considered an adequate symbol for multiracial harmony as envisioned by Singapore’s nation-building policy (Kahn 2006).
This uneasiness about Malay-Muslim history reflected in the urban fabric caused the Singapore government to resort to a 1970s’ “Instant Asia”-approach of heritage representation (Figure 4.3).

The government still deemed the display of Malay heritage in a simple and depoliticised village environment with neat replica of Malay farmhouses more appropriate than highlighting the Malay-Muslim legacy of a multi-faceted inner-city district.
Kampong Glam had many roles in history, such as a trading post, royal precinct, pilgrim hub and centre for Malay communalist activities. It featured largely intact rows of historic shophouses around the national monument of Sultan Mosque when the Singapore government sought suitable venues for the display of ethnic heritage at the end of the 1980s. Yet, cultural policymakers who had then only recently drafted the strategy of heritage enhancement to “protect” against Westernisation were struggling with the rich history of Kampong Glam (Hamzah 2002). They turned their attention to the less complex “Malay Village” theme park, perpetuating colonial stereotypes about non-enterprising “rural” Malays in the post-independence era. With this auxiliary site of the “Malay Village”, the Singapore government could not solve the underlying dilemma of Malay-Muslim representation of heritage, i.e. the community’s undefined contribution to nation-building.

The equal treatment of all races as acknowledged by the CMIO scheme made it an imperative for the government to allocate a heritage district to the Malay community, along with those of the Chinese and Indian communities (Yeoh and Huang 1996). The 1989 heritage awareness campaign aptly identified three inner-city areas as ethnic heritage districts; the identification of Chinatown as “Chinese” and Little India as “Indian” sparked little controversy. Given its historical record as the historic seat of Malay royalty in Singapore, Kampong Glam seemed like a good choice to represent the Malay and Muslim community, especially since its rows of shop houses had been spared demolition for the purposes of urban renewal. But the question of precisely whose heritage to present at Kampong Glam remained. Showcasing a Malay-Muslim heritage district was necessary to show equality and social cohesion, but there was still the controversy of Kampong Glam as the site of Malay communalism, i.e. the fear that Kampong Glam would not represent national cohesion but rather separatist tendencies of the Malay community (Narayanan 2004).
Even after the opening of the MHC in the prominent urban location of the ex-Sultan’s palace, the rural Malay theme remains strong. Behind closed windows, a village house is erected in an indoor exhibition space.

A simple solution was to use rhetoric to verbally highlight the existence of the heritage district of Kampong Glam without actually making any initiatives for revitalisation and the enhancement of urban ethnic heritage in the area. This approach was practised up to the mid-1990s in Kampong Glam; at the time, the district was initially overlooked in conservation efforts (Sim 1996, section 5.2). Regarding the refurbishment efforts that were already in progress at Chinatown (and to a lesser degree at Little India), the neglect of Kampong Glam could not be sustained in the long run. The head of the URA’s conservation department, Kelvin Ang, said that given the situation, the URA finally called for the implementation of a commercial flagship project at Kampong Glam to boost the revitalisation of the area (22 April 2008). The URA chose the commercial focus to avoid having to engage in interpreting history, but this strategy inevitably invited criticisms precisely because of its neglect of cultural components beyond building facades.
When the commercial flagship, Bussorah Mall, was completed, the STB took over the promotion of the commercial flagship. With its marketing partner, the Kampong Glam business association, the STB initiated an advertising campaign with a focus on local commerce, which did not feature any information about ethnic history, unlike the signposts at Chinatown for instance, said Quek Ling Xiang, a manager at the STB’s “Attractions Division” (11 June 2009). When cultural assets were mentioned at all, a “Sultan of Spice” walking tour, offered by marketing partner of the STB, highlighted Arab heritage. Similar to the auxiliary function of the rural “Malay Village” for Malay heritage, the Arab trading legacy subsequently substituted local Malay-Muslim heritage in the core zone of Kampong Glam.

The new openness towards a prominent display of ethnic heritage in Singapore’s urban fabric was a major step forward for the conservation of historic areas in the 1980s even though the various areas were developed at different speeds, with Kampong Glam having the slowest development pace. Since then, the government has once more changed its take on ethnic identity and gradually acknowledged the existence of a more diverse heritage beyond the four essentialist CMIO categories.

4.4 Recent Developments since the 1990s: Rediscovery of Cosmopolitan Heritage

Developing ethnic heritage districts as tangible representations of Asian cultural values for nation-building was problematic in two ways. The government used Confucianism, which was identified as a foundation of Chinese culture, as the basis of Asian values for all of Singapore society (Hill 2000). This 1980s Asian values discourse, with foundations in the imported ideals of Confucianism, proved to be an uneasy compromise in terms of racial harmony (Hill 2000). The Singapore government’s preference for Confucianism as the leading Asian ethic thus became a
divisive force among the city’s various cultures. To mitigate this divisive potential, the government would have to formulate a national identity equally considering the values and needs of the other ethnic groups (Khong et al. 2004).

Under the unifying “cloak” of Asian values, however, the government was able to represent a successful, hardworking and cohesive society in order to highlight Singapore’s economic success and stable political situation. Tourism practitioners and cultural researchers, however, criticised the Confucian-biased value debate and the representation of Singapore as “antiseptic”, a judgement exemplified with the “sterile” pedestrian streets and facades of Chinatown, which had undergone “whitening”, with the traits of everyday culture washed away by refurbishment (Yeoh and Kong 1994).

Critics argue that this “sanitising” of historic neighbourhoods and further campaigning based on this ideology might adversely affect tourism. This would be bad news for tourism brokers, because they had actually pushed for the enhancement of ethnic heritage to promote Singapore’s Asian “charm and mystique” (Henderson 2000) and hence co-initiated the discourse on Asian values, but they did not anticipate the turn of events (Chang and Lim 2004). The “Asian-values” approach to the representation of heritage had to be fine-tuned, since it had two major shortcomings. In terms of cultural representations of Singaporeans, the approach was based on Confucian philosophy so it does not adequately reflect other ethnic groups. For tourism promotion, the representation with the focus on Confucian-Asian heritage appeared not only hostile to foreign cultures and cultural interconnections but it was also lacking excitement and variety.

---

40 It was divisive because the Singapore government constructed Confucian philosophy as a social guideline for Chinese-Singaporeans, making them loyal citizens. This guideline had no clearly identified equivalent for the Malays and the Indians. Due to this inconsistency, moral education in Confucianism, for instance, was dropped again from school curricula in the 1990s (Khong et al. 2004).
4.4.1 A Global City-State with Cosmopolitan Heritage – The Underlying Policy

In the 1990s, a long-anticipated policy adjustment eventually took place. The approach for the enhancement of ethnic culture was “being modified from an overtly Confucian design to a refurbished global systems model” (Hill and Lian 1995, p.210). Similar to the two-tiered problem of local representation of heritage and tourism perceptions, the new “global systems model” had two components. Internally for Singapore, the government’s ethnic policymakers defined racial categories less rigidly, giving leeway for hybrid cultures in representations of heritage. For tourism promotion, government agencies such as the STB tried to change the image of Singapore as being dull and restrictive. The government wanted to highlight Singapore as a global gateway, making sure the city-state was rightly seen as welcoming to foreign visitors and cultures. Hence, they discarded the rhetoric of “Westoxification” in the 1980s and tried to bridge ties with Western markets.

With the collapse of the communist Eastern bloc in 1989, the world became more globally interconnected than ever before in both economic and cultural terms (Gomes 2003). For tourism, legal limitations on travel were reduced to a minimum and only applied to those travelling from the world’s most isolated states such as North Korea. Recognising the limitations of a small city-state, the Singaporean government identified the need to plug into the global networks of economic exchange and tourism flows. The inward-looking perspective on Asian values as a defence mechanism against Western influences had to be adjusted to meet the challenges of developing a cosmopolitan global city. The adjustment had two components. First, the government selectively relaxed restrictions on migration with the aim of “importing” cosmopolitans to Singapore. Second, the government simultaneously attempted to re-engineer Singapore society, with a new focus on the arts, heritage and culture, so that the city could seem more culturally sophisticated and cosmopolitan.
In the 1990s, the Singapore administration’s newly discovered focus on the immigration of manpower started to have demographic impact, if pre-independence immigration policies are taken into account (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Changing Share of Locally Born and Resident Population over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>940,824</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,445,929</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,413,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total born in S’pore/ Malaysia</td>
<td>571,331</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>1,055,184</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>2,282,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (excluding non-locally domiciled services personnel)</td>
<td>369,493</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>14,725</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>131,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Resident Population</td>
<td>2,194,280</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>2,595,243</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>2,973,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Resident Population</td>
<td>213,845</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>109,872</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>290,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yeoh 2003, p.20

In 1980, the share of Singapore’s resident population had reached an all-time high of 94.5%, up from 73% in 1957. These numbers show that the post-colonial Singapore of the 1970s had restrictive migration policies; a reason for the era’s low level of migration was that the Singapore government had to sort out the existing ethno-cultural tensions in society before integrating new cultural elements via migration (Chua 2006). During the 1990s, the Singapore government selectively reopened channels for migration to infuse “foreign talent” into society. For the economy, the government believed this “infusion of talent” would enhance Singapore’s competitiveness in the expanding knowledge-based industries (Olds and Yeung 2004). The government sought to diversify society carefully, building international connections by inviting highly qualified and well-connected foreigners (i.e. “Cosmopolitans”), to work and stay in
Singapore. Because of relaxed restrictions on migration, non-residents (comprising: recent migrants) made up 18.8% of the city state’s inhabitants in 2000, up from only 5.5% in 1980.

4.4.2 Singapore as a Cosmopolitan “Renaissance City”

The integration of new migrants coincides with attempts to reshape Singapore’s rigidly categorised CMIO cultures into a more diverse yet cohesive cosmopolitan society. Government representatives have repeatedly urged Singaporeans to welcome foreign talent and allow them to “sink roots” in Singapore (Yeoh 2004, p.2438). To make Singaporeans more “naturally” appreciative of foreign cultural influences, the government also worked hard at reshaping Singapore’s urban environment into a “global hub for arts and culture” so that Singaporeans, even those unable to travel, would become more accustomed to those influences (Yeoh and Huang 2004). The government hence emphasized transnational components of heritage to local and foreign visitors in Singapore’s historic districts (STB 1996).

The new cultural policy required a redefinition of ethnic-cultural heritage as the Asian values-good/Western values-bad siege mentality, i.e. the uneasiness about Western influences, had lead to a hostile perspective towards most cultural elements from outside the CMIO-scheme. To build a cosmopolitan society, the government needed those non-native elements that symbolise international connections. Faced with the task to communicate this change of strategy, the Singapore government decided to focus on selective elements of the port-city’s history as a basis for the independent nation’s cosmopolitan future. The government designed special policies “aimed at re-imaging Singapore as a culturally vibrant ‘Renaissance City’” (Yeoh 2003, p.11).

---

41 Such “foreign talent” make up a minor share of total immigration to Singapore. Comparatively, other migrants are discouraged from mingling with locals and cannot stay in Singapore after their work permit expires. The aim to diversify society is hence limited to the inclusion of “foreign talent”.

42 Since the xenophobic undertones of the Asian values discourse of the 1980s were relatively fresh in people’s memory, these attempts to instil a welcoming spirit for “foreign talent” in Singaporeans showed only modest success (Barr and Skrbis 2008).
The government coined the term “Renaissance city” to tie its open-door policies for migration and its cosmopolitanism-inspired social-engineering to Singapore’s historical legacy as an open port city and maritime hub (Yeoh 2004). This linking of past and present is thus an attempt of the Singapore government’s tourism authorities to underpin the sudden policy change in representation of heritage - towards an emphasis on the arts, cultural diversity and interregional interconnections- with historical precedence from the colonial era.

Two schools of criticism apply to such a construction of Singapore as a “renaissance city”. First, migration policies were not continuously unrestrictive (Table 5.4). Nor are the current integration of selected foreign talent and the ostracising of labourer migrants similar in character to the era of the colonial cosmopolis when all migrants were in principle eligible to stay. Second, no fundamental policy changes concerning nation-building and citizenship acknowledged the desired emphasis on cultural diversity and transnational connections. Although Singaporeans are expected to adopt a cosmopolitan perspective on culture deemed fitting as citizens of a “global hub”, the government’s underlying legal framework, the CMIO scheme, remains unchanged. The consequences of such inconsistencies will be addressed at length in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.3 Tourism Promotion as the “Hip Hub”

The new tourism slogan of the 1990s was “New Asia-Singapore – So Easy to Enjoy, so Hard to Forget” (1996-2004). The locator “Asia” is reminiscent of the 1970s “Instant Asia” promotion whereas the qualifier “new” emphasises the difference from previous campaigns. The hyphenation of “Asia-Singapore” is probably the most intriguing component of the slogan. Together with the qualifier, the hyphen implies that the “new”, modern and developed Asia can be found in Singapore (Chang and Huang 2005a, Chang and Lim 2004, Chang and Yeoh 1999).

---

43 This is not to say that non-White migrants in colonial Singapore had a prospect of better living conditions as compared with current circumstances (Young 1995).
The slogan does not constitute a clear break from previous promotion efforts, but this emphasis on Asian modernity is a reaction to the self-orientalising of the 1980s, during which Asian virtues were over-emphasised (from the perspective of tourism promotion), so that Singapore was ultimately seen as efficient, but restrictive and dull. “New” Asia’s emphasis on Asian modernity is a response to such perceptions, with a clear emphasis on all exciting activities, which are possible and legal in Singapore (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Tourism Promotion with “Exciting” Activities in Singapore

Source: STB Postcard Campaign 2004

Granted that worldwide tourism marketing campaigns typically highlight extraordinary activities, the promotional activities of Singapore tourism can be seen to be quite exceptional. A STB postcard campaign (under the “Uniquely Singapore” slogan, the successor of the short-lived “New Asia-Singapore”) asked Singaporeans to send free postcards to friends abroad to update them about contemporary Singapore. The two motives above are an obvious refutation of the depiction of Singapore as dull. The emphasis goes beyond the activities of bar-top dancing and wakeboarding; the simple message is that Singapore has become less restrictive, therefore asking the viewer to rethink his or her images of the city state (refer to slogan on Figure 4.5). The high-profile postcard campaign shows that the government-linked tourism and economic development
board were concerned about the existing geographical imaginations\textsuperscript{44} of Singapore (Chang and Lim 2004). Both statutory boards concluded that the recent policy of gradual liberalisation of prohibitive policies had not been sufficiently communicated to a sceptical global audience.

Deregulation did not signify a paradigm shift away from soft authoritarianism\textsuperscript{45} altogether but focused on a step-by-step removal of excessive bans of lifestyle components. Indeed, the Singapore government had scrapped a law forbidding bar top dancing as captured in the first postcard (Figure 4.5) while standing firm on its draconian drug policies. In this context, the excited wakeboarder symbolises that there are plenty of fun things to do in Singapore without resorting to illegal substances. The “New Asia-Singapore” campaign and its successor promote Singapore as cosmopolitan, modern and exciting.

4.4.4 A Cosmopolitan Kampong Glam – Interconnected Heritage

The 1990s saw a gradual replacement of self-orientalisation with exclusively Asian values by an “Asian-flavoured global system model” as the guideline for development of Singapore’s urban society (Hall and Lian 1995). During the course of policy adjustment, the above mentioned “Renaissance city” image became the government’s favourite strategy to attract investors and tourists. “Renaissance city” has a particular significance in the context of the representation of ethnic heritage – the legacy of openness and interregional connections of the colonial cosmopolis were to be resuscitated for each ethnic culture. The good news for Kampong Glam was that, in principle, its ethnic attractions, which had yet to be defined as Malay, Arab or generally “Muslim”, was now eligible for enhanced marketing because the cosmopolitan turn in cultural policy ended the neglect of the district’s potential cultural contribution to Asian values.

\textsuperscript{44} Cultural Geographer Doreen Massey (1995) defines geographical imaginations as “the way we understand the geographical world, and the way in which we represent it, to ourselves and to others” (p.41).

\textsuperscript{45} Political scientist Gordon Means (1996) defines Singapore’s soft authoritarianism as the existence of “basic democratic institutions” combined with the absence of “democratic ideals and practices” (p.113).
The cosmopolitan turn, with the revival of a non-rigid understanding of ethnicity, lessened the pressure to label Kampong Glam as Malay, Arab or generally Muslim; as cultural policymakers are now mainly concerned to bring the designated message of an “interconnected” heritage across (Chang and Raguraman 2001). Kampong Glam, similar to other ethnic districts, has the chance to portray a rich history of international linkages, supported by its former role as a port settlement and pilgrim tourism hub. The “Renaissance City” image hence offers an opportunity to Kampong Glam to finally step out of the shade of Chinatown and Little India.

But the shift in emphasis creates some pitfalls for the Malay-Muslim quarter. The changing character of Bussorah Street due to landscaping of the district’s main artery and the marketing activities of this flagship project is an example. The outcome of the urban redesign process, the URA’s commercial flagship, the Bussorah Mall pedestrian area, already featured Arab architectural elements in the mid-1990s. As the cosmopolitan “Renaissance city” theme became more popular among cultural policy makers during the 1990s, Arab heritage continued to be highlighted in marketing activities about Bussorah Street. The background for such a focus on the Middle East was the interregional connections of Kampong Glam’s Arab-Hadramauti pilgrim brokers from the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula. They turned Singapore into a “pilgrim tourism hub” by the end of the 19th century (section 5.2). The connection to the end of the 20th century, when the STB (1996) published its “New Asia” campaign with Tourism 21 – Vision of a Tourism Capital as a code of practice is the following: the cosmopolitan fever of policymakers during the 1990s made them demand a contribution from Singapore’s ethnic heritage districts – each of the districts had to underline the city’s legacy as an interconnected “hub”, to help Singapore achieve the aspired status of a “Tourism Capital” (Chang and Lim 2004). The prominent pilgrim tourism legacy of Kampong Glam matched those expectations perfectly – except for the low profile of the Malays in the pilgrim business. Historically, Arab traders
organised the Hajj travel with the help of the Bugis people from the Indonesian Archipelago. Although Kampong Glam’s Muslim legacy was suddenly popular and a key element of the cosmopolitan representations of heritage, the local Malay contribution was still largely missing—a situation with some parallels to the 1980s’ neglect of Malay contributions to Asian values and national heritage.

The potential highlighting of cosmopolitan connections were so tempting that the STB, in cooperation with other government statutory boards, quickly redefined Kampong Glam’s Bussorah Street as showcasing primarily Arab “interconnected” heritage. The campaigning promised an “Arabic Buzz” in Singapore. The “Arabic Buzz” is not to be understood as a reference to a particular target region of tourism marketing—as the STB’s Kelvin Leong, asserts that the tourism board “does not cater to any specific tourist group with any of our heritage districts” (16 April 2008). Illustrations of advertising material reinforce the non-specific marketing focus; or more aptly, it demonstrates that the marketing focus is not seen as specifically Arab-Muslim as the “Arabic Buzz” features only Caucasian tourists (Figure 4.6).

As the “Arabic Buzz” illustration insinuates, a cosmopolitan visitor is best personified as a Westerner or light-skinned North Asians, not by travellers from neighbouring Muslim countries. Middle Eastern visitors, as well as Indonesian or Malaysian tourists, are also not featured in most other publication material about Kampong Glam, with the obvious consequences—none of the latter group said they visited Kampong Glam according to the annual Singapore tourism survey (STB 2006b, p.28). Hence, the highlighting of “Arab connections” did not serve to strengthen

---

46 The Bugis are a Malay ethnic group but have been excluded from the narrow definition of “Malay” that dominates in Singapore since the 1920s (Kahn 2006). Hence, there is a Bugis/Malay contribution to historic pilgrim tourism, albeit not a prominent one.

47 The STB (2006b) recently published a special guidebook for Muslim travellers. Kampong Glam, however, is only introduced as one of many shopping attractions. Also, most promotional material in Singapore tends not to display
Middle Eastern ties as such but to reconfigure Kampong Glam’s heritage as cosmopolitan, with the Arab component as a tool.

Figure 4.6: Advertising for Kampong Glam from the Public Affairs Directorate

![Advertising for Kampong Glam](image)


The STB’s marketing partner, the Kampong Glam Business Association (KGBA), was especially eager to further enhance the Arab character. Dr. Ameen Talib, the chairman of the business association suggested covering Bussorah Mall with white linen to evoke the atmosphere of an Arabian Zouk – a Middle Eastern market quarter (22 March 2008). The initiative aims at improving the business climate on Bussorah Mall using the best incentive, seemingly an enhanced Arab theme along Kampong Glam’s pedestrian shopping strip. According to the STB-KGBA marketing alliance, the initiative would be specifically aimed at enticing tourists to frequent Bussorah Mall to reach this target. With such a pragmatic emphasis, the sensitivities of the Malay community were secondary. Since their heritage was believed to lack the designated people with darker skin, such as South Indians, Singaporean-Malays and most non-Chinese Malaysians. But it is remarkable that this bias in representation is similarly applied in the promotion of a Malay-Muslim heritage district.
cosmopolitan component of being inter-regionally networked, the Malays had to give way to other more marketable ethnic representations.

Although the local Malay-Muslim heritage was indeed less frowned upon after the cosmopolitan turn of representation of heritage, it still remained marginalised because international connections were deemed to be absent. The STB conveniently ignored the fact that Singapore-Malay culture had been deliberately constructed as inward-looking, rural and homogeneous, and that existing transnational Malay networks were downplayed in official representations (Kahn 2006). Again, the neglect of Malay heritage for cosmopolitan representations is similar to its minor role during the 1980s, when the contribution of the Malay community to Singapore society and the role of its heritage in identity-building were not defined. As a consolation for the Malay community, the Arabian Zouk plans of the Kampong Glam Business Association have not been implemented. Arguably, government authorities had realised that the absence of Malay heritage from a Malay-Muslim heritage district would be conceptually flawed. The Zouk plans for Bussorah Mall have subsequently been identified as potentially jeopardising the authentic historical character of the district by the URA, because “Singapore never had a Zouk, despite the early presence of Arab traders” (Kelvin Ang, 15 May 2008). The redevelopment authority had hence recognised that further engineering towards a Middle Eastern urban design would “risk carrying the Arab tourism theme to excess” (ibid).

Prompted by the STB’s relentless emphasis on global connections, numerous newspaper articles subsequently also stressed the cosmopolitan environment and “Arabic Buzz” (Yong 2007). Most press reports agree that the district has become “hip” and glamorous, and has started to draw a large crowd of young visitors especially on weekends (Straits Times 17/6/07). The KGBA was quick to take credit for the rise in customer frequentation and the revitalisation of the area. Although the cosmopolitan “Arabic Buzz” appears to have aided the rejuvenation of Kampong
Glam’s businesses, the neglect of local Malay heritage grew into a problem (Yeoh and Huang 1996). The Malay community was eligible for a heritage district according to the underlying CMIO scheme, which had weathered the policy changes in representation of heritage. But they would be left without one if Kampong Glam were portrayed as predominantly Arab. Given the underrepresentation of Malay culture in cosmopolitan rhetoric, it is worth inquiring why the communities’ existing transnational linkages have not been highlighted immediately when the Arab component dominated the marketing images of Kampong Glam. A rationale has been revealed above – the pilgrim trade legacy of the Arabs to Mecca matched the STB’s vision of a cosmopolitan tourism capital so that other traits of Kampong Glam were not deemed necessary to emphasise.

4.4.5 Cosmopolitanism and Malayness – a Mismatch?

The Singapore government did not intend to apply its cosmopolitan aspirations to all Singaporeans (Barr and Skrbis 2008). Applying an inherently elitist approach of classical cosmopolitanism (Pieterse 2006), cosmopolitan Singaporeans were defined as business-savvy degree holders who travelled frequently and took up key positions in the public and private sector. Singapore is also home to a population that the government calls “heartlanders” – average or low-income individuals who live in public housing estates and whose life is centred around these “New Towns” and whose exposure to or networking with foreign cultures is thus limited. In the recent decade, 99% of Malays fall into that category (Chih 2003, Rahim 1998). Given these circumstances it is not hard to imagine why cultural policymakers continue to overlook the cosmopolitan traits of having international connections and business savvy, in the history of Singapore’s Malay community. Similarly, Singapore tourism brokers and planners still doubt the

48 The HDB’s “New Towns” are self-sufficient towns outside of Singapore’s downtown core. The HDB started to build these “New Towns” in the 1960s, based on British planning for new towns around London (Powell 1994). The difference to a suburb is that all Singapore New Towns have commercial facilities and offer work places in order to lower the dependency on the downtown core.
Malay community’s ability to eventually represent a cosmopolitan Singapore (Kahn 2006). The result of such perceptions is that Malay and Muslim heritage was split into an Arab-cosmopolitan and a local “heartlander” Malay component.

Ultimately, Geylang Serai (venue of the rebuilt Malay village) was defined as the “cultural heart of the Malay community” (Kelvin Leong, 16 April 2008) because of its high share of Malay residents, budget shops catering to Malay families and seasonally, the Ramadan Bazaar. Geylang Serai is also located near Bedok New Town, currently one of Singapore’s most “Malay” housing estates, which consistently exceeds the Singapore government’s ceiling on the Malay share of residents (Chih 2003). The STB website reported that ever since the British dissolved a floating Malay village in Singapore River in the 1840s, the Malays had moved to the periphery and subsequently “congregated in Geylang”, with a second wave of migration to the outskirts following the urbanisation of Kampong Glam in the 1920s (www.visitsingapore.com, on ‘Uniquely Singapore’, last assessed 24 November 2009). Geylang Serai is thus presented as an integral part of Singapore’s “heartland”, where visitors can experience locally rooted Malay culture. In contrast, the STB’s website mentions Malay culture in Kampong Glam mostly with references to the past, introducing the Istana as the historic seat of Malay royalty (www.visitsingapore.com, on ‘Uniquely Singapore’, last assessed 21 November 2009). Rarely, but perhaps increasingly is contemporary Malay culture emphasised in Kampong Glam, one example would be a partitioning wall in the MHC, on which outstanding careers of Malays in present-day Singapore are highlighted.

Rahil Ismail (2009) furthers this dichotomy between Geylang, which she says was designated to represent Malay lived culture and Kampong Glam, designated to showcase Singapore Muslim culture for tourists. She argues that tourists should be discouraged from visiting Geylang because of the vulnerability of local Malay culture whereas visitation of Kampong Glam should be
promoted because it was merely a tourism showcase to begin with. This well-intended intellectual effort to advocate sparing Geylang Serai from high-profile marketing is ultimately unfortunate because it perpetuates a siege mentality, depicting local Malay culture as fundamentally incompatible with tourism and transnational connections. Rahil’s insinuation is that fellow Muslim groups such as the Arabs of Kampong Glam should once again act as mediators of Malay interests in terms of representation. They would especially take over the representation of the Malays when it comes to communal matters such as showcasing a global heritage attraction in Kampong Glam while Geylang Serai would serve as a sanctuary for Malay lived culture and best remain untouched or minimally influenced by tourism (Rahil 2009). Ironically, such acting of fellow Muslim migrant groups on behalf of the local Malays is what caused their socio-cultural marginalisation and the neglect of Malay heritage in the first place.

This common split of Malay-Muslim heritage into two components, Arab-international and Malay-local, also affected the representation of heritage of Kampong Glam in international travel literature. Initially, the STB, the URA and other government agencies entrusted with the marketing of the district were unsure about any general headline for Kampong Glam’s promotion efforts and hence reluctant to provide a clear label. The underlying dilemma was the aforementioned gap between a possible Malay emphasis, as required by the CMIO-inclined heritage proportioning, and the alleged incapability of the Malays to represent the cosmopolitan interconnections – hence calling for a substitute in promotion efforts. This gap proved hard to bridge and its persistence resulted in a fairly random representation of Kampong Glam. The suggestions provided range from “Arab quarter” (frequently used by the STB) to “Malay district” (initially favoured by the URA), and have only recently led to a predominant compound representation as “Malay and Muslim precinct” (Quek Ling Xiang, 11 June 2009). This long-lasting confusion about the ethno-cultural labelling of Kampong Glam by Singaporean
stakeholders has directly translated into the district’s representation in tourism guidebooks (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Textual Analysis of Kampong Glam’s Heritage – As Portrayed in Guidebooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Focus of Guidebook</th>
<th>Kampong Glam as… Malay</th>
<th>Kampong Glam as… Arab</th>
<th>Kampong Glam as… Bugis &amp; Transnational Malay</th>
<th>Kampong Glam as… Muslim/Islamic Unspecified</th>
<th>Tie of Muslim (general) and Arab (specific) Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore &amp; Malaysia</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several SE Asian countries, including Singapore</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from 30 Contemporary Guidebooks and Brochures

Table 4.5 shows that most guidebooks refer to an unspecified “Islamic” or “Muslim” label when introducing Kampong Glam (especially guidebooks with a broad geographical scope and a relatively short section on Singapore heritage). Singapore and Malaysia guidebooks prefer the Arab affiliation to a Malay emphasis. Only the most closely focused guidebooks, geographically limited to Singapore, mention a cosmopolitan Malay component, highlighting the Bugis and other Malay people as transnational traders. The representation of heritage in guidebooks emphasises an unspecified Muslim legacy. If specified, however, the Arabs are more frequently mentioned than the local Malays with the cosmopolitan legacy of “transnational” Malays being a niche topic limited to Singapore-focused guides.

In view of this common perception of Malays as “un-cosmopolitan”, some new policy initiatives are indeed aimed at acknowledging the Malay contributions to Singapore’s interconnectedness. It
took some time before the legacy of cosmopolitan “Malayness” was finally highlighted by government officials. In a recent *Straits Times* interview, Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Singapore’s Senior Minister of State and chairman of the Malay Heritage Foundation, said that he is particularly proud of a cartographic achievement exhibited at the MHC. “In school, we learnt about Portuguese and Spanish maps, and explorers such as Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan. But this [here] is a Bugis map of the Malay Archipelago. I use that map to introduce the whole region to visitors of the centre” (*Straits Times* 28/3/09). During the course of the interview, Zainul Abidin elaborates that historical connections between Singaporean Malays “and their Bugis, Javanese, Boyanese and Acehnese cousins from Indonesia” are something the MHC should “dive into” with its future operations (ibid). The example shows a change in attitude by parts of the Singapore government, a change that has occasionally already made its way into official representations of heritage (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Seafaring – Malay Transnational Connections Highlighted

Guides now highlight a Bugis trading vessel during tours of the MHC compound

Similarly, the partitioning wall featuring contemporary Malay achievements in career also highlights the potential of “successful” Singapore-Malays to network with other Malay
“achievers” in neighbouring, culturally-related states. However, initiatives for highlighting the cosmopolitan heritage of the Malay community are still rare and have had only limited success, since powerful imaginations of the Arab community as the only “true” cosmopolitans among Singapore’s Muslim people remain in place (Kahn 2006). In principle, the STB’s new definition of Kampong Glam as “Malay and Muslim” leaves room for cosmopolitan representations also of the Malay community. However, the simultaneously constructed dichotomy between simple/peripheral Geylang with its “lived culture” and urban and glamorous Kampong Glam does not help the cause because Kampong Glam’s character is frequently depicted as “un-Malay” simply because the district’s history shows too many foreign traits and global influences (Rahil 2009).

Ultimately, both districts show different aspects of Malay culture in Singapore. They are potentially complementary to each other, but a categorization into a “local” Geylang Serai and “global” Kampong Glam only limits the development perspectives for both districts. Two elements of Malay and Muslim history in Singapore coexist largely in isolation from each other; one focuses on local Singaporean “Malayness” and the other on a cosmopolitan Muslim or, more specifically, Arab legacy. The two versions remain to be reconciled through an adequate representation of the two elements in each of the districts.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter on the representation of Malay heritage started by discussing the cosmopolitan legacy of Kampong Glam of the colonial era, when the district served as a melting pot for Muslim migrant and local and regional Malay cultures. It discussed the rising frustration of the Singapore Malay community about the self-appointed mediator position of the Arab and Indian Muslim elite regarding issues with the colonial government and the subsequent call for emancipation of the Malay community. These attempts for local Malay empowerment failed in urban Kampong Glam.
in the 1920/30s. Malay reformists of this period believed that the future progress of Singapore’s Malays was achieved by a spatial and cultural separation of local Malays from urban environments and other Muslim migrant groups. Contemporary constructions of Malayness in Singapore have not overcome the socio-political effects of the socially engineered, out-of-sync Kampong Melayu settlement, i.e. the construction and subsequent identification of Malays as rurally dwelling and non-enterprising. No “Malay modernity” compensated for the (self)-conceptualisation of Malays as a homogeneous group of simple village dwellers. Such communalism and activism of the ever more exclusionary defined Malay community in the 1950s became a major obstacle for the prominent display of Malay heritage after independence when the multicultural state of Singapore engaged in nation-building after 1965. Malay activism, especially as centred in Kampong Glam, was remembered for triggering race riots, not for the short-lived urban revival in the post-war period and the cultural contributions of the Malay community to Singapore society.

In terms of the representation of heritage after independence, Kampong Glam has since then taken on the constant role of the latecomer in refurbishment, as most of the local shophouses remained in decay when restoration in Chinatown and elsewhere had started (Sim 1996). In the 1970s, the problematic heritage mattered comparatively little since all ethnic heritage presentations were confined to indoor exhibition spaces. In the 1980s, however, the situation worsened as the Malay contribution to the Asian values discourse could not be exactly defined (Barr and Skrbis 2008). The discourse’s “self-orientalisation” tendencies undergirded both nation-building and representations of heritage, and Malay heritage could thus not be represented prominently, as opposed to Chinese Confucianism with its concrete contribution for instance. Although Kampong Glam became an official heritage district in 1989 along with Chinatown and Little India, no improvement initiatives followed since it remained unclear what Kampong Glam
was meant to represent. Finally, a commercial flagship project on Bussorah Street was initiated to halt the decay, albeit without progress in terms of defining the cultural heritage in Kampong Glam. This long wait in defining Malay and Muslim heritage has made the community’s culture vulnerable to distortions in representations.

Instances indicating such vulnerability cropped up in the 1990s, when the Singapore government embarked on correcting self-orientalisation with cosmopolitan cultural policies. Tourism brokers, led by the STB, saw the opportunity to finally represent Malay and Muslim heritage in Kampong Glam more prominently and reconstructed the legacy of transnational maritime connections of the former port settlement for an attractive display of heritage. But the STB had underestimated the persistence of powerful stereotypes about Malays as locally rooted, un-enterprising and rural-dwelling (today: suburban “heartlanders”); which other government agencies only half-heartedly tackled or altogether ignored, as the long overdue preoccupation with the Malay Village and the simultaneous neglect of urban Malay heritage shows. These stereotypes led to a paradoxical perception of cultural qualities, which hindered and delayed the representation of Malay heritage at a time of a potential opportunity (Imran 2005). An “Arabic Buzz”, not without historical justification because of the Arab dominance in the pilgrim trade, was marketed extensively to make up for alleged “Malay shortcomings” in representing an internationally networked culture. Current initiatives to boost the Malay character of Kampong Glam are only understood in this context of neglect of existing Malay contributions to cosmopolitan connections.

The current representation of Kampong Glam as “less Malay than Arab” is not without alternative, but a logical consequence of a particular interpretation of Malay heritage as rurally-rooted. The underlying fact, assumptions and persistent stereotypes leading to this representation have to be kept in mind when the tangible results of such a conceptualisation of Kampong Glam
as Singapore’s cosmopolitan “Malay and Muslim” heritage district are discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5
Kampong Glam – The Evolution of Built Heritage

5.1 Introduction

Having discussed how cultural heritage has dominated the political and societal discourse of Singapore’s post-colonial era, this chapter explores how these representations have materialised in terms of place and space (section 5.2). The chapter discusses how difficulties with defining Malay-Muslim heritage reduced the number of respective monuments, buildings and meeting points for social gatherings until the end of the 1980s (section 5.3). When the government finally decided to halt the demolition of the heritage sites, it was too late for some as many of the sites around Kampong Glam’s core zone had already been torn down. Hence, organizers of contemporary heritage awareness campaigns and tourism promotion face the difficult task of finding coherent heritage themes in a fragmented landscape. But once the government identified conserving historical neighbourhoods as a valuable endeavour for nation-building in 1988, its city planning authority drafted architectural guidelines to prevent further fragmentation (URA 1988; URA 1989; URA 1991), which also clarified the pathway for conservation, preferring adaptive reuse over preservation (section 5.4)49.

Planners and cultural policymakers then deemed conservation of Kampong Glam necessary because of the new emphasis on ethnic heritage. To showcase Malay and Muslim culture, the government earmarked the remaining landmarks and their surrounding areas for conservation. I introduce the remaining landmarks here as the three “survivors” of urban renewal. Refurbishment works on Sultan Mosque, Bussorah Street, and the Istana Kampong Glam finally started in the 1990s (see sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7). The consecutive sections of the chapter analyse how the

49 In contrast, Singapore architect and writer Robert Powell (1994) and his colleague William Lim (2004) highlighted the importance of historical preservation as a potentially more place-sensitive approach than adaptive reuse because the latter does not ensure continuity in land use (section 5.4).
more recent in-depth consideration of ethnic heritage resulted in spatial changes and how these changes have shaped Kampong Glam’s community life.

Religious landmark Sultan Mosque is the only building that has been preserved, that is, it could retain its original role as a place of worship. Although early plans for the enhancement of ethnic space in Kampong Glam favoured historical preservation as a place-sensitive component of conservation (Lou 1985), i.e. with preservation ensuring a continuity of prevalent activities and land uses, the implementation phase ended up with adaptive reuse as conservation’s major component. Creating Bussorah Mall as a commercial flagship and planning the MHC from scratch demonstrate this tendency, without incorporating existing cultural venues.

In this chapter, I assess tangible ethnic heritage. The chapter investigates changing attitudes towards ethnic heritage and their consequential effects on space. Hence, the chapter features controversial debates about recent attempts to recreate ethnic spaces, particularly at Bussorah Street or within the MHC compound. It thus serves as a basis for analysing how various interest groups react to representations of ethnic space in Kampong Glam. The chapter not only detects changing patterns of representation of heritage, but includes reactions specifically related to spatial changes at a number of landmarks. But I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 6, which provides a more comprehensive evaluation of conservation by various stakeholders beyond spatially manifested aspects.

5.2 Religious Tourism Hub and Trading Centre

Kampong Glam evolved as a port and can be compared with other Islamic Southeast Asian maritime hubs in terms of its early development (Imran 2005). But the area did not evolve as a fully independent port town, but as part of the colonial city of Singapore. With the various ethnic groups assigned to different districts, Singapore grew as a multiracial and polycentric city. The
British administration relocated the main harbour to the Singapore River to exercise tighter control over traded goods as early as the 1820s. The port of Kampong Glam, however, remained in operation but had to focus on trades that the British were not interested in (Perkins 1984). As a settlement, Kampong Glam thus specialised in pilgrim trades catering to the city’s Islamic community while Chinese businesses also had a strong presence (Imran 2007). Likewise, Kampong Glam’s seafront became a hub for Islamic traders. Bugis traders from the Indonesian archipelago, especially, established a strong presence. British colonial administrators were ambivalent about the Bugis’ unsavoury reputation as occasional pirates. They feared the Bugis as a safety threat but welcomed their dubious activities as long as they were carried out in Dutch East India (Perkins 1984). By smuggling goods out of East India, the Bugis helped to undermine the Dutch monopoly on spices and other natural assets, which the British intended to break. The Bugis eventually formed a “shipping alliance” with the Hadramautis, the more established Islamic migrant group from the Arabian Peninsula (Ho 2002, p.29).

This shipping alliance proved important for the development of pilgrim tourism in Singapore. As experienced seafarers in the Indonesian archipelago, the Bugis had connections to many Islamic port cities in the Dutch East Indies (Wong 2003). They transported Hajj pilgrims to the holy sites of Mecca and Medina via Singapore. In Singapore, Hadramauti ships from the British Aden Protectorate (Jemen) would be anchored for further transportation to the final destinations on the Arabian Peninsula. Between ship passages, pilgrim brokers would provide religious travellers with lodging and halal food, i.e. food prepared in accordance with Islamic dietary law (Kamaludeen and Pereira 2008). The brokers also assigned them to selected ships and equipped them with pilgrim attire such as sandals and headwear. Even though Singapore was a stopover for
pilgrim tourists, this supported many businesses in Kampong Glam and grew into a major sector of the local economy\textsuperscript{50}.

Figure 5.1: Medical Examination Centre for Pilgrims in Kampong Glam in 1965

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5_1.jpg}
\caption{Medical Examination Centre for Pilgrims in Kampong Glam in 1965}
\end{figure}

Source: Courtesy of the URA Archives

Imran (2005) provides detailed information about the whereabouts of the pilgrim trades during the 19th century in Singapore. Apart from Bussorah Street, the main artery leading to Sultan Mosque and a prime location for pilgrim brokers (section 5.4.1), several other kampongs or compounds are mentioned as essential for the trades\textsuperscript{51}. Naturally, any street leading from the harbour, where the pilgrims disembarked, to a praying hall located further inland, became an important artery for the Hajj travellers. As pilgrim tourism flourished, the “New Mosque” or Masjid Bahru was built in the 1870s at the end of Jeddah Street (Figure 5.2). Jeddah Street and the new mosque were located about 700 metres east of Bussorah Street. In contrast to Sultan Mosque or Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, Masjid Bahru was Kampong Glam’s only mosque that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{50} Since the transportation of pilgrims was a business in which neither the Dutch nor the British were interested, the pilgrim business flourished in Kampong Glam without the interference of either colonial power.

\textsuperscript{51} Today, the names of Haji Lane or Bali Lane remind us of the former pilgrim compounds, the latter being named after the origin of an influential pilgrim broker from Northern Bali.
\end{flushright}
maintained the three-tiered tiled roof typical of Southeast Asian places of Islamic worship (Imran 2005). But being a fine example of regional architecture did not save the mosque and Jeddah Street, an area formerly known as Kampung Bahru, from demolition during urban renewal in the 1960s. Today, the area is a green field located just outside the boundaries of the Kampong Glam conservation zone. With the destruction of Kampung Bahru and the exclusion of Hajjah Fatimah Mosque from the conservation zone, tourism brokers, who wanted to revive the tradition of Islam-related tourism in the 1990s, had to concentrate on Bussorah Street.

Figure 5.2: Jeddah Street Leading to Masjid Bahru

After Kampong Glam was declared a heritage district in 1989, the URA initiated urban renewal projects – started by the revamp of Bussorah Street – within the conservation district. As the state agencies in charge, the STB and the URA would commercially revitalise the district and improve the tourism profile by redesigning streetscapes and beautifying shophouses. Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong (1994), along with other cultural researchers, criticised earlier state intervention within heritage districts. They especially questioned the downplaying of lived street culture at
Chinatown and pointed out the “fake” sorting of streets according to tourism themes, so that the URA and the STB should have known about the pitfalls of conservation and tourism-centred approaches. As a response to such criticism, the long history of pilgrim tourism in Kampong Glam came in handy for both agencies. Thus, the STB and the URA used the ancient pilgrim trades as a tool to evoke a feeling of historicity and continuity when actually, a re-interpretation of heritage with a reshaping of ethnic space was taking place. Indeed, when refurbishing the conservation core area for commercial and tourism purposes, Bussorah Street was architecturally infused with Arab influences through mosaics with oriental motives on the pavement. This was intended to revive the ancient cultural and architectural links to the Middle East (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Arab Mosaic Tiles at Bussorah Mall

The star mosaics follow a Middle Eastern style of ornamentation.

The ancient pilgrim trade and its transcontinental connections provide the tourism board a justification for the re-infusion of cosmopolitan and “exotic” Arab elements into the local environment. The re-infusion of heritage was planned from scratch rather than deduced from the
course of history. Pilgrim tourism rapidly declined after the 1960s and was of minor importance for the heritage district in the 1990s. When conservation began, the Islamic theme was reactivated for marketing purposes rather than as a sign of local grassroots revival. The URA-directed revamp of Bussorah Street into Bussorah Mall featured an Arab aesthetic to compensate for the commercial focus of the project (Rahil 2009). The architectural focus on Arab heritage in conjunction with the pilgrim tourism legacy is misleading because it overemphasises the Middle Eastern connection. Granted, all pilgrims wanted to depart for the Middle East, but most of them arrived from the Indonesian archipelago (Imran 2005). The cultural practices infused into Kampong Glam’s streets and alleys via pilgrim tourism were those of the Boyanese, Javanese or Northern Balinese Islamic cultures – regional Muslim societies from the East Indies. The pilgrims spent a couple of weeks in Mecca before a stopover on their return, but they had lived in regional Muslim societies their entire lives before deciding to leave for their Hajj travel. Moreover, some of the pilgrims had insufficient funding to continue their pilgrim journey and permanently stayed on in Singapore and subsequently mingled with the local population (Imran 2005, Perkins 1984).

Khalid Shukur Bakri, the MHC’s senior manager, affirmed the importance of regional connections: “Pilgrims who were unable to move on integrated into local society. People here jokingly called them ‘Haji Singapura’ and usually received them well” (16 January 2008).

In terms of architecture, Imran (2005) traced buildings, streets and compounds in Kampong Glam back to their regional connections through the records of certain pilgrim brokers. He also detected architectural links primarily to Bali and Java. Arab architectural influences due to the pilgrim connections are marginal\textsuperscript{52}. All this is not to say that Arab influences do not exist in Kampong Glam, as they have been highlighted in a previous chapter (section 4.1.1). However, the pilgrim

\textsuperscript{52} Contrary to popular belief, the “Arab” style of the mosque has no relation with pilgrim tourism. In fact, it is Indo-Saracenic architecture (section 5.4.2), which was popular in the British Empire and mostly applied by Western architects for projects co-financed by the British colonial administration (Imran 2007).
tourism business is not a major component of the said Arabian ties but a story of regional connections. Therefore, it does not ideally fit into the “exotic” Arabic theme that is presently highlighted at Kampong Glam. Historically, Islamic pilgrim tourism has played an important role at Kampong Glam. But tying it to an Arab theme for marketing purposes does not paint an accurate picture of the district’s history. The same can be said for attempts to construct a continuous legacy of inbound Islamic tourism. Urban renewal has disrupted the continuity with the past at and around Kampong Glam’s conservation zone. Recent attempts to re-infuse Malay and Muslim character into the conservation zone might help to reconnect future generations with their past, but to base those attempts on incorrect assumptions of continuity would be to distort historical records of local ethnic culture.

5.3 The Fragmentation of Islamic Heritage

Section 4.2.2 focused on the perception of Kampong Glam immediately after independence, a time when its Malay-Muslim heritage was deemed problematic (Hussin 2005). As an ethnic enclave, Kampong Glam was considered to be a breeding ground for communalist activities of Malay nationalists, in which questions of land use, for instance of the Istana compound, easily became politicised (Narayanan 2004). The district’s tangible heritage was deemed undesirable then and several pilot projects of urban renewal were targeted at Kampong Glam. The district was coded as “Precinct N1” with regard to locality and priority, meaning that it was accorded the highest priority for urban renewal of all districts north of the Singapore River (Gan 1981). The Singapore government initiated urban renewal, intending to improve the living standards of inhabitants. At the same time, urban renewal meant that the government had to resolve the racial tensions, often through the resettlement of residents and also through a tabula rasa, that is, a “destroy and rebuild” approach to the built environment and ethnic heritage sites (Lim 2004, Yuen 2004). The government intended urban renewal to “result in the rebuilding of obsolete
properties in the Central Area, with comprehensive planning of pedestrian/vehicular traffic systems” (Gan 1981).

Figure 5.4: Map of Kampong Glam’s Sub-Zones and Heritage Attractions

Inner-city areas were officially demolished as part of a slum clearance programme. The Singapore government frequently cited social, rather than racial, reasons for the prompt removal
of these settlements (Perkins 1984, Yuen 2004). Even though many other historical areas of Singapore would be demolished to facilitate a “better” standard of life, the immediately implemented “pilot” project of slum clearance around the Kampong Glam ethnic district after independence also bears witness to a distrust of racial “ghettoisation” by the Singapore administration. Hence, demolition was at least partly due to racial motives (Chih 2003).

5.3.1 Urban Renewal and an Isolated “Survivor”: Hajjah Fatimah Mosque

Outside Kampong Glam’s core conservation zone, which was ultimately saved for conservation, major parts of Kampong Glam such as the Crawford area and Clyde Terrace were demolished in the 1960s and 1970s (Gamer 1972). These and other clearances of squatters and Malay kampongs outside the core zone caused “severe disruptions to ethnic based identities and traditions” (Lim 2004, p.15). It was only in hindsight that the ethnic heritage outside the district’s central zone was once again acknowledged as being more diverse than merely symbolising Malay nationalism or Muslim fundamentalism, and of broader cultural value rather than potentially threatening. Perkins (1984) said that ethnic space had been recognised as a natural feature of a cityscape:

Kampong Glam’s Crawford was chosen as one of the pilot projects of urban renewal. The area was known as Precinct N1 and when demolition began in 1966. 1,828 families and businesses had to be relocated from the 90-odd acre site. The area… housed a colourful community of Javanese, Bawaen, Malay, Bugis and Chinese and at the time some strongly resisted being moved from this traditional Islamic district (p.26).

Only Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, since 1979 designated as a national monument, was spared the bulldozer, but after urban renewal it stands isolated from the conservation area, sandwiched between commercial centres and high-rise public housing blocks.

On the problem of isolated historic landmarks in Singapore, Smith said that such buildings “require compatible urban context if their significance is to be fully communicated to tourists” (1988, p.246). This prerequisite is not always met; the URA City Gallery, for instance, features a
city model that illustrated the separation of the Hajjah Fatimah national monument from the Malay/Muslim heritage district (Figure 5.5). From the perspective of Hajjah Fatimah Mosque at the foreground, the massive apartment blocks that were built during early urban renewal form a barrier around the conserved low-rise structures of the historic district and isolate Hajjah Fatimah.

In the background of the picture (see arrows) are Kampong Glam’s main attractions, the Sultan Mosque and the MHC.

Figure 5.5: Hajjah Fatimah Mosque after Urban Renewal – Linking Insular Heritage Sites back to the Conservation Core

Check out other delightful gems off the beaten track...

14. Drop by a unique, square-shaped mosque
- Mosque Hajjah Fatimah, 58H Beach Road

Also known popularly as “Roche Mosque”, this elegant mosque was founded by Hajjah Fatimah, a wealthy Malaccan Malay lady who married a Bugis merchant trader. To orientate it towards Mecca, it sits with a square building footprint at a skewed angle within a rectangular site. The mosque has a single prominent octagonal minaret shaped like a tower that was gazetted as a National Monument on 6 July 1973.

Source: URA 2005

Hajjah Fatimah Mosque was built in 1846 and is a religious site with a peculiar history. A wealthy woman from the Malay aristocracy donated the mosque. A Muslima donating funds is a rare occurrence in Islamic history and it is an example of the high status of women within the Muslim community in Southeast Asia (Chua 2000). The mosque has been refurbished and remains an architecturally interesting sight, but it has been spatially separated from the heritage
district. The STB and the URA struggle to reintegrate it into the Kampong Glam legacy. The two agencies independently came up with a walking map linking this “off-the-beaten-track” mosque (URA 2005) and other Malay and Muslim sights at the existing conservation area. Ironically, their listing of attractions situated outside the conservation zone’s narrow boundaries draws attention once more to a missed opportunity. Had the government defined the boundaries of the conservation zone more widely, more attractions could have been included within, which would have allowed for more coherence in the representation of heritage as presently achieved (Yeoh and Huang 1996). But the original structure of this mosque remains and can be visited with a small detour from the main conservation area. The fate of other Islamic sites around the present-day conservation area was not as fortunate, which I will discuss in the next section.

5.3.2 Exclusion II: The Madrasah Al-Junied and the Aristocratic Graveyard

Many Islamic monuments can be found in the strip of open space north of the conservation zone. This excluded area is also the site of the ancient royal burial grounds. In his analysis of the evolution of Kampong Glam, Imran (2005) traced the existence of these graveyards back to the 1830s and said the royal graveyard was an important feature of major regional maritime cities. Hence, the areas adjacent to graveyards were considered prestigious locations for certain land uses such as craftsmen quarters. The subsequent developments to the North of Kampong Glam support this idea. The graveyard area houses several keramat -- Muslim shrines for the dead. A mosque is located at the northeast while a notable madrasah, an Islamic religious school, donated by a Singaporean-Arab trading family, the Aljunieds, was located at the north-western side until 1996 (Yeoh and Huang 1996). In addition, wealthy Islamic families built elevated and occasionally covered platforms for their family tombs (Figure 5.6).
The yellow colour symbolises the connection with Malay royalty.
Descendents of the Johor Sultanate’s royal family are buried here in tombs on elevated platforms.

This area thus combines elements of Islamic worship, remembrance and education, and it was largely intact until the mid-1990s (Hamzah 1996). But the Singapore redevelopment authorities planned to convert the graveyard into a park, for which the historic madrasah building and family tombs had to be demolished. Besides the fact that demolition “demonstrates a lack of sensitivity of the cultural practices of the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore”, local visitors and tourists would also not have the opportunity to experience its distinctive heritage53 (Yeoh and Huang 1996, p.421).

The Madrasah Al-Junied was built in a similar style as the Sultan’s palace, combining Malay elements with colonial influences (Alwiyah 1997). In 1997, the historical building was replaced by a concrete structure of unremarkable architecture just beside the original location. Next to the original madrasah, the Aljunied family tombs were exhumed and the void platform neglected.

53 According to Alwiyah (1997), removal of burial grounds and places of ancestral worship is a common occurrence in Singapore in the past few decades and not just at Kampong Glam (Comaroff 2007).
The family continues to do business in the nearby conservation core zone of Kampong Glam. Even though descendents readily participated in a survey about the economic situation within this core zone for this research, they declined to be interviewed about their feelings concerning the clearance activities outside of the existing conservation boundaries. Figure 5.7 shows the historic madrasah building (top left) and its modern replacement (top right), the well maintained family tombs in the 1990s (bottom left), and the currently deserted and dilapidated platform (bottom right).

Figure 5.7: The Madrasah Al-Junied and Family Tombs in the 1990s (left) and today

Source: Hamzah 1996 (left)
Alwiyah (1997) pointed out that there was a need to modernise and expand the existing *madrasah* during the mid-1990s due to the steady growth in student numbers. But the grounds once occupied by the historical school building have remained unoccupied since then and at the time of writing. Why has the government not considered alternative uses, such as an information centre on Islamic education? Alwiyah said that the cemetery could also have served as an educational venue for Malay history, but that “cemeteries in Singapore have unfortunately not acquired the status of being useful learning tools” (1997, p.29). Not all Islamic sights in the northern part of Kampong Glam have been demolished or have deteriorated. The royal tombs remain even though their future is uncertain. The Malabar Mosque, too, remains as a landmark. Similar to its efforts to put Masjid Hajjah Fatimah into spatial context with the heritage zone, the URA tried to link the Malabar Mosque back to the conservation area. Referring to the core conservation zone, the URA’s promotion material asks tourists to visit Malabar Mosque, which it calls “the other mosque with the golden roof” (2005, p.19), differentiating it from the Sultan Mosque at the centre of Kampong Glam.

Likewise, an award-winning guided walking tour also features the royal graveyards (www.singaporewalks.com, last assessed 10 December 2009). As a participant observer, I joined the walking tour. The cemetery area north of Kampong Glam’s core zone is the last stop of an intensive tour schedule. This fact and its isolation from the designated conservation zone left some participants confused upon the abrupt ending of the tour on the periphery of Kampong Glam. When I approached the participating tourists for their impression of Kampong Glam and the way the heritage was presented, a tourist said:

> Where am I now? I lost orientation. Where are the shops we visited and the restaurant mile? Am I supposed to climb over this fence [line separator of Victoria Street main artery] to get back? This is a strange kind of no-man’s land here.

(British Tourist, on guided walking tour, 17 April 2008)
The bewilderment demonstrated the difficulties of relaying the cultural value of the Islamic graveyard across to tourists since it is hard for them to see the value of such sites when they are dilapidated or in partial ruin. Although a few Islamic heritage sites remain intact in the northern vicinity of the official conservation area, other historical Islamic structures have been demolished. Similar to the case of Hajjah Fatima, the remaining scattered structures of the excluded graveyard area are not easily put back into context with Kampong Glam’s core conservation zone and principal landmarks.

5.3.3 Maritime Heritage – The Bygone Function as a Maritime Hub

The previous sections highlight the fragmentation of heritage as a result of the removal of structures. This section offers an interesting variation to this theme, focusing on land reclamation as being an “add-on” to the urban environment. Yet this addition actually resulted in the loss of a key element of local cultural heritage – its maritime connection. Singapore has a history of reclaiming land to create additional space for a growing population (Glaser, Haberzettl et al. 1991). Apart from the coastal strip of Kampong Glam, other conservation areas such as Joo Chiat, Boat Quay and Clarke Quay were equally affected by land reclamation, i.e. by the growing distance to the seashore. The two quays, however, could retain their waterfront location despite the growing distance because the Singapore River continues to “flow” through the areas. The quays’ waterfront ambience could thus be retained even if it were modernised as a post-industrial dining, wining and clubbing hubs (Chang, Huang et al. 2004, Savage, Huang et al. 2004, Chang and Huang 2005b). Boat tours for tourists continue to be offered at Boat Quay and Clarke Quay. The fact that they were centres of colonial entrepot trading might not be immediately obvious, but the interested visitor can catch a glimpse of that maritime history through the remaining seafaring structures (Chen 1994, Yuen and Ng 2001).
In contrast, Kampong Glam, once a hub for sea trade and a haven for pilgrim tourists, has lost all visible contacts to its maritime heritage. The picture on the right in Figure 5.8 is of Beach Road, which used to be the district’s waterfront and today its southern border, during the 1950s. The star indicates the location of the Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, which by then stood a block away from the waterfront and had already lost the auxiliary function as a lighthouse for arriving ships, its role during the 19th and early 20th century (Imran 2005). A few scattered ships can still be seen off the “new” coastline of Kampong Glam in the 1950s picture, scarce reminders of its heyday as a maritime hub. The left picture shows Beach Road a few hundred metres west of Hajjah Fatimah Mosque in the 1980s. A skyscraper super block has replaced the small houses at the coastal side of Beach Road. Further land reclamation has taken place at the skyscraper’s “coastal” edge, rendering Kampong Glam an inland location far away from the shoreline.

Figure 5.8: Land Reclamation and Beach Road in the 1980s and 1950s

With the coastline out of sight, a crucial part of Kampong Glam’s heritage, its maritime ambience, has gradually been lost. As this research project’s business survey shows, the shops related to water sports and activities continue to make an impact on the area’s business profile, with 12 outlets located at the southern end. Consisting of eight shops along Beach Road and scattered outlets at Baghdad Street and Bali Lane, this cluster of fishing and diving outlets is a holdover of the era when maritime trade was a familiar occupation at Kampong Glam. In a
pragmatic turn, the STB and other planning agencies chose to highlight Beach Road as “a haunt for fishing enthusiasts” (URA 2005, p. 16) in the aforementioned walking guide of Kampong Glam as a way to commemorate the maritime heritage. The slogan “stroll along where the beach used to be” (URA 2005) is both an acknowledgement of lost heritage and a marketing ploy to lure tourists into the “concentration of fishing accessory shops here” (ibid). Even if this strategy generates tourism revenue, it cannot bring back the maritime atmosphere. Although the speciality shopowners interviewed openly admitted that they support the URA’s “beach stroll” campaign mainly due to self-interest, they have no illusions about the non-authenticity of the pragmatic marketing approach. The statement of a fishing gear shopowner demonstrates the typical attitude of the other related businesses in the area:

The district and the walking map is purely commercial and for tourism. It is all fake, but it kind of works.

(Beach Road Shopowner, 11 March 2008)

Promoting the maritime heritage as an important historic component of Kampong Glam existed in the past, too. Ellen Lou’s (1985) extensive research on conservation opportunities in Kampong Glam lists maritime trades as the first point under “Major Concepts and Strategies” for conservation (p.149). Her proposed procedures today read like a collection of lost opportunities, especially since her manual for the enhancement of maritime heritage is detailed and takes technical and architectural realities into consideration. Acknowledging that the physical connection to the water has been permanently lost due to land reclamation, Lou said providing a visual link to the shoreline could “restor[e] ‘access to the water’ from Kampong Glam, with new focal points along the water, [and] re-create a historical atmosphere and help visitors relate Kampong Glam with its maritime trade story. [...] Kampong Glam’s linkage with the sea will be represented symbolically with sculptures marking the historical shorelines along Beach Road and Nicoll Highway” (1985, p.153). She not only suggested beautifications based on an historic
waterfront theme, but also linked this to community life, tourism marketing and business revitalisation. Even though the STB had access to Lou’s detailed study to counter the depletion of maritime heritage before conservation begun, the implementation phase reduced the maritime heritage to a row of shops for water sport aficionados. Although most of Lou’s suggestions were shelved, recent efforts to diversify the accessible aspects of Kampong Glam’s history have led to isolated installations of maritime signifiers. Today, both the compound and the exhibition rooms of the MHC allude to the maritime theme (Figure 5.9). But the objects on display are static and appear to be out of context and are thus not conducive to attract attention to the maritime aspect of Kampong Glam’s heritage, said Erica Danielson, a Canadian exhibition designer involved in various cultural projects in Singapore (5 March 2009). Particularly, the aforementioned replica of a Bugis trading vessel in the compound of the heritage centre seems out of place, “stranded” in today’s landlocked district (Figure 4.2).

Figure 5.9: Maritime Heritage on Display at the MHC

The STB did not capitalise on opportunities to enhance the maritime theme during the initial phase of conservation. Hence, it is much harder to provide coherent visuals of Kampong Glam’s maritime connections to tourists and visitors, especially since the visual connection to the
waterfront has been lost and Lou’s plans (1985) for a walking trail along marine sculptures were not implemented.

5.3.4 Pondok Jawa I – A Cultural Centre for Javanese Migrants

Pondok Jawa, the Malay term for a Javanese hut, refers to a one-storey building that was erected next to the Sultan’s Istana compound at the centre of Kampong Glam. Imran (2005) traced its construction back to 1835 and describes it as a “Javanese cultural hall” (p.12). In the 19th century, Javanese royalty frequented the building to attend performances of classical Javanese opera and wayang kulit, a shadow puppet show. Alwiyah (1997) and Perkins (1984) give a slightly different record of the Pondok Jawa, presenting it as a centre for vernacular culture, stressing its role as a homestead for Javanese bachelors and a meeting point for Javanese immigrants. As a meeting point for this Muslim community, which came from the neighbouring territory of what is now known as Indonesia, Pondok Jawa has played a vital role in shaping Islamic cultural heritage in the area. All authors agreed that Pondok Jawa’s prominence declined during the second half of the 20th century, when it became a marketplace for Javanese food sellers. It gradually lost its role as a cultural venue, due to a general change in entertainment preferences tied to the rise of movie theatres and amusement parks in Singapore and worldwide (Alwiyah 1997).

Pondok Jawa functioned as a food haven until the early 1990s. But the house was not utilised frequently and became a storage room for mobile food stalls of local hawkers during the 1980s (Imran 2005). On the “intra-segregation” of the local Muslim community around Pondok Jawa, local cultural researcher Ahmad Norhayati wrote that the immoral and “loose” lifestyle of some Javanese Muslims had adversely affected the relations of local Malays with the Javanese “migrant” community (1987, p.62). The latter was accused of showing locally unacceptable behaviour and being “out of place” in an Islamic district even though Javanese migrants had
resided at Kampong Glam for more than a century by then. A Malay resident and informant described the Javanese as “lacking in tumoninah” or etiquette (cited in Norhayati 1987, p.62). Many were allegedly involved in gambling, drinking and prostitution around the Pondok Jawa, and some Javanese supposedly used their former cultural centre for such activities (ibid).

Whatever the activities that took place around Pondok Jawa, the once well-reputed cultural centre started to deteriorate. Ellen Lou’s 1985 pre-conservation report described the building as “badly deteriorated and covered with layers of temporary sheds”, but she argued for its restoration, highlighting that “financial incentives and technical advice will be needed to achieve this preservation goal (ibid, p.159). Even after the government designated Kampong Glam as a conservation district in 1989, Pondok Jawa did not receive such support. Eight years later, Ahmad Norhayati (1987) reports that the Pondok Jawa had ended up “in shambles and [was] no [longer] fit for staying by the mid-1990s” (p.27). Despite Kampong Glam’s status as a conservation zone, the government decided to demolish this building. Pondok Jawa suffered a similar fate to other buildings such as the Masjid Bahru-mosque that were torn down due to the drastic urban renewal approaches of the 1960s and 1970s.

Representatives of the MHC offered no comment on the issue of the Pondok Jawa demolition during interviews. As the centre’s operator, the Malay Heritage Foundation stated that “the structure had to be demolished since it was deemed unsafe” in its online overview of Kampong Glam’s historic sites (www.malayheritage.org.sg, last accessed 19 August 2009). Today, a lawn has grown where the house once stood and some benches have been installed. Coincidentally, because of a “haunted tree” here, tourists still visit the lot as part of a “spooky-themed” night-walking tour (Hamzah 1996). Otherwise, there are no traces of what were once Pondok Jawa and its cultural heritage. It is hard to determine whether the demolition of Pondok Jawa was indeed unavoidable because of the violation of security standards or whether it was caused by a
technocratic planning approach with hypersensitivity to building codes combined with disregard for local attachment to places. But by not preserving Pondok Jawa, Singapore has lost the connection to its legacy of Javanese migration.

5.3.5 Pondok Jawa II – A New Approach to Heritage Presentation?

What makes Pondok Jawa noteworthy is the innovative approach the URA seems to apply to its proposed re-erection in 2010. The URA claims to have employed a modification of its usual principle of unconditionally awarding the land to the highest bidder when tendering, now giving preferential treatment to “culturally sensitive” land uses (anonymous source, conservation expert, 15 March 2008). This cultural dimension in the URA’s business revitalisation strategy is remarkable, especially since the state-owned lot where the Pondok Jawa used to stand is a central location next to the refurbished heritage centre and near scarce parking space. Many individuals, groups and organisations have expressed interest in buying the land for development. Dr. Ameem Talib, head of the Kampong Glam Business Association, for instance would like to erect an Arab cultural centre at the respective lot to revive the “rich Arab trading tradition” (22 March 2008). At the time of writing, it is unclear whether this or other cultural concepts will materialise. According to an informant, the URA has approached selected local business owners and cultural brokers to draft design studies with integrated use concepts for the former Pondok Jawa land. Accordingly, the land will be awarded to the party, which can guarantee a land use that’s commercially viable and in line with the Islamic heritage (anonymous source, conservation expert, 15 March 2008).

Although the lot on which the Pondok Jawa once stood is small, the design studies concept approach is a major policy change, since it might imply not honouring the highest bidder principle. Local business owners and researchers have criticised the authority for its materialistic approach (Kong 2000b, Chang and Teo 2001, Chang and Huang 2005b). Awarding the Pondok
Jawa plot to an applicant based on the quality of his or her land use concept would be an innovative step for the recreation of Islamic heritage in Singapore. Such an alternative for the reuse of land would provide a chance to infuse new Malay and Muslim character to the area. This would go beyond the URA’s usual efforts to reconnect fragmented heritage into its spatial context through walking links. Having discussed the demolition, fragmentation, isolation of Islamic heritage over the past sections, the Pondok Jawa example would add “recreation” to the list of possible pathways of representations of heritage if the plans materialised as drafted.

5.4 Technical Basics of Conservation – Legal Guidelines for Ethnic Space in Singapore

In the previous chapter, I noted that the government started to conserve historical districts in the 1980s as a way to promote a national identity based on Asian values; the CMIO scheme was put in place to shape a cohesive society aware of its multicultural history. These ambitious aims are challenging to meet since conservation activities in Singapore depend largely on private sector investment. The state limits itself to set the legal framework by drafting conservation manuals, which are decidedly business-friendly, to lure private investment into conservation zones. Conservation started with the lifting of rent control in 1989. “Rent decontrol” for buildings in conservation zones was an important legal tool to attract private investment to inner-city areas without businesses relying on government funding (Powell 1994). This reluctance to provide government funding constitutes a shift in policy. During urban renewal projects in the 1960s and 1970s, the Singapore government had invested directly in housing estates, which were built on many cleared inner-city sites, not only during the construction phase but also subsequently, in the form of rent subsidies for the tenants of the new public housing estates. Then, the state had actively designed the population composition of the new residential environments. It assigned ethnic quotas to maintain the racial balance and, by means of these quotas, intended to pre-empt any communalist activity (Chih 2003). One might suppose that the state would also take the lead
in shaping the conservation zones to ensure a distinct cultural and ethnic character for each zone. This was, however, not the case.

Compared to the high degree of state intervention during the 1970s, the conservation procedures of the 1980s were profoundly different in implementation. Despite claims that the maintenance, and possibly strengthening, of the distinct character of conservation zones would be of crucial national importance, the Singapore government never granted subsidies or incentives for traditional businesses that enhanced the historic atmosphere (Perry et al. 1997). The state only directly intervened in pioneer conservation areas such as Emerald Hill and Tanjong Pagar, which is a part of Chinatown, where the URA restored historic shophouses (Lee 2004). But this approach was gradually abandoned. Subsequently, the only way of ensuring the conformity of free market activities with conservation aims of identity development was the list of permitted building uses in conservation zones, included in all conservation manuals (URA 1988, 1989). In spite of the URA’s crucial role as a mediator between business and cultural interests, its key list of legal land uses included a wide range of permitted commercial activities; nearly all “non-polluting businesses” (URA 1989) would be automatically allowed. This, along with the welcoming of fresh investment in the form of new businesses, has contributed to a profound change in character of conservation zones. They did not lead to the preservation of traditional activities as reports on the largest ethnic heritage district Chinatown show (Yeoh and Kong 1994; Kwok 2000).

In addition to the changing role of the state, I shall define three technical terms describing ways to deal with heritage before I analyse spatial changes brought on by conservation efforts. Singaporean architect, lecturer and writer Robert Powell (1994, p.17) has defined conservation in Singapore as “an all-encompassing term” that “means the process of looking after a building (or an urban space) so as to retain its cultural significance”. His research distinguishes between
historic preservation and adaptive reuse as two components of “conservation”. Regarding the former, “the preservation of an historic building (or an urban space) means maintaining the structural fabric in its existing state and retarding deterioration” (ibid, p.17). In contrast, “adaptive reuse” has been defined as “the modification of a building to accommodate a compatible new use. It is sometimes referred to as “‘recycling’ an old building” (ibid). From here on, conservation is thus referred to as the overall process of refurbishing the frequently rundown sites, which only started in the 1990s for Kampong Glam. A few Singaporean architects such as William (Lim (2004) and Robert Powell (1994) have said that conservation requires a “messy” mix of methods. Therefore, a clear distinction among its various components, such as adaptive reuse or historic preservation, would be near to impossible. In spite of this, this chapter concludes that “adaptive reuse” clearly dominates the approach to conservation in Singapore while “historic preservation” has been generally limited to the conservation of Sultan Mosque.

5.5 Sultan Mosque: A Landmark of Rare Continuity

5.5.1 The Preservation of the Mosque

Although Singapore is a secular state, religious practice is highly encouraged as a moral basis for good citizenry that must be separate from national politics (Kamaludeen and Pereira 2008). When urban renewal policies resulted in the resettlement of many inner-city residents to the periphery, the government made sure that land was set aside in the New Towns, the self-sufficient high-rise developments erected by the HDB, for places of worship for various religions, including new mosques (Kong 2000a). Similarly, the government prioritised the preservation of religious landmarks in inner-city districts undergoing urban renewal (Perry et al. 1997, p.259). In many cases, religious landmarks stand out amid otherwise revamped neighbourhoods, where high-rise
buildings replace the traditional shophouse. Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, for example, is the only building preserved in the Crawford pioneer area for urban renewal next to Kampong Glam (see section 5.3.1).

Still, the destruction of Masjid Bahru (section 5.2) demonstrates that the status as a place of worship is no guarantee against demolition. In the case of Sultan Mosque, the URA’s decision to preserve it was made much earlier than that of the other sites in the surrounding area. The Singapore government designated Sultan Mosque as a National Monument in 1975 (Powell 1994) while Kampong Glam was chosen for conservation only in 1989. As with the conservation of most religious buildings in Singapore, the “adaptive reuse” approach was not considered since tearing the country’s oldest mosque down would have caused uproar in the Muslim community. Since the mid-1970s, it was clear the Sultan Mosque was to remain unchanged, an anomaly in ever-changing Singapore. Arguably, that has enabled the Singapore Muslim community to continue to have a strong sense of attachment to this famous landmark.

Yet, earlier in its history, the colonial administration had commissioned major changes to the mosque’s building structure after World War II. The original Sultan Mosque had a tiered-roof, which reflected the Southeast Asian regional architecture for Islamic places of worship. In 1924, an Irish architect rebuilt the mosque in the Indo-Saracenic style, which was then popular in the British Empire. The Indo-Saracenic style is eclectic and features some elements of the Mediterranean Muslim architecture of the Saracens, but freely combines these elements with other Islamic architectural traits regardless of their geographical origin. The Indo-Saracenic architecture is thus a “fantasy style” that architectural purists has criticised, saying that it does not stand for anything concrete but epitomises colonial practices of “Othering”, sweepingly

---

54 The Singapore shophouse traditionally combines residential and commercial use under one roof.
combining many Islamic stylistics elements into a “fusion-style” architecture cut off from its historical roots (Imran 2005).

I argue here that it eventually became a popular architectural style across the many countries and continents of the British Empire, thus highlighting transnational connections within the contemporary colonial framework. In any case, the colonial reconstruction lasted four years and resulted in a completely new structure (Powell 1997). Critics claim that the rebuilt mosque did not reflect local culture due to its alien architecture (Imran 2007). This is debatable since the “colonial cosmopolis” of Singapore consisted of immigrants who came from various parts of the British Empire and also from beyond its borders. For instance, the Arab immigrants actually came from the British Aden protectorate and its hinterland on the South-western Arabian Peninsula, the Hadramaut region of Yemen. As a result of this large-scale and diverse migration patterns, Kampong Glam, the designated Malay and Muslim district, was home to a heterogeneous community with cultural influences from beyond the region (section 4.2). These cosmopolitan connections were thus reflected in the hybrid Indo-Saracenic architecture of the mosque. Even though the Indo-Saracenic style comprises countless input elements from different regions and is thus not authentic to any specific culture, it probably portrays the manifold cultural influences in Kampong Glam as good as any mosque in “conventional” Southeast Asian tiered-tiled roof architectural style (Figure 5.2).

Naturally, having an Islamic place of worship in regional style, such as the former Masjid Bahru, as well as a cosmopolitan-inspired mosque would best reflect the range of cultural influences at Kampong Glam. After urban renewal, however, Sultan Mosque is the only “surviving” place of

---

55 It is difficult to interpret the feelings of locals about the alteration from regional to Saracenic style in hindsight; when it was constructed in the 1920s, local Muslims might have contested the changes because they saw them as an exercise of European colonial hegemony by the Irish architect (Alatas 1977).
worship within the conservation zone and due to its Indo-Saracenic style, the architecture at Kampong Glam is often mistaken for being of Arab origin (Imran 2005). I mentioned this in my prior discussion of the Arab tourism theme along Bussorah Mall; this erroneous attribution contributes to the overemphasis on Arab heritage. Ironically, the carpet that we see today in the main prayer hall, which was donated by a sheik, is the only Arab element at Sultan Mosque. Yet, such incorrect presumptions remain, possibly to justify the STB’s overall “Arab” tourism theme (Hamzah 2002). In any case, the physical appearance of Sultan Mosque has not been altered significantly since the reconstruction of the 1920s. An annex for social events was built in 1993, also in the Indo-Saracenic style; hence, it is architecturally similar to the main building. Because both the form and function of the mosque have not changed substantially, Sultan Mosque remains a popular venue for many local Malays and Muslims.

Figure 5.10: The Mosque as a Draw for Locals

![Reasons cited for visiting Kampong Glam - local visitors](image)

Source: Author’s fieldwork (January-October 2008)

Figure 5.10 presents the reasons Singaporeans visit Kampong Glam. Although most people go there to shop or dine, many also viewed the mosque as a spiritual place of great importance. Nearly 30% of local visitors said they visited Kampong Glam to fulfil religious duties, pray at the mosque or volunteer at the attached community club.
5.5.2 Limitations of a Single Landmark

Despite the important role Sultan Mosque plays, it takes more than just preserving a historic landmark to revitalise the entire conservation zone. Its appeal is limited to Singapore’s Muslim community (Hamzah 2002). The striking exterior of the mosque is great for promotional material (URA 2005), but the interior is plain and there is little impetus for non-Muslims to visit. For example, non-Muslim tourists cannot access the praying hall at the mosque unless a special tour is booked. Even the weekly guided tour of Kampong Glam which takes tourists to the mosque between praying times, stops short of the main hall. These facts have led to occasional complaints by Western tourists. A Polish backpacker, for instance, told me: “All churches in Europe are accessible to everyone, so frankly, I am disappointed I can only see the inside from behind this barrier” (15 April 2008). Clearly, the mosque’s role as a place of worship limits its tourism potential. To enhance Kampong Glam’s appeal to all visitors, the STB and URA built an Arab/Muslim-themed commercial artery, Bussorah Mall, in 1994 and a secular cultural centre, the MHC in 2005, near the Sultan Mosque. As “adaptive reuse” projects, however, both venues lack the historical presence of Sultan Mosque. The mosque symbolises continuity in the rapidly changing urban landscape of Singapore. Because even conservation zones such as Kampong Glam have been affected by the fragmentation of heritage, the mosque is an important identity marker for the district.

5.6 Recreated Bussorah Street: Ethnic Space Enhanced or Undermined?

5.6.1 Pre-Conservation Commercial Decline

Bussorah Street is traditionally a centre for tourism at Kampong Glam (section 6.2). Specialising in pilgrim tourism, the road was known as Kampung Kaji, which means Haji compound in Javanese, and featured tourism infrastructure, such as lodging, food stalls and sellers of travel utensils, for long-haul religious travellers. But by the time Kampong Glam was declared a
heritage district, the pilgrim trade had already declined. Rahil (2006) argues that Hajj-related business continues to influence the area and henceforth declares it an overall “Islamic place”, but she noted that its Muslim character is seasonal, meaning that many Singapore Muslim only frequent the area during the Islamic festive month of Ramadan. Although Kampong Glam retains an overall Malay and Muslim character, the remaining Hajj businesses today cannot be compared with the major role of the Islamic pilgrim brokers up to the mid-20th century (Imran 2007). Two fundamental changes occurred in the past breaking the continuity of pilgrim trade. First, pilgrims no longer stay at Kampong Glam when they stop over at Singapore because air travel has replaced sea travel to Mecca since the 1960s. Bussorah Street has not been a centre for such Muslim travellers for decades. Second, pilgrim brokers and their travel agencies today are forced to concentrate on local Muslims who intend to undertake Hajj travel, instead of having a customer base including the vast Indonesian Archipelago, a decline that has caused some entrepreneurs to cease operations. Most of the remaining travel agencies moved from Kampong Glam around 1980 to the neighbouring Golden Landmark shopping complex. Pilgrim trades, therefore, have not shaped the streetscapes of the heritage district for almost a quarter of a century.

Norhayati (1987) provides an extensive categorisation of business activities in Kampong Glam shortly before the area was zoned as a conservation district. According to him, there were fewer than five Malay business outlets amid numerous Chinese and Sikh retail outlets and he described Bussorah Street as a “mainly residential area” (ibid, p.79). Thus, the historic role as a pilgrim tourism artery is an interesting fact about Bussorah Street, but it did not affect the URA and the STB’s decision to build a pedestrian mall here in 1994 (Figure 6.10). By this time, Bussorah Street had developed into a residential area (Norhayati 1987), a trend the URA wanted to revise through zoning the street for purely commercial use; whereby the first floor units had to be occupied by restaurants or retail businesses.
5.6.2 The Creation of Bussorah Mall – A “Commercial Flagship”

Figure 5.11: Bussorah Street from 1980s to the Present

Bussorah Street as a predominantly residential street in the 1980s (Norhayati 1987, p.79)

Bussorah Street seen from the doorstep of Sultan Mosque around 1990 (Courtesy of URA Archives)

The URA cites poor pedestrian patronage of Bussorah Street as a reason for the 1993 revamp

1994: Bussorah Mall originally remained unoccupied (left and right Courtesy of URA Archives)

2006: The business situation improved; today, all units are occupied.

2007: Events attract a reasonable crowd of locals and tourists to the pedestrian street mall
It is unclear why the URA chose a predominantly residential street for the commercial flagship development or why it has been marketed as a “mall” (Figure 5.11). Kelvin Ang, head of the URA’s conservation department, said that the excellent, central location in the conservation zone might have been a decisive factor. He is unsure who coined the term “Bussorah Mall”, but he said it is an unfortunate label since the refurbished street would be more charming than an actual mall (22 April 2008).

Ellen Lou’s pre-conservation assessment of Kampong Glam in 1985 mentioned other determining aspects for the location of the “mall”. She suggested that Arab Street would be a better choice as a commercial flagship because it already featured the largest variety of retail outlets. Lou also proposes a step-by-step expansion of this existing retail area into the narrow Haji Lane for long-term commercial development. In contrast to the URA’s approach to boost Bussorah Mall, Lou’s findings exclude Bussorah Street from commercial rezoning, cautioning that:

> The Muslim community in areas along Bussorah Street should be maintained. Most of the residents here are tenants. They dwell in these mostly state-owned, rent-controlled buildings. Keeping these tenants in the neighbourhood can be done by using leasing controls” (1985, p.156).

Lou hinted at Bussorah Street’s socio-demographic patterns, raising awareness about the vulnerability of Bussorah’s low income Malay-Muslim community. Warning against the displacement of these tenant residents, Lou subdivided the proposed conservation zone into thematic districts and labelled Bussorah Street, along with the Sultan Mosque as “Muslim cultural districts”. Here, the cultural theme should focus on preservation rather than adaptive reuse through “retaining the historic setting, conserving the Muslim community and its activities” (1985, p.154).

Looking back, it seems that pragmatic decisions to build Bussorah Mall took precedence over Lou’s plea for non-displacement. Apart from Bussorah’s central location, the street’s state-
dominated ownership pattern was favourable from an official planning perspective. The state already administered most rent-controlled buildings along the street so that only few remaining ones had to be forcibly acquired. Many buildings along Arab Street, however, which was the commercial backbone of Kampong Glam in the 1980s, were privately owned by an Arab and Indian merchant elite (Lou 1985, Sim 1996). Singapore law allows for the acquisition of privately owned buildings, but the fact that nearly all tenants along Bussorah Street lived in state-controlled housing very likely made lengthy acquisition procedures unnecessary. Hence, that might have played a decisive role in the building of the commercial flagship at Bussorah Street. The URA rightly estimated that clearing the tenants out was a swift process compared to building acquisition (Alwiyah 1997). The Singapore government and its planning authorities pursued the swift development of a “flagship mall” along Bussorah Street instead of a step-by step expansion of Arab Street’s retail sector.

Statistical evidence from my business survey supports Lou’s characterisation of ownership patterns. The data showed that Arab Street remains the street with the highest quota of privately owned retail outlets located in Kampong Glam. Figure 5.12 shows that Bussorah Street’s ratio of owner-occupied commercial units is lower than those of its two parallel streets. The differential to Kandahar Street is small, but Kandahar Street consists of only one row of shophouses. Its opposite side is a part of the MHC. Thus, Kandahar Street would not have been a suitable location for the URA’s proposed commercial flagship project despite, according to the URA’s perspective, similarly favourable ownership patterns to Bussorah Street. In contrast, Arab Street shows a much higher rate of owner occupancy of commercial units. But Arab Street’s merchant elite has not been willing to have their property affected by construction, i.e. have the local streetscape re-engineered.
The URA hesitated to forcibly acquire these units or compensate owners, considering the owner’s potential resistance. The alternative of redeveloping other houses was easier to implement, especially given the predominant state ownership of shophouse units at the parallel Bussorah Street, which was available for development. Lou (1985), however, had already drafted concrete plans on behalf of the STB, proposing to develop Arab Street into an attractive shopping street by gradually improving the streetscape. This would have allowed for a commercial flagship that did not require displacing members of the local community.

Once the URA had decided on the creation of the commercial flagship along Bussorah Street, however, the transition to Bussorah Mall was promptly undertaken in 1993/1994. The URA acquired the few non-state-administered houses from the owners, refurbished all the buildings at the state’s expense, relocated all tenants, developed the street as a commercial area and sold the now-empty units to the highest bidders for the return of prior investment in refurbishments. Even if the highest bidder/new owner had been willing to extend the lease of a unit’s tenant resident, this was then illegal as a consequence of the rezoning, since the new use had to be commercial.
5.6.3  Bussorah Mall – The Tangible Heritage Conserved

Regarding heritage, the URA left all building facades intact due to the detailed guidelines of the conservation manuals (URA 1988 and 1989). But the redevelopment fundamentally changed the character of Bussorah Street at the National Mosque’s doorstep (Powell 1997). The URA deemed the creation of a “flagship” commercial strip necessary to attract new visitors and to make the district commercially viable (URA 1991). The assumption was that a state-of-the-art commercial strip with historic buildings at the centre of the district would bolster the economic performance of the neighbouring streets and eventually lead to the revitalisation and refurbishment of the entire conservation zone. Even though architectural heritage survived and was refurbished for improved presentation, Imran (2005) said that the URA’s conversation manuals do not acknowledge specific Malay and Muslim architectural components for preservation in Kampong Glam. He explained that the conservation manual for the heritage district had simply replicated earlier guidelines for the preservation of Chinatown (URA 1991). Although this is a valid point, the state of tangible heritage in Kampong Glam 20 years after being chosen for conservation has been evaluated as generally “successful” and this success has been emphasised as a positive feature of the district by various stakeholders.

Figure 5.13 provides an overview of evaluations of the state of tangible heritage, focused on Bussorah Street. Individuals from various backgrounds were asked to respond to a statement insinuating that the planner’s aim to conserve the historic buildings along Bussorah Street has been achieved. The figure demonstrates that even though tourists were most enthusiastic about

56 To complement this commercial orientation, the Singapore government planned a cultural centre. The centre was, however, separated from the Bussorah Mall project and implemented only 10 years later (see section 5.7 for a detailed account).

57 From January to October 2008, I conducted three different surveys of local visitors and tourists supporting this hypothesis. Figure 6.12 shows the results for each regarding Bussorah Street’s tangible heritage. For an in-depth evaluation of conservation, see Chapter 6.
the state of tangible heritage and local Malay visitors most critical, there is an overall agreement that the efforts to conserve the heritage in term of “restoring building facades and monuments”, i.e. the tangible heritage, have been well-implemented. Still, the Malays as local “insiders” are less affirmative than the Singapore-Chinese. Popular attitudes suggest that Bussorah Mall has not diminished the architectural appeal of the street’s tangible heritage.

Figure 5.13: Public Evaluation of the State of Tangible Heritage

Visually pleasant presentation of heritage with popular appeal, however, does not say much about the truthful or authentic content of its presentation (Urry 1995). Representations of heritage places can be deceiving, in that they can be attractive but inaccurate. Imran (2007) said that because a re-engineering of ethnic space took place along the district’s main artery, Bussorah Street, such inaccurate representation is in place in Kampong Glam, i.e. local Malay culture had been sidelined by the selective enhancements of the Arab elements present. I approached an URA representative for an elaboration on the authority’s conservation policies in Kampong Glam. Kelvin Ang said that refurbishment works of the 1990s had not compromised the architectural
authenticity of Bussorah Street but conceded that other problems with the adaptive reuse, such as a possible discontinuity in land use, exist (22 April 2008).

The commercial flagship approach caused ruptures in community life on Bussorah Street because it forced fundamental changes upon the locals since many lost their homes while others had their family members relocated. The URA’s urgency to create a “commercial flagship” has made matters worse since accompanying measures such as rent subsidies to facilitate the transition from mainly residential area to commercial hub could not be integrated into the swift rezoning process (Rahil 2006). This urgency to erect a commercial flagship with Bussorah Mall in the early 1990s is explained today with “a strong and immediate need for revitalisation initiatives in the district by that time” (Kelvin Ang, 22 April 2008). The formation of the STB/URA cooperation thus was intended to attract financially strong outsiders, such as tourists, into the area, offering them a redesigned pedestrian mall, landscaped with palm trees and “Arab” mosaics (Figure 5.3). But the necessary relocation of previous tenant residents from the street resulted in the erasure of community life since the entire street was practically closed for a year for refurbishment. Chang stated that the place was entirely “devoid of visitors” and street life during urban restoration (1997, p.79). The gap in occupancy combined with the rezoning was a rupture that rendered statements about the continuity of Islamic tourism rhetoric since neither the residents of the “old” Bussorah Street nor its scattered pilgrim attire shops moved back into the landscaped pedestrian mall upon its completion (Alwiyah 1997).

Today, the retail outlets at Bussorah Mall have been there for at most 15 years. The “total clearance” strategy prevented most remaining Malay-owned shops from reoccupying their previous units as rent control had been lifted and the URA offered tenders strictly to the highest
In terms of visual appeal, refurbishment efforts in the 1990s have succeeded in improving the conservation core zone along Bussorah Street. This Singaporean example for heritage conservation is a major achievement for a land-scarce Asian global city, where low-rise neighborhoods regularly ‘disappear’ completely (Cheung 1999). However, the excellent condition of the tangible heritage along Singapore’s Bussorah Street, which is also rare within the Kampong Glam conservation zone because the dilapidation of shophouses generally continues to be a problem in many other small streets, did not fully translate into a revival of Malay and Muslim culture.

5.6.4 The Discontinuity of Social and Cultural Life at Bussorah Mall

The shop units newly available after renovation often went to affluent investors rather than the locally rooted low-income tenants, a result of the tender procedure of awarding the units to the highest bidder (Kelvin Ang, 22 April 2008). As earlier shown in Figure 5.12, property ownership among retailers along Bussorah Street remains low. Many investors who bought the commercial units did not intend to operate the businesses in “Bussorah Mall” themselves but to rent their premises to tenants willing to pay sharply increased rents. The government did not grant incentives for pre-conservation tenants to buy their previously rented property, as Lou had suggested (1985). Such financial support for the upgrading of locally rooted business was considered a hindrance to overall competitiveness, which external investments could potentially enhance.

The URA’s manual for homeowners in conservation areas demonstrated such investor-friendly perspectives and the less favourable treatment of local tenants. The “Procedures for Conservation Works” (URA 1989) stated that the relocation of tenants is to be jointly handled by the URA and

---

58 Chang (1996, 2000) analysed a similar case in the Little India conservation area, where a commercial flagship project called “Little India Arcade” threatened the existence of traditional crafts and businesses.
the HDB. The entire procedure outline drafted by the two government bodies, i.e. the contract between them, the new property owner and the tenant consists of 11 lines. It is written from a particular perspective, addressing only the building owner. Line 11 concludes, “Tenants vacate your building after allocation by HDB” (ibid, p.14). The lifting of rent control and the redesign of Bussorah Street as a commercial area were severe setbacks for proponents of preservation approaches that advocate the maintenance of everyday lifestyle and culture. Singaporean cultural researcher Rahil Ismail (2006) refers to Bussorah as a “seasonal space”, saying that the street’s Malay and Muslim character largely disappeared apart from the Islamic festive seasons, when many Muslims would come back to the area due to its historic significance for Islamic pilgrimage. Singaporean writer-architect Robert Powell sums up their disillusionment with conservation:

A visitor to Bussorah Street up to 1992 would have witnessed the residential lifestyle of urban Malay families, which spilled out onto the five-foot-way. One would have hoped that the lessons of Tanjong Pagar [part of the prior refurbished Chinatown conservation area] had been absorbed and that residential use of the shop house in Bussorah would have been encouraged. […] Why struggle to create, with special staged cultural events, what formerly existed naturally and unself-consciously? (1994, p. 95).

Thus, the continuity of street life along Bussorah has been interrupted (Alwiyah 1997, Rahil 2006, Lim 2004). In terms of indoor activities and building uses, the situation has been only slightly better, i.e. a few Malay shops continue to operate outside of the pedestrian mall, erasing traces of residential life. Rising rentals caused this discontinuity after the lifting of rent-control in all conservation areas in 1989, the lack of accompanying measures and the displacement of residents for the construction of the URA’s commercial flagship. Since Bussorah Street is the main artery to the mosque and the central street of the conservation zone, the attractive location then became unaffordable for previous tenants despite an unanticipated drop in commercial real estate values after 1997 due to the Asian financial crisis. The few remaining traditional Malay shops had only a slim chance to adjust to changes after Kampong Glam was declared a heritage
district as the new competition from external investors and the lifting of rent control took place simultaneously.

Although shopowners today generally consider the current business climate in the district favourable (see Chapter 6), they showed some frustration about the supposedly ill-prepared creation of Bussorah Mall in 1993/1994. During the interviews, about half of my local business owner contacts strayed off to the 1990s’ revamp and were openly critical of it. Malay shopowners, especially, said they considered the revamp a strategic mistake, which “diluted the Malay and Muslim character” and hence ironically weakened the very character conservation initially set out to strengthen (Powell 1997). In this context, the lifting of rent control and the highest bidder approach, with the vacated Bussorah shophouse units, has caused concern over the fate of Malay ethnic space in Kampong Glam:

Due to the high rentals in this area, most shops dealing in traditional trades like songkok and chapals have to move out. So, no more traditional Malay headwear and footwear.

(Malay Shopowner, 21 March 2008)

Hence, the new commercial heart of the district ensured high architectural and physical conservation standards but not continued space for former occupants. The 1997 Asian financial crisis slowed down tourism development and prolonged the vacancy period, such that the time gap until reoccupation of the empty units had a worse impact than expected. As the owner of all upper Bussorah Street units, the URA initially insisted on full return of investments and refused to lower the rental fees or purchase price for units (Akbar Kader, 25 February 2008). Today, vacancies are not a major problem along Bussorah Street, but selling occupancy to the highest bidder has sparked resentments among business owners from neighbouring streets. Their concerns are similar to those of the remaining Malay shopowners on Bussorah Street itself. Their comments also focused on the impact of the revamp, which is said to have brought about “unacceptable” commercial uses rather than reinforcing existing Malay and Muslim commerce:
There are many unsuitable businesses and activities such as places where liquor is sold. There is an undesirable social crowd. All those facts do not project a good Malay and Muslim character.

(Shopowner from Kandahar Street, 3 April 2008)

In particular, a 7-Eleven convenience store along Bussorah Street has sparked controversy. Located in front of the mosque and in the conservation zone’s “dry area” with an alcohol-serving ban, the store uses a loophole in the law and sells beer to customers because the alcohol is not served but sold. Meanwhile, widespread negative comments about such practices and “unacceptable” commercial uses have caused unease over the commercial developments in Bussorah Mall. The URA’s initial response to the criticism was that the pedestrian space of Bussorah as a “festival street” potentially allowed for Islamic festivities to be held, thus it incorporated a cultural dimension into the commercial development (URA 1995, p.79). Rahil Ismail from the Centre for Muslim States and Societies said:

[Those statements are] ignoring the fact that Bussorah Street was already an authentic ‘festival street’ before conservation, it is this cookie-cutter ‘pedestrianised’ shopping mall that had caused most consternation as gentrification of the street had erased both life and authenticity to a historic street (ibid 2006, p.248).

Certainly, the community need more than a “cookie-cutter” response to address any negative side effects resulting from the adaptive reuse of Bussorah Street as a commercial mall.

5.6.5 Tackling Adaptive Re-Use Problems with a Revised Role of the URA

Since the creation of “Bussorah Mall”, shopowners and the remaining residents of Kampong Glam said they have to struggle with some unsuitable commercial uses of space at Bussorah Street. The URA expressed concern about the negative side effects of adaptive reuse as well. Kelvin Ang said, “Once units have been sold, the new owner freely chooses the tenants”, making it impossible for the agency to ensure culturally appropriate uses (15 May 2008). He said that the URA is in a dilemma: previously criticised for its heavy-handed approaches, the URA’s
conservation department now wants to step away from the image of a restricting and limiting agency. Conservation specialist William Lim (2004) concurs with this proposed shift in emphasis, saying that conservation should result in a pleasant, rather than limiting or negative environment.

About Kampong Glam, Ang said he empathises when concerned locals complain to the URA about undesirable commercial uses brought about by the highest-bidder principle, which does not request a concept of future use from the prospective owner. But he said that the URA’s conservation department refuses to revert to heavy-handed state-centred approaches as previously undertaken with the 1993/1994 revamp. Such divisive approaches, including the displacement of local residents, were “unavoidable in an initial phase when conservation was supposed to gain momentum” (ibid). But they have created certain mistrust towards conservation by local stakeholders (Yeoh and Kong 1994), which the URA now seeks to overcome through a revised strategy.

Ang also said that the URA today regards itself as a “mediator” in conservation affairs, who sets guidelines but only directly intervenes if stakeholders cannot come to an agreement among themselves (ibid). The URA shifted its focus to providing assistance and incentives to private actors who accurately restore buildings to revitalise conservation zones (Lim 2004). According to this revised “low-profile” approach, Ang specifically urged the new owners of buildings on Bussorah Street, acquired by the 1993/1994 tender, to be considerate and to carefully select suitable tenants. He added that the same appeal applied to more recent tender processes and other conservation zones as well. Besides the constant contact with individuals, the role of a mediator in planning procedures also required to be regularly in touch with interest groups of conservation zones (cf. Dale 1999). For instance, Ang mentions the Kampong Glam Business Association as an important dialogue partner, provided its members do not compromise on the conservation
zone’s Malay and Muslim character. According to Ang, “we are very concerned about the character of Bussorah Street and we want to enter in a dialogue with the various stakeholders to ensure appropriate uses of rental units. Their feedback is most welcome” (ibid, 15 May 2008).

The URA’s revised conservation strategy is generally considered as an improvement, but some local analysts and conservation insiders, including senior officials of Singapore planning authorities, remain sceptical (Lim 2004). Although they appreciate the “good intentions of a rejuvenated leadership in the URA’s conservation department”, they doubt that their change in approach will eventually make an impact (anonymous urban planner, 16 May 2008). These critics said that the financial returns from shophouse units given for tender, just as in the case of Bussorah’s tender, continue to be listed with high estimations as sources of general revenues in the URA’s budgeting. In the short and medium term, the critics argue, the conservation department would thus have to give the conservation zone’s tender units to whoever pays the most, regardless of the intended use of the shophouse unit. The intention for policy change would thus be undermined by financial practicalities as the executive level of the URA has not yet allocated financial resources to make up for the drop in revenues if the highest-bidder approach were indeed to be abandoned (anonymous urban planner, 16 May 2008).

Bussorah Street is a “survivor” only in terms of architectural features. The character of the street, however, has been profoundly changed with the conversion to Bussorah Mall. Commercially successful, the street’s new character has been described as “inappropriate” by many visiting locals as well as by architects and conservation professionals (Imran 2007, Lim 2004). Local architect Robert Powell said that the “content and meaning of the street has been changed and the resulting image has little authenticity” (1994, p. 95). Despite such critical voices, the URA’s conservation of a low-rise neighborhood with a religious landmark, a relative abundance of
attractive open space on Bussorah pedestrian mall and within the compound of the former Sultan’s palace along with the recent opening of a heritage centre is an invaluable opportunity for sustainable development of locally accepted heritage tourism.

5.7 The Istana Kampong Glam – Re-Establishing Ethnic Culture

5.7.1 The Heritage Centre Planning Process

Bussorah Street was revamped into Bussorah Mall with a commercial focus; it was meant to contribute to the revitalisation aspect of conservation plans. The creation of a cultural hub for the Malay and Muslim community of Kampong Glam were intended to balance commercial and cultural interests. The URA intended to locate a Malay Heritage Centre within the conservation zone as a high-profile cultural venue that complements Bussorah Mall. The MHC project was finalised in 2005 and was initially managed by the Malay Heritage Foundation. Contrary to what the name suggests, the centre is not a grassroots scheme by the Malay community. Rather, Singapore’s Minister for Community Development and Sports, Abdullah Tarmugi (2001), clarified that the formation of the Malay Heritage Foundation was a government-initiated project. The minister emphasised the long-term perspective of the heritage centre planning process, saying that its concept had been carefully developed throughout the 1990s. According to official media releases (Shanmugaratnam 2006), the Singapore government made the fundamental decision to build heritage centres for Singapore’s four main ethnic communities, the Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians, in 1990, only a year after the designation of ethnic heritage districts for the first three ethnicities. The heritage centres were to be seen as complementary to the opening of the Singapore National Museum, with the planning process spearheaded by the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (Narayanan 2004). Since implementing the idea of

59 In 2008, the management was handed over to the National Heritage Board (NHC). Exhibition designer Erica Danielson said that the initially unpopular move towards a more centralised management was ultimately more happily accepted since it was combined with a doubling in funding (5 March 2009).
heritage centres signifies putting state-conceived ideas of ethnicity or “representations of space” (Lefebvre 1991) into practice, it is worth highlighting their mission in some detail. Tarmugi said:

> While the National Museum will present Singapore’s history in a national and regional context, the community heritage centres can capture the social and cultural heritage of each community in greater depth and help trace the linkages of each community with their kinsmen in other parts of the world (2001, p.1).

The minister did not explicitly mention tourism, but he did highlight transnational connections. Apart from its usual focus on racial harmony, the government was keen to integrate its cosmopolitan ambitions for Singapore into the representations of ethnic culture in heritage centres. The first step in implementing the idea of community heritage centres in 1990 consisted of a state-approved cost-sharing scheme with the Singapore Federation of Clans Associations, a private Chinese cultural organisation. The Chinese, being the majority ethnic group in Singapore, were the first to receive the funding for a community heritage centre pilot project (Tarmugi 2001). After two years, the government announced a similar cost-sharing scheme for the Malay community. In 1992, a task force was set up to look for a possible venue for a prospective Malay Heritage Centre.

The location turned out to be the Istana Kampong Glam; the head of the task force, Ridzwan Dzafir, later became chairman of the Malay Heritage Foundation, which was set up in 1999 to supervise the development of the heritage centre on behalf of the Singapore government (Tarmugi 2001). Thus, the decision to convert the Istana Kampong Glam into a heritage centre seemed to precede the launch of the Malay Heritage Foundation by about seven years. Likewise, the selection of the Istana Kampong Glam has been the long-term preference of government officials rather than the Malay community itself (Narayanan 2004). But after the launch of the Malay Heritage Foundation as a statutory body for the heritage centre and the creation of an “endowment fund” to finance the centre in 1999, the project proceeded quickly (Figure 5.14). Although the locational decision was taken by the government task force, that is, it was
determined through a top-down approach, community ties were also cited as a vital factor for the location of the heritage centre. Malay studies scholar Zarina Bin Ali (2001) said that the Istana was chosen because of “the buildings’ historical background, their Palladian architectural style\(^6\) and their long association with the Malay community of Singapore” (p.3). Although there is no doubt about the historic significance of the Istana Kampong Glam and that it was a desirable venue for a heritage centre, the focus on architectural and historical assets in many sources (Alwiyah 1997, Zarina 2001) leaves out the fact that the Istana compound was inhabited at the time (Figure 5.14). The project would displace 79 members of the royal family, who were distant relatives of the final Sultan (Tarmugi 2001).

\(^6\) Palladian architecture is actually a European architectural style heavily drawing from Greek and Roman influences. Its application to the Malay Sultan’s palace once more shows the strong Western influences of the colonial era (Imran 2007).
Figure 5.14: From “Istana Kampong Glam” to “Malay Heritage Centre”

During the 1940s, the Istana’s compound was a playground for children. (Doggett 1957, p. 59).

Istana compound with gravel in the 1960s, used as a parking lot for the nearby community club (URA Archives).

The 1980s saw an improvement in maintenance. The Istana is painted in yellow, the Sultan’s family royal colour (Norhayati 1987, p. 78).

The inhabitants are evicted from the Istana, which is repainted white, moving away from the royal association with yellow (Alwiyah 1997, p. 65).

The Istana under renovation from 1999 until 2004 (Courtesy of National Archives)

The unoccupied Istana in 2006 after restoration.
The eviction of the inhabitants caused uproar in the Malaysian press (Narayanan 2004). The Malaysian press argued that the proposed heritage site would “deprive the Malays of their last bastions of cultural heritage in Singapore” (cited in Narayanan 2004, p.52). The Singapore government went on alert, issued responses in press releases, urged Malay Members of Parliament to speak to fellow Singaporean Malays and to justify its choice of location by “detailing the background to the decision and the benefits that would accrue from the preservation of Istana Kampong Gelam to the Malay community” (ibid, p.52). Figure 5.15 shows that the concerted efforts of Singapore’s government and media to counter the accusations of the Malaysian press have had some success. In two separate surveys, tourists and local visitors were asked an identical question about the type of use they favoured for the Istana Kampong Glam. Prior to the requested response, the questionnaire briefed respondents about the Istana’s history and the recent change of use from private and residential to cultural public space, including the resettlements undertaken.

Figure 5.15: Reactions to the Istana as Location for the MHC

![Evaluation of the new use (heritage centre) compared to the old one (“Istana”, private and residential)](chart.png)

Source: Author’s fieldwork (January-October 2008)
Most Singaporean Malays did not consider the eviction of the Sultan’s distant relatives an important reason to disapprove of the new use as a heritage centre. I deduced this sentiment from their slightly higher approval rate for the centre as compared to other Singaporeans and tourists. Despite the fundamental support for the heritage centre, the displacement issue, i.e. the eviction of the 79 residents of the Istana Kampong Glam, remains a problem. Many local Malays remain puzzled that the creation of a Malay cultural hub had to start with the eviction of Malay residents from the heritage district (Imran 2007).

Although the street surveys of Singaporeans and tourists reveal that local and foreign visitors to Kampong Glam generally support the location of the MHC within the previously inaccessible Sultan’s palace, the in-depth interviews allowed local shopowners to air details of the sensitive heritage centre issue. Some interviews revealed a deep frustration with the allocation procedure cum displacement. A Malay shopowner said: “The Malay Heritage Centre is a shell, the real inside, the character, is gone since all residents had to leave; one cannot just throw a ‘Hari Raya Event’ to revive culture” (6 February 2008). Many neighbouring shopowners made similar comments while a few did not mind the adaptive reuse of the Istana.

Although the street surveys showed an overall approval for the location of a MHC within Kampong Glam’s Istana, the business survey gave room for more in-depth comments that shed light on the reservations many in the Malay community have about the top-down allocating approach. Most Malay shopowners’ position is that although they support the idea to erect a heritage centre in Kampong Glam, the top-down implementation of the project has limited their enthusiasm, because opinions of their community were not sought. These slightly ambiguous results allow for two conclusive statements. First, the controversial location does not automatically preclude success for the centre as a heritage attraction and community centre. Second, making the project a success would have been easier had the Singapore government and
its heritage centre task force convinced the Malay community that the heritage centre project is implemented in good faith. To convince the Malay community, the planners could have incorporated existing cultural venues and shown more sensitivity towards traditional uses of land and avoided eviction.

5.7.2 The Soft Opening of the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)

After completing refurbishment works, the MHC had a lacklustre debut. The STB projected 22,000 visitors in the first year of operation in 2005; Table 5.1 shows that by the beginning of 2008, the number had dropped by a third to little more than 14,000 visitors.

Table 5.1: Declining Frequentation of the Heritage Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitors by Group in Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Tourists (and in %)</td>
<td>10,121 (47.9%)</td>
<td>9,345 (54.0%)</td>
<td>8,313 (59.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Tourists (and in %)</td>
<td>7,764 (36.8%)</td>
<td>5,835 (34.0%)</td>
<td>4,652 (33.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singaporean Visitors (and in %)</td>
<td>3,236 (15.3%)</td>
<td>2,134 (12.0%)</td>
<td>1,084 (7.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,153</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,314</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,049</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Malay Heritage Foundation 2008

The lack of public consultation during the planning process might have a lot to do with the MHC’s poor performance. Local historian Imran Bin Tajudeen said that the centre is a “reinvented landscape” located in an Istana “stripped of all accretions” (2007, p.20). The new architectural elements, such as the building annexes, do not have a sense of history like the older elements, but the most significant loss is the loss of lived culture with the eviction of residents from the Istana compound. Imran’s (2007) interpretation is that the reinvention of ethnic heritage alienated the local Malay community, which remains sceptical about the way “their” heritage centre came into being.
Khalid Shukur Bakri, senior manager at the heritage centre, adds a more nuanced understanding of the feelings of the Malay community. According to him, the newly refurbished facilities are still underused even though he added that they “are physically in excellent condition and centrally located in the heart of Kampong Glam”. But he admits that “some people remain unconvinced” (16 January 2008). The location of the heritage centre at the former Istana seems to be generally accepted (Figure 5.15) and the facilities are easily accessible. For the MHC’s future agenda, Bakri states that the heritage centre should develop a better outreach approach to the local Malay and Islamic community and the community should be more strongly involved in the project with relevant activities (ibid).

But regarding the current state of affairs and the MHC’s role as a community heritage centre, Table 5.1 shows that by the end of 2007, the number of local visitors had dropped down to little more than a thousand. Figure 5.16 also hints at problems with frequentation, since the share of locals surveyed in Kampong Glam who had visited the heritage centre is exactly 50%.

Figure 5.16: Visitation of the MHC

![Visitation of the Malay Heritage Centre](image)

Source: Author’s fieldwork (January-October 2008)
This is a moderate share given that the survey took place next to the centre’s main entrance. Even though most of respondents above the age of 49, around 70%, have frequented the centre, the number drops sharply for middle-age or junior respondents from 21 to 30; only about a third of the latter visited the centre.

The poor visitation among non-seniors is only compensated when teenagers are taken into account. Although senior manager Bakri said that senior citizens visit the venue for nostalgic reasons, he added that the overall visitation rate could be improved (16 January 2008). He especially aimed at capturing a bigger share of visitors from the younger generations since “they are the ones who need to learn most about our Malay heritage here in Kampong Glam” (ibid). Regarding the MHC’s role as a heritage attraction, its tourist visitation is falling steadily (Table 5.1) because tourists might notice that the venue is not frequented by locals, which in turn adversely affects their decision to visit the centre (Imran 2007). The drop in annual visitation to 14,000 is a setback, but it does not connote that this trend cannot be reversed for the future of the ‘young’ centre.

5.7.3 A Lack of Community Involvement Today – The Underlying Reasons

Franco-American urban geographer Andrew Merrifield (2000) says that many planner and cultural brokers want communities to conform to the spaces designated for them rather than accepting a substantial role of the communities shaping or reworking these spaces (Merrifield 2000). Human geographer Hilary Winchester (et al. 2006) focuses on the role of tangible heritage in urban space and concurs with Merrifield, stating that the hegemonic role of representation is to make what “is socially constructed appear to be the natural order of things” (p. 66). These global

61 Individuals in this age group, however, seldom come on their own volition but mostly as part of compulsory school visits. A basic disinterest of teenagers to visit historic venues voluntarily is probably not limited to Singapore. Despite that fact, the drop in visitation rate to 33.9% for Singaporeans who are out of school and in their twenties calls for strategies to entice the young to visit.
observations also apply to Southeast Asia. In Singapore, especially, there is a tradition of expecting ethnic communities to accept newly created places rather than consulting these communities beforehand about what kind of material representations of their culture and tradition they would like to see implemented (Yeoh and Kong 1994). The Singapore government frequently reminds all ethnic communities to patronise the ethnic spaces conserved or rebuilt for them through commentaries of spokespersons in the media (Chia et al. 2000). As a response to such reminders, Imran (2007) said that there is no duty of the local Malay and Muslim community to frequent the heritage centre. Calls for increased visitation of local Malays are even less credible when their visitation is considered a way to entice foreigners to visit as well. Such attempts had been made in the case of the “Malay Village” in Geylang Serai, a “forerunner” to the MHC (Eriyanty 1998). When the project started to fail as projected numbers of foreign visitors were not reached (Imran 2007), the “Malay Village” management used the local press to convince local Malays to visit the ethnic tourist attraction as a form of moral obligation:

It is high time we accord the village the status of a symbol of the Malay culture. It is no point labelling it as a white elephant when we, on our part, have not done anything to contribute towards realising the dream of a cultural showcase. If the existing management is serious in realising this dream, then the Malay community should support it.

(Malay Sales Manager to The Straits Times in 1996, cited in Imran 2007, p.26)

This sort of logic – reproaching a community for scepticism about the results of non-consultative planning rather than involving the respective community in the planning process beforehand – is a phenomenon common in Singapore but not limited to the city-state (Lim 2004). Attempts to make the spatial behaviour of communities conform to official representations of them are widely discussed in modernist city and tourism planning (Rath 2007, Watts 1992). French philosopher and geographer Henri Lefebvre (1991) postulated that prevalent planning ideologies and preconceived ideas frequently shape space to formal “representations of space”, according to those ideologies. Formal representations of space are thereby compromising on spaces for lived
culture, i.e. ignoring the ‘lived experiences’ of locals in urban open space. Lefebvre (1979) stated that “We have passed from the production of things in space to the production of [formal] space itself” (p.285).

In terms of the Istana Kampong Glam, state ideologies have indeed produced a new space within an existing building and compound. At the spacious garden within the compound with the white mansion, visitors might forget that the courtyard was actually home to Malay families who are distant descendants of the Singapore Sultan until 1997 (Zarinah 2001). In contrast to today, the inhabitants of Kampong Glam’s Istana used to provide a direct connection to Malay culture and every-day practices. For instance, these residents lived, played and at times worked within the compound so that insights about Malay culture did not have to be derived from any ideological construct but were immediately accessible to interested visitors by observing the local’s “lived experiences” (Figure 5.14). With the loss of this direct link to Malay culture after the residents’ relocation, re-interpretations of the Istana’s role in the history of Singapore’s Malays became a necessity. Regarding the subsequent re-engineering of ethnic space by the state-endorsed Malay Heritage Foundation, Imran Bin Tajudeen claims that the restoration project of the Istana Kampong Glam “exceeded any effort to simply return the palace to its former grandeur; it has added new signifiers of regal splendour and exclusivity that never existed” (2007, p.20). This critique offers a possible explanation for the drop in visitation of the MHC, that is, the refurbishment of the Istana has created a prestigious space that does not represent everyday culture and is thus not meaningful for the Malay community as the ethnic group it seeks to represent.

The funds allocated to the MHC project were “more than sufficient”, as the Singapore government had allocated a lump sum of S$2 million to run the recreated “cultural hub” for the Malay Community (Tarmugi 2001, p. 2). The reservations of local shopowners towards the
results are therefore rooted in the curiosity about how these funds have been spent. Since Imran
(2007) describes the reconfiguration of the Istana as a heritage centre as a laborious and costly
process, it is questionable why an existing neighbouring cultural venue was discontinued and not
considered for a gradual refurbishment. The Pondok Jawa as a Javanese cultural house had to
finally close its doors in the early 1990s after years of decreasing cultural activities (Alwiyah
1997), a decision the URA then justified by poor building conditions.

Around the same time, the Singapore government’s task force sketched out the MHC as a new
cultural venue and allocated the yet-to-be cleared space of the Istana Kampong Glam as the
centre’s new location. The Pondok Jawa was not integrated into those plans and finally
demolished in 2004, the year of the heritage centre’s soft launch. The procedure does make sense,
however, if the state and its tourism and city planning agencies had different constructs of ethnic
culture in mind than the ones that are actually practised in the designated ethnic districts. Imran
(2007) substantiated this claim, saying that the cultural performances at the Pondok Jawa, such as
wayang kulit puppet shows or bangsawan “romance” theatre plays, were deemed not typically
Malay and Muslim since they involved dancing and other “non-Islamic” content. The ancient
cultural influences from Java, the main island of neighbouring Indonesia, would be downplayed
in favour of strictly local Malayness at the new cultural centre. This local Malay culture,
however, has yet to be defined clearly so it is hard to pinpoint its main attributes when considered

The spatial adjustments mentioned above have been described as an inaccurate “reinvention of
Malay-Indonesian heritage in Singapore” (Imran 2007, p.1), not accounting for the realities of
Malay-Muslim lives at Kampong Glam. Lived culture had to give way to the showcase of regal
Malay culture in a prestigious location. In this respect, the refurbished Istana might be interpreted
as a “state-endorsed political statement” (ibid, p.8) that the Malays, often critically discussed as a
socially marginalised community (Rahim 1998; Lee 2006), indeed have a central place in Singapore society and fare well or at least much better than commonly expected. The Malay community would thus have to welcome the new heritage centre as a “representation of (ethnic) space”, that is, how the government envisions it to be rather than a reflection of everyday Malay life.

Representatives of the planning agencies involved said that there was no viable alternative to the Istana Kampong Glam at the time of planning of the heritage centre during the early 1990s. For instance, Khalid Shukur Bakri, as the head of the Malay Heritage Museum, explained that other Malay and Muslim cultural venues in the area were in such a poor state that it “made more sense to start from scratch” in a central and potentially magnetic location (16 January 2008). He also denied the contention that lived culture has been deliberately erased to portray more prestigious images of Malayness in Singapore. He added that he and his management team considered the set up of the MHC in a prominent location as a signifier for the wholehearted appreciation of Malay and Muslim culture in Singapore. The consultants hired for the planning of refurbishment works highlighted the rootedness of the heritage centre within Singapore’s Malay community in terms of geographical connections:

The redevelopment of the Istana Kampong Gelam into the Malay Heritage Centre was not only about the restoration of a historical landmark, but also provided the opportunity to revitalise, reconnect and integrate the historic core of Kampong Gelam area to its hinterland.

(CPG 2005, p.12)

The quote suggested that the cultural brokers involved in the planning process were genuinely interested in an enhanced promotion of Malay and Muslim culture. Khalid Shukur Bakhri emphasised that community involvement is always welcome and that some suggestions, such as the organisation of Malay music guitar courses, have already been implemented (16 January 2008). About the idea that the MHC portrayed an image of Malayness different from reality, he
said: “We cannot come up with something original if people do not tell us their preferences. There might be financial constraints, but we are always working on organising activities which are relevant for the Malay community” (ibid). The Istana Kampong Glam is one of two Kampong Glam’s prime landmarks. Other than Sultan Mosque, it has recently undergone a fundamental change in usage. Together with Bussorah Mall, it epitomises the changes in Kampong Glam from a residential neighbourhood with commercial and cultural activities to a commercial heritage district with a small resident population.

5.8 Conclusion

Drawing on Lefebvre’s (1991) insinuations about the production of space, I argued that the creation of representational space via adaptive reuse sidelined the lived culture of the Malays. Conservation did not focus on preservation, i.e. maintaining traditional activities and land uses, but on the adaptive reuse of ethnic space. For non-tangible aspects of heritage, conservation therefore demonstrated a continuum of fragmentation processes through adaptive reuse rather than a paradigm shift towards increased appreciation of lived culture and everyday experiences of locals. In contrast, the architectural component of conservation, concerning tangible heritage, has been praised, and both local and foreign visitors see the newly created pedestrian mall as appealing. But Bussorah Street’s revamp into a pleasant heritage attraction has been achieved at the cost of displacing the local residential community.

Meanwhile, the example of the MHC shows that well-intended cultural projects have to engage with their audiences rather than assume an automatic appreciation by the targeted ethnic community. The heritage centre faces problems of acceptance, which can only partially be explained by the displacement of Malay residents before the restoration of the Istana. On a more general level, the non-integration of the Malay community in the planning process is now overshadowing the heritage centre management because it remains unclear what kind of programs
and activities the community would wish to see implemented. This dire situation might be adjusted over time if community participation were sincerely encouraged.

The history of fragmentation, neglect, demolishment and reconstruction of the tangible heritage matches the context of changing interpretations of Malay-Muslim heritage (established in Chapter 4) by the Singapore government after independence. The “flagship projects” of Bussorah Mall and the MHC, especially, demonstrate the break in continuity caused by changing ideals of representation of heritage. As Malay-Muslim heritage was not deemed suitable for tourism promotion and Malay enclaves ostensibly constituted a hindrance for economic development (Rahim 1998), Kampong Glam, especially Bussorah Street and the nearby Istana compound, became a low-income neighbourhood.

When ethnic heritage, including Malay and Muslim heritage, was finally identified as a valid component of post-colonial nation-building and tourism development, the two potential attractions were arguably in too poor a condition for gradual improvements. As a consequence, the new plans for Bussorah Mall and the MHC had to start from scratch after former inhabitants were displaced instead of capitalising on existing cultural (Pondok Jawa) or commercial venues (Arab Street). Sultan Mosque is perhaps the only exception. Other places of worship next to Kampong Glam, Malabar Mosque and Hajjah Fatimah, have also been preserved, but they were isolated from the core of the Muslim neighbourhood and remain out of spatial context compared with the cultural venues in the core zone.

I argued that the recreation of ethnic space in Kampong Glam has resulted in inaccuracies in the display of the Malay-Muslim legacy. Heritage attractions have not developed organically. Instead, nation-building and its “politics of heritage” have re-engineered Kampong Glam’s ethnic space repeatedly. A period of neglect for Kampong Glam’s Malay-Muslim heritage was followed
by a new emphasis on Arab cosmopolitan elements along Bussorah Mall in the 1990s to symbolise the glamorous trading legacy of the area. This international and commercial focus of representation of heritage was belatedly complemented by the opening of a cultural centre for the Singaporean-Malay community in 2005. Intended to highlight and enhance the local cultural elements in Kampong Glam, the performance of the MHC, too, suffered from the ruptures caused by the re-engineering of ethnic space, that is, the displacement issue of former Istana residents.

The cosmopolitan makeover of historic districts leads to distortions in the representations of heritage. These distortions are rooted in the contemporary agenda of the government, that is, the cosmopolitan emphasis, but they are not brought about by tourism. In any case, the cosmopolitan re-engineering of ethnic space shifts the emphasis of representation away from indigenous heritage, even though Kampong Glam was initially designated to be the homestead of a “founding race”, the Malays. This conceptual incongruence precludes the integration of the (Malay) native population in the global cultural economy. The attempt to rectify these distortions in representations (with an enhancement of indigenous Malay-Muslim heritage displays) in the former Istana has yet to overcome teething troubles. The evaluation of the government’s adaptive reuse efforts differs drastically among various parties involved, as exemplified by the heated debates over Bussorah Mall and the MHC. The next chapter will discuss in-depth how the representations of space as manifested in Kampong Glam have been received by various stakeholders; local shop owners, tourists and local visitors to Kampong Glam.
Chapter 6
Malay and Muslim Culture and Heritage Conservation – Reactions to the Re-Engineering of Ethnic Space

6.1 Introduction
We learned from Chapters 4 and 5 that an initial distrust in the representation of ethnic heritage in post-colonial Singapore, especially Malay-Muslim heritage, has resulted in a fragmented landscape at Kampong Glam. This chapter examines how various stakeholders in four different neighbourhoods across Kampong Glam have reacted to changes in representations of heritage brought about by conservation. It focuses on the reactions to the carefully state-engineered, well-funded and centrally located “flagship projects” (Bussorah Mall and the MHC in sections 6.2 and 6.3) as well as feedback from other areas within the conservation zone (section 6.4). In those peripheral areas, a non-interventionist attitude prevailed and the URA considered a guideline on prohibited activities and land uses, for instance outlawing noisy businesses such as car repair shops, a sufficient tool to preserve the Malay and Muslim character so that the peripheral areas were largely left to deteriorate. The chapter puts reactions to recent initiatives on enhancing heritage into context with the actual changes in the built environment (chapter 5) and links those reactions to the legacy of representing heritage in post-colonial Singapore (chapter 4). It concludes that Malay and Muslim heritage features more prominently today in official representation. But these representations essentialise the Malays as village dwellers as opposed to cosmopolitan representations of an urban interconnected heritage of other Muslim groups. I have tried to reconcile Malay-Muslim heritage with modernity by highlighting a cosmopolitan side of the “Malay quarter” along the Haji Lane neighbourhood. But as for the local reactions to heritage tourism development, the Malay community remains sceptical of their contemporary representation at Kampong Glam.
6.2 Commercial Revitalisation – a Buzzing District of Global Tourism?

6.2.1 Basic Facts about Commercial Revitalisation at Kampong Glam

To revitalise Kampong Glam commercially, the URA had pursued a flagship approach only at Bussorah Street, a spatially limited but firmly implemented form of intervention, focused on a small core conservation zone. According to the URA’s Kelvin Ang, Kampong Glam is a middle ground in terms of state intervention in heritage districts: “Chinatown, at least in parts, saw a lot of intervention, but in Little India there was a quite ‘un-interfered’ development, almost in the entire district” (25 May 2008). It has been 20 years since Kampong Glam was designated a heritage district for conservation, so it is time to evaluate whether interventions for its commercial revitalisation have struck a balance between state guidance and local grassroots initiatives.

In Singapore, proponents of revitalisation through adaptive reuse typically have to fight the contention that their initiatives would be targeted less at the demands of the local population and be more exclusively tailored for the pursuit of business interests (Chang 2005, Yeoh and Kong 1994). In the Singapore context, economic geographer Martin Perry has labelled this development path “other-directed” development (Perry et al. 1997). The URA’s approach to sell state property in conservation zones strictly to the highest bidder would also constitute “other-directed” development because it is likely to contribute to gentrification, as it initiates the influx of external capital into neighbourhoods whose communities cannot match those external investments with funds of its own and are thus driven out of their homes (Powell 1994). Moreover, the planning authority observed the markets closely and is most interested to maximise long-haul sales revenues (Lim 2004), so that this interest occasionally overrides the target to preserve the cultural or historic value of an area. For instance, the authority left the completely refurbished Bussorah

---

62 Recently developed alternatives to this approach are still in their infancy, as exemplified by the proposed re-erection of Pondok Jawa (section 5.4.5).
Mall units vacant for more than two years when no bidder was found to match the revenue expectations due to the Asian financial crisis in 1997. The prolonged vacancy had negative consequences on community life, which virtually disappeared at the deserted street (Alwiyah 1997), but this was accepted by the URA for economic reasons. Apart from the Asian financial crisis, the property values in conservation zones rose sharply after their demarcation as heritage districts, in part due to this long-haul perspective of the URA’s tender projects, whereby property is usually not put on the market in times of economic downturns to keep the price level high. By the early 1990s, the anticipated investments of the state authority in flagship projects thus further boosted rental levels. On a lighter note, the authority’s long-term perspective in principle enables a revitalisation and restoration of historic neighbourhoods and is this potentially beneficial for their future development path.

However, the URA currently faces a dilemma as the proposed flagship projects for revitalisation are prone to side effects. For instance, such projects speed up gentrification and cause low-income tenants to be displaced and ‘dispossessed’ (Hart 2006), especially if no precautions are taken, such as accompanying measures in the form of subsidies to local businesses or a gradual phase-out of rent control (Lou 1985). On the other hand, if all state-initiated flagship projects were cancelled, conservation would be based completely on market forces and the state could provide even less guidance. In such a situation, culturally sensitive development would be near to impossible. To abandon state investment in conservation would be interpreted as neglect and possibly send a wrong signal to potential investors. The URA therefore faced a tough choice between interventionism and non-interference. The URA’s Kelvin Ang said that the right amount of state involvement in conservation remains contested and continues to be adjusted on a case-by-case basis (15 May 2008).
Despite this dilemma, the attempts at commercial revitalisation in Kampong Glam may be deemed successful, especially in relation to other aims of conservation such as the intention to preserve Malay and Muslim cultural elements (Figure 6.1). That is unsurprising given that revitalisation has a straightforward goal compared to the preservation of cultural identity (Yeoh and Kong 1994). One complication, however, is the numerous traditional business sectors in Kampong Glam, which are made up of a diverse group of shopowners, a historical reality since the foundation of the district as Malay and Muslim quarter (Norhayati 1987). A second contentious issue focuses on changes in the local mix of business brought on by rejuvenation efforts. The reactions to those changes might differ since locals as potential customers of traditional businesses are likely to see the commercial supply catering to them diminished by an increasing share of souvenir businesses for tourists\(^63\).

Business operators today, however, responded positively to revitalisation efforts as can be seen from the survey (Figure 6.1.), where 70.3% agreed that a good mix of old and new businesses has been achieved. The affirmation of business revitalisation was exceptionally high and tops the approval of all other components of conservation. This high approval for “business revitalisation” puts the achievements in terms of “building preservation”, which 64.8% approved, second in rank. Likewise, a majority agreed that the underlying Malay and Muslim character of Kampong Glam was maintained despite major changes in the built environment and changes in tenancy, as shown by the yellow column in Figure 6.1.

---

\(^{63}\) This contention will be substantiated in section 6.2.2; according to Kalyan Bhandari (2008), gentrification often goes hand in hand with touristification, meaning that shops catering to local customers are less profitable than tourism-oriented businesses and therefore would be gradually replaced by tourist souvenir shops.
But when asked about specific cultural components, the affirmation rate for conservation dropped below 50%. A majority of respondents did not think conservation has succeeded in terms of two aspects. First, slightly less than half of the respondents believed that businesses locate their shops in and clients shop at Kampong Glam because of its Malay and Muslim character. Second, only 30% of respondents affirmed the designated approach to re-infuse ethnic culture with a cultural flagship project, as most did not believe that the reuse of the Istana Kampong Glam as a Malay heritage visitor centre has created a vivid cultural hub. There is a great contrast between the high rate of affirmation for “revitalisation” as a business-oriented phenomenon and the low approval at 28.9% for the effective development of a cultural landmark. “Flagship” projects initiated by the state were meant to endorse both commercial revitalisation and cultural revival strategies. The reasons commercial revitalisation is more widely accepted than the intended cultural revival of the area will be discussed in subsequent sections.
6.2.2 The Commercial Flagship – Bussorah Mall and Tourist Satisfaction

The majority of Kampong Glam’s shopowners think that conservation projects have resulted in a balanced mix of old and new businesses in the district, which helped the local economy to revitalise via the infusion of investments in new commercial activities complementing the traditional trades. The approval rate for revitalisation projects by business operators of state-engineered Bussorah Mall is average compared with those at other streets covered in the survey. Even though 72% expressed content, a few critical Bussorah Mall shopowners cautioned against the influx of too many businesses. In particular, they feared a loss of character because of the perpetual influx of new businesses:

Only initially, there was a good business mix. Now, there are too many new activities and shops here on this street, for instance the “7-Eleven”, the franchise camera shop and lots of other new ones. There are already three “7-Eleven[s]” in the small Kampong Glam district here and another one just outside. It is too much.

(Bussorah Street Shopowner, 15 February 2008)

Like this shopowner, a few tenants on Bussorah Mall see modernisation as a threat to the conservation district as they feel that things are progressing at a faster pace than people can get used to (Alwiyah 1997). Moreover, around a quarter of Bussorah Mall’s shopowners feel there is no balanced mix of traditional and new shops. They believe that Kampong Glam’s distinct character can only be maintained if the influx of new commercial activities is halted. They are aware of their positionality as commercial actors on a tourism artery. For instance, a service outlet owner acknowledged that “as tenants right here on Bussorah Street, we rely on the other streets to have the original Malay and Muslim businesses like in the olden days. If any street is [sic] like here, no locals would come, because nothing for them to do” (14 March 2008).

But the current balance of old and new commercial activities is fragile since most shopowners are aware that many non-traditional businesses have located at Kampong Glam and they believed that there will be more. Some of them, for instance the owners surveyed at 15 souvenir shops
(business survey data, February 2008) do in fact represent “non-traditional businesses”. They, too, agreed that it is critical to strike a balance between traditional and non-traditional businesses and that the current business mix should ideally be maintained. The shopowners of Bussorah Mall are also aware that the less tourism-oriented businesses at neighbouring streets are complementary to the modern outlets at their landscaped pedestrian zone, and they now ask for the preservation of traditional activities and businesses in other parts of Kampong Glam. The head of the KGBA similarly expresses concern about striking the right balance of old and new:

I would say that the area is as a kind of Bohemian village; we are very open to everyone here. Yet, we have to see that all businesses conform with the Arab and Muslim character, so alcohol cannot be served. We had to bring new businesses in and we did. All the Shisha Cafés on Arab Street and Haji Lane get the young people to come here and the tourist like them, too. We have done what was necessary to have a commercial revival here. But now we need to be careful that the character does not get lost. The cosmopolitan crowd should come, but the locals must feel at home. We need to keep the kampong [village] atmosphere too.

(Dr. Ameen Talib, 22 March 2008)

Despite the absence of concrete suggestions on maintaining Kampong Glam’s heritage, Dr. Talib showed that measures to maintain a “distinct” atmosphere are now considered crucial. He said that the KGBA encourages businesses to adopt a Malay and Muslim character, which the association has not defined, except for the minimum requirement that they must not serve alcohol. It would thus be appropriate to compile a list of commercial activities that shopowners must conform to in order to maintain this Malay and Muslim character. But for now, state laws forbid the sale of alcohol in the core area, and the business association is in principle similarly willing to limit the scope of approved businesses to promote a “unique” Kampong Glam, thus supporting culturally sensitive development.

In view of these well-intended attempts to strike a balance between local sensitivities and tourism demands, I initially expected local and foreign visitors to appreciate Kampong Glam’s commercial offerings and atmosphere. In the survey, I asked tourists to evaluate the attractiveness
of Kampong Glam’s commercial flagship on a five-point ordinal scale. They were asked to comment on a “pro-revitalisation” statement, expressing their opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Figure 6.2). The results show that for both Western and Asian tourists, more than 50% “agreed” with the statement, with almost 19% of Asian tourists strongly agreed.

Figure 6.2: Tourist Evaluation of Bussorah Mall at Kampong Glam

Although all tourists agreed that Bussorah Street is an attractive commercial strip, Asian tourists are less affirmative (69.4%), i.e. they “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement provided about Bussorah Mall, than their Western counterparts (74.4%). The Islamic-Arab tourism theme is generally popular, but it is most appreciated by Western visitors, some of whom are especially fascinated by Islamic elements in a tropical setting: “We come down [just came] from Malaysia. This is where we saw these baroque [sic] mosques surrounded by coconut palm trees for the first time. This is like ‘out of the world’. I love this style” (German tourist, 17 March 2008). The overall positive judgement at 72.2% of tourists on Bussorah Mall indicates that satisfaction with revitalisation is not only limited to the commercial operators but extends to their non-local customer base. The re-engineering of Bussorah Street into a pedestrian mall has generally gained the approval of both Kampong Glam business operators and tourists even though critics warn
against the further engineering towards a Middle Eastern heritage theme of the streetscape by adding respective design elements, for instance a cover of white linen in the style of a Middle Eastern Zouk. Such additional landscaping would be counterproductive as it would introduce more costly changes. These changes would adversely affect the few remaining traditional businesses at Bussorah Mall because some traditional businesses would have a harder time bearing the costs for neighbouring owners compared with better endowed businesses with fresh capital (Alwiyah 1997). Moreover, additional landscaping is not necessary since many tourists (72%) as well as a substantial number of locals are satisfied with their visit (Figure 6.3 below).

6.2.3 Local Reactions to Bussorah Mall

In contrast to most foreign tourists, many Singaporean visitors are concerned with the lack of accurate representation of Malay and Muslim heritage at Bussorah Mall. Figure 6.3 provides an overview of the perspectives of local visitors, sub-dividing them into Malay and non-Malay Singaporeans. Similar to the tourist survey, they had to evaluate a statement, with options for an affirmative, neutral or negative response. With the line “I feel like I am in a tourism enclave”, I prompted visitors for a response. I elaborated that enclave tourism refers to geographically isolated and closed-off areas containing facilities and services required by tourists, which thus encourages them to stay within the compounds (Nash 1999). Often, locals have limited access to the enclave and are likely to feel out-of-place in this tourism-oriented landscape.

64 In a separate survey, I approached tourists with the same statement. As a reference, their responses are also shown in Figure 6.3.
Malay visitors, as the designated ethnic group of the Kampong Glam heritage district, were the most convinced that tourism along Bussorah Mall constitutes a form of enclave tourism. Tourists, especially Western tourists, rejected the notion of Bussorah Mall as a tourism enclave. Even though local non-Malay visitors are also fairly evenly split in terms of their judgement, Singaporean Malays are most decidedly divided on this issue. A chi-square test which tested the non-indecisive attitudes of total ‘outsiders’ (Western Tourist) against those of the ‘insiders’ (Malays) showed a sufficient significance level of 0.042, meaning that there is a less than 5% chance that the difference in attitude is a random phenomenon limited to particularities of the sample. The analysis thus confirms that the reaction to Kampong Glam’s heritage landscape along Bussorah Mall is significantly different between insiders and outsiders.

In contrast, the difference in perception among local ethnic groups is relatively weak. The perception tendency trend among locals (i.e. a higher share of critical voices who label Bussorah Street as a “tourism enclave” correlating with an allegedly stronger attachment to the place, ultimately ‘peaking’ with the Malays) is thus an interesting observation, but statistically not
significant. Yet, the peak in critical attitudes among Malays calls for further inquiry on local reactions (cf. Katz 2005), identifying their take on post-colonial heritage tourism developments in Kampong Glam (see section 6.4).

Further statistical analysis showed that the debate on accurate representation among the Malay community has a gender and age dimension. Female and young respondents below the age of 30 tended to believe that Kampong Glam’s Bussorah Mall is not a tourism enclave (46.4% and 42.9% respectively negated the statement; 27.4% and 37.5% affirmed the statement). In contrast, a majority of male and senior respondents above the age of 50 agreed with the statement (41.7% and 45.5% affirmative; 33.3% and 36.4% negative); the remaining respondents were indecisive. Even though all groups surveyed rejected labelling Bussorah Mall a tourism enclave, Singapore Malays have mixed feelings about the project as the tight margin, 1.9%, for its approval as “locally relevant” shows. Further landscaping and exoticising, that is, displaying non-native heritage through Middle Eastern theming according to the KGBA’s Zouk plans of a white linen cover (section 4.4.4), risks alienating the local Malays, and ultimately turning the narrow lead of supporters of the flagship project into a minority. Many shopowners along Bussorah Mall therefore believe that the business association should prioritise balancing the mall’s souvenir shops with other locally orientated business to make Kampong Glam a meaningful heritage destination for local visitors.

Shopowners, tourists and local visitors agree that revitalisation, which includes the building of Bussorah Mall, has taken place at Kampong Glam. Although that is good news for the URA as the coordinating conservation agency, the affirmation by local visitors is coupled with fears. Especially male and elderly Malay visitors are suspicious of a tourism-focused future development path as envisioned by the STB, in which the prominent display of an “exotic” heritage theme would be prioritized over the relevance of the street as a commercial venue for
locals. Despite the success of the URA in the “revitalisation” dimension of conservation, the spatial changes should be critically evaluated because the re-engineered ethnic landscape is least criticised by Western tourists (22.2%) but is more strongly contested among local visitors (36.7%), with the Malay community being even slightly more sceptical (39.4%). However, the premise of the Singapore nation-building effort is the loyalty of each ethnic group to its culture. Nation-building hence focuses on social identity-construction through ensuring the rootedness of citizens in Asian cultures, which necessitates their attachment to native ethnic heritage (Tay 1988). If the exotic focus of revitalisation on portraying appealing tourism themes persists in heritage districts like Kampong Glam, the basic aim of conservation to enhance local ethnic heritage as a way to safeguard the national identity through rootedness in native heritage will be undermined. Thus, the STB and the KGBA would neglect fundamental cultural policies with continuing practices of “exoticising” urban ethnic space.

6.2.4 The Flagship Role: Generating Revitalisation as Intended?

The URA’s main assumption of the Bussorah Mall flagship project was that this revitalisation effort would motivate private actors to invest in commercial units elsewhere in Kampong Glam (see section 5.5). The authority produced a manual for property owners, inviting them to take part in refurbishment works across Kampong Glam (URA 1988), but at the same time, it largely neglected other streets and landscaping and improvement works outside of Bussorah Mall. The heavy-handed state intervention at Bussorah Street is thus an isolated incident in the conservation core and stands in contrast to non-interference of other streets, especially at the periphery of the conservation zone. Perry et al. said, “As far as possible, the government seeks to avoid public investment in conservation projects, preferring to see them as opportunities for local enterprise so as to ensure that conservation pays its way” (1997, p.265). Thus, regarding commercial
revitalisation at Kampong Glam, the state has only directly invested in Bussorah Mall and the MHC (section 6.3).

Since state efforts in revitalisation have concentrated on a narrow core but tended to neglect the periphery, the URA hoped for spillover effects, anticipating that such effects would trigger revitalisation outside of the district’s core, where the state had not invested in upgrading works of public space. But despite the authority’s anticipation of spillovers of revitalisation from the core to the periphery of Kampong Glam, it did not draft concrete plans beyond existing conservation manuals (cf. URA 1989). These manuals for Kampong Glam’s conservation zone only provided detailed guidelines in terms of particularities for restoration such as restrictions on altering building facades (URA 1988, 1989 and 1991). At this time, the URA did not address the underlying issue of ensuring that different ethnicities and sub-zones across Kampong Glam benefit as evenly as possible from revitalisation – an oversight perhaps rightly justified by the “urgency to intervene due to severe decay” (Kelvin Ang, personal communication, 15 May 2008).

Unlike earlier concept plans (Lou 1985, section 5.6.2), the URA’s existing manuals do not include designated cultural themes for the sub-zones of Kampong Glam, indicating that the authority assumed that centrally located flagship initiatives would radiate out of the centre into nearby areas, helped by a business-friendly legal framework. In this context, commercial revitalisation along Bussorah Mall might be obvious, but whether it brought about revitalisation elsewhere is debatable. Figure 6.4 shows ambiguous results for the attitudes of shopowners at different streets within Kampong Glam. As many as 72% of Bussorah Mall shopowners agreed that Kampong Glam was effectively revitalised, which is an average rate compared with other streets in the conservation zone. The Jalan Kecil area has the lowest affirmation rate with less than half of its shopowners, 42.9%, seeing revitalisation as having an impact on their business. This perspective from Kampong Glam’s periphery will be contrasted with the enthusiasm for
revitalisation by Haji Lane’s shop owners and their 79.2% affirmation in section 6.4. The wide gap in perception is remarkable, especially since both areas have not experienced direct state intervention.

Figure 6.4: Evaluation of Revitalisation Efforts by Shopowners – A Vital Business Mix?

Source: Author’s fieldwork, February – April 2008

Bussorah Mall’s average approval rate is slightly lower than those of its neighbouring streets, Arab Street and Haji Lane. There was no state intervention in Arab Street and Haji Lane after Kampong Glam was designated a heritage district; therefore, the designation was a mere formality for shopowners at these streets. In terms of property ownership, many boutique shops at Haji Lane, originally a service alley, are located in small commercial units at the back of Arab Street houses and “those shops are actually rented from Arab Street shopowners”, property owner Hassan Al-Junied explained (25 March 2008). Arab Street has the highest ownership rate at Kampong Glam. The success of the commercial developments of Arab Street and Haji Lane are intricately intertwined. According to the positive evaluation of the existing business mix in Kampong Glam by Arab Street and Haji Lane shopowners, the more organically developed streets adjacent to Bussorah Mall profit more from revitalisation than the commercial outlets
within the Bussorah flagship project. In particular, Arab Street shopowners are able to maintain their clientele and traditional businesses, such as in fabrics, while the tourism traffic induced by Bussorah Mall brought new customers in. Business operators who own shophouses at Arab Street can make extra profit by renting the back portion of their stores to fashion boutiques at Haji Lane, which has developed into a hotspot for the Singapore fashion scene (www.independent.co.uk, last accessed 20 October 2007). The results of Figure 6.4 for Arab Street and Haji Lane validate the URA’s approach to invest in a commercial flagship project and subsequently trust the market forces to expand the investment target area. Despite the absence of direct state investment, the spillover effects at Arab Street and Haji Lane makes further refurbishment and revitalisation throughout the neighbourhood seem plausible. Shopowners along Bussorah Mall describe the relationship between Bussorah Street and Arab Street as complementary (section 6.2.2). The redesigned pedestrian mall is a draw for tourists while the unchanged Arab Street largely caters to Singaporean customers, among them a high percentage of local Malays, who patronise the street to buy traditional clothing and fabrics (Sim 1996). Haji Lane’s trendy shops attract many local visitors, too. But the rate of Malay customers is low while the overall share of Singaporeans is high; Figure 6.5 shows the different customer ratios. Together with Arab Street and Bussorah Mall, the different but complementary make-up of the customer potential of the three streets constitutes a “win-win-win relationship”. Arab Street merchants – who attract more than 50% of Malay customers – and Haji Lane’s boutiques – whose low share of Malay customers is set off by a peak in local patronage at almost 75% – can be jointly categorised as a “local-oriented” shopping zone. Together, they complement the non-Malay- and non-local-oriented shops along the tourism strip of Bussorah Mall.

65 There are 20 fashion outlets along the small alleyway (business survey data, February 2008).
Akbar Kader, deputy president of the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce, explained the nature of the relationship between Bussorah Mall and neighbouring streets, saying that “Bussorah Street needs Arab Street to work well. No Arab Street, no local shoppers. And if there are no local shoppers, tourists will feel weird because they come here to see our culture and what we do” (25 February 2008). Kader added that the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce lacked the legal tools and funds to preserve traditional Malay businesses at Kampong Glam in order to keep a balance between old and new in the long run (ibid). Hence, their survival depends exclusively on their economic viability, and not on a possible cultural contribution, which, as Ellen Lou (1985) suggested, could be honoured with financial subsidies for select businesses that help to preserve intangible Malay-Muslim heritage.

6.2.5 The Limitations of Spillover Effects from Bussorah Mall

When restoration activities started at Kampong Glam, the URA’s commercial flagship was meant to push revitalisation forward, ideally having Kampong Glam “levelled up” with Chinatown in
terms of economic viability and economic development (Alwiyah 1997). Also, the flagship project should generate spillover effects for revitalisation, i.e. “the URA planners of the 1990s gave Bussorah Mall priority because they wanted that development to induce revitalisation throughout the district” (Kelvin Ang, 15 May 2008). Today, however, the spillover effects from Bussorah Mall affect the various streets differently. There is a wide gap between the 81.8% affirmation of revitalisation at Arab Street and the 42.9% approval at Jalan Kecil.

Some of Bussorah Mall’s neighbouring streets profit from the flagship, especially if they are easily accessible from Kampong Glam’s conservation core zone, others do not. Although it might have been difficult to alter the commercial structure of entire streets, the URA had the opportunity to increase accessibility and urban design across the heritage district but ultimately decided to concentrate its efforts on the central area. In this context, it is unfortunate that of the sub-zones of Kampong Glam, it was Jalan Kecil, which has a strong Malay and Muslim character, that is most disconnected from the core because of road-widening – a prevalent activity of Singapore’s Land Transport Authority (Mueth 2003). Another limitation of revitalisation is that, wherever it occurs, ethnic groups benefit unevenly. Hence, revitalisation tendencies at a particular street do not equal a revival of Malay commercial activities. Initial plans for the Kampong Glam heritage district intended to financially support traditional businesses in a “cultural core zone” next to the Sultan Mosque (Lou 1985), but these suggestions were never implemented due to a lack of funding (Akbar Kader, 25 February 2008). Today, the streets, such as Arab Street and Haji Lane, at which shopowners witness effective revitalisation, feature a low commercial ownership rate for Malays (18% and 8%).

At Arab Street, Haji Lane and on other streets, the rise in property prices after conservation zoning due to the lifting of rent control, has allowed the proliferation of non-Malay businesses (Yeoh and Huang 1996). Moreover, many Indian businesses at Arab Street own their commercial
units while most Malay businesses rent their shop units. Furthermore, some Malay traditional trades, such as the sale of sandals or headwear, generate low profit compared with new high-turnover businesses such as arts and craft stores (Alwiyah 1997). Therefore, the traditional trades cannot compete with high-end establishments such as the mostly Chinese-owned fashion boutiques at Haji Lane. Initially, many Malay businesses preferred not to situate their shops at Jalan Kecil, but they were priced out of the core conservation area. As a result of these market mechanisms in the course of revitalisation, most Malay and Muslim-owned businesses are located in rather isolated streets far from the conservation core; this clearly contradicts the founding idea of enhancing Malay and Muslim activities and culture in the ethnic quarter (Tay 1988). Although spillover effects eventually occurred, they took effect without accompanying measures. Such measures could have included temporary rent subsidies for traditional businesses by the Singapore government to channel the spill-overs into the least developed sub zones or to areas with a high level of Malay ownership. However, since the government did not provide accompanying measures, revitalisation uplifted particular areas of Kampong Glam, while other areas such as Jalan Kecil remained behind in economic development.

The URA as the government’s conservation agency deliberately took the risk of spatially and culturally uneven revitalisation with its free-market approach. In terms of socio-cultural impact, sub-zones with a high ratio of Indian and Chinese businesses generated more profit than areas with mostly Malay commercial outlets. The re-engineering of ethnic space along Bussorah Street did not uplift the Malay community as the government’s plans to enhance the community’s profile within the historic district intended; rather, other ethnic groups at Kampong Glam enjoyed most of the benefits. This discrepancy between national “politics of heritage” and local

---

66 This is because there was no concept as to how manage revitalisation across sub-zones at Kampong Glam. More precisely, a comprehensive concept was lacking even though existing exploratory concepts, such as Lou’s tourism and heritage plan (1985), were largely ignored.
empowerment has also very recently been discussed by the cultural geographers Su Xiabao and Peggy Teo (2009). They caution that the heritage of minority groups deserves special attention in cultural policies (cf. Yan and Santos 2009). Su and Teo (2009) particularly highlight the “complex relations that need to be untangled” to ultimately attain an adequate representation of the local heritage of ethnic minorities in post-colonial Asian nation states (p. 76). Enriching the global-local nexus debate, they propose an update to a “global-national-local nexus” because it would be “foolhardy to assume that national is equivalent to local” (ibid).

For Singapore’s Kampong Glam, Su and Teo’s (2009) observation also applies, as the state-sponsored commercial flagship project on Bussorah Mall has not substantially helped the representation of the local Malay minority in the government-endorsed ‘cosmopolitan’ society of the globalised city-state (cf. Olds and Yeung 2004). Even though commercial revitalisation and spillover effects materialised in Kampong Glam’s core, where a few Malay-owned business benefitted, the overall outcome did relatively little to enhance Malay ethnic identity and strengthen the attachment of local Malays to the district.

6.3 A Cultural Flagship to Complement Bussorah Mall – The MHC

6.3.1 Likely to Disappoint? – A Flagship Project to Meet All Expectations

As the previous sections established, there are discrepancies regarding the evaluation of various aspects of conservation, fluctuating between positive responses to and rejection. The “creation of a cultural landmark” with the MHC has the lowest approval rate, with 28.9% of local merchants thinking that the centre measures up to its aspirations (Figure 6.1). This is unfortunate since the MHC was an ambitious cultural flagship project, for which the Singapore government and its task force intended to complement the commercial focus of the Bussorah Street revamp. Specifically, the centre was intended to break the low-key Malay-Muslim representation of heritage in
Singapore and for the first time prominently display Malay culture in “royal” surroundings. This is in the hope that some of the “glamour” will boost the confidence of Singapore’s Malay community, which often scores the lowest in most socio-economic indicators such as educational achievements or monthly family income of any of the ethnic groups (Betts 1975, Kamaludeen 2007, Rahim 1998, Stimpfl 2006).

The idea behind the MHC was to show that Malay-Muslim heritage is not only based on a village or kampong culture, but that the Malay is also found right in the heart of Singapore (CPG 2005). The intended socio-cultural message is that Malays are capable of integrating themselves in an urban environment and playing a substantial role shaping it (Bunnell 2002). This argument has recently gained a lot of ground in contemporary Malay studies (Kahn 2006, Reid 2004) and in popular discourse on ethnic policy and treatment of the Malays in Singapore (www.theonlinecitizen.com, last assessed 21 November 2009). The MHC in its central urban location can thus be considered as the materialisation of changing ideas about Malayness. The actual capability of the Malay community to rework hegemonic representations of heritage, however, might remain limited. Political geographer Matthew Sparke (2008) cautions that the agency of locals tend to be over-estimated, a warning that especially applies to the MHC as it is a brain child of the Singapore government-linked Malay Heritage Foundation and hence an intergated part of state politics on ethnic representation. In Singapore, too, it is extremely difficult to challenge state-approved representations of ethnic heritage since the city-state’s government reacts extremely alert when its official schemes on ethnic policy are put into question (Narayanan 2004).

Apart from the perceived need to accurately react to changed perceptions of Malayness, i.e. acknowledging urban Malay heritage through the construction of a high-profile cultural heritage flagship in a central location, the eviction of the former residents added to the pressure to succeed
because the Singapore government promised a great cultural venue and community centre as a compensation for their eviction (Narayanan 2004). The government’s justification for the eviction was that the compound would be restored as a state-of-the-art showcase of ethnic culture (Tarmugi 2001), resulting in a high level of attention for the museum project. In this context, the failure of a former government-initiated Malay heritage project, the Malay Village in Geylang, further complicated the situation (Imran 2007). The Singapore government had to show it was serious in its appreciation of Malay-Muslim heritage, promising that it would tailor the new space for the Malay community (Lee 2007). Hence, much was at stake with the MHC. According to a Malay entrepreneur:

Malay culture here in Kampong Glam is showcased via the Malay Heritage Centre, especially the museum, apart from Sultan Mosque. There are many Malay artefacts and some activities in the Malay Heritage Centre. After the failure to showcase Malay culture in Geylang Serai’s Malay Village, there has been definitely a lot of political pressure to succeed here.

(Kandahar Street Shopowner, 14 March 2008)

The government actively promoted the MHC when it was first opened. But the MHC could not meet the projected visitor numbers for its first year of operation; what was worse is that the numbers dropped further (Table 5.1). The pervasive debate over the heritage centre’s location did not translate into public curiosity to visit the former palace once it was made accessible to the public. This is so despite the great potential of visitors. A majority of Singaporeans and tourists did not reject the designated location, i.e. they would be interested to visit the venue in the former Sultan’s palace in Kampong Glam (Figure 5.15).

6.3.2 The MHC and the Cultural Flagship Role: A Lack of Spillover

Despite the high profile of the heritage centre project during the phase of construction, the completed museum has problems reaching out to the Malay community and fitting in with the rest of Kampong Glam. The latter issue is interwoven with the spatial limitations of the spillover effects of revitalisation, as was previously mentioned in the discussion about Bussorah Mall.
There were similar problems with the MHC, as the cultural complement of the commercial flagship. Considerable investments by the Singapore government and an endowment fund of the Malay Heritage Foundation have been focused on a small space, the Istana building and its compound, in the hope that the restoration would revitalise not only the palace grounds but also the surrounding area (Khalid Shukur Bakri, 16 January 2008). But the heritage foundation’s plans for the MHC did not feature any concept as to how the centre’s surroundings can benefit from revitalisation within the compound (Imran 2007). This is a pity for the streets around the centre since a large number of people visit the heritage centre. Agencies involved in conservation, the URA but also the Malay Heritage Foundation and the KGBA, have not thought of the centre’s visitation in terms of customer potential for the heritage district as a whole or at least they did not draft a concept that addressed this point explicitly (ibid).

Having a plan to guide the stream of visitors through the district might have tackled this shortcoming. The objective would be twofold; first, a mapping of safe pedestrian access to the heritage centre would be useful. Second, having complementary activities in specified sub-zones at Kampong Glam, other than visiting the heritage centre’s museum, would entice visitors to stay for a longer time in the district. The overall effect of the plan would be to establish a stronger link between the MHC and other attractions and commercial venues of Kampong Glam. Despite these potential benefits, the only comprehensive plan for enhancing the distinctive character of particular sub-zones of Kampong Glam and relating all of them to a “cultural core”, consisting of the MHC, the Sultan Mosque and the open space between the two monuments, dates back to 1985 in the pre-conservation era (Lou 1985). Although Lou’s proposal did not mention the MHC, which would open 20 years after her proposal, she did suggest how to make a “cultural core”

___

67 Critics might argue that now that the completed centre lacks vibrancy, the discussion about spillover effects might be oblivious. But such a perspective is an oversimplification because even though the centre might not live up to ambitious expectations, it drew an average of 17,500 visitors per year between 2005 and 2007 (Khalid Shukur Bakri, 7 March 2008).
accessible from other sub-zones of Kampong Glam. The key strategy was to assign complementary uses to adjacent sub-zones, hence linking cultural attractions and commercial spaces by guiding visitors throughout the heritage district.

Figure 6.6: Turn from the Main Street (right) to the MHC without Signposting

Today, 24 years later, the URA and the STB have not implemented most suggestions of Lou’s proposal, not even the simple plans for a pedestrian crossing across North Bridge Road next to the MHC have materialised (Figure 6.6). The publication that comes closest to a comprehensive plan is the URA walking guide (URA 2005). But the guide is targeted at sightseers (locals and tourists) and does not address commercial operators. No one has informed commercial operators and remaining residents at Kampong Glam of the consequences after the opening of the heritage centre. The Singapore government and its heritage centre task force missed the opportunity to include local actors in the implementation process of the project (Imran 2007). As a consequence, commercial operators, as main actors in Kampong Glam, show little enthusiasm about the heritage centre. Figure 6.7 compares the reactions to the MHC from Bussorah Mall and other streets of Kampong Glam. The figure shows that in most parts of Kampong Glam, more commercial operators think that the MHC has not improved business prospects.
The share of owners who affirm an improvement varies between 20% and 23% on most streets, with Bussorah Mall being the exception. Along the flagship mall, however, an affirmative attitude, 48%, outnumbers the critical voices, 44%. The numbers imply that the two flagship projects are interconnected to each other, but not well-networked with other areas of Kampong Glam. The Malay Heritage Centre only receives a positive rating from retail owners who are an integrated part of another “URA-flagship”, the commercial Bussorah “Mall” project. The fact that most shopowners do not see revitalisation emanating from the MHC reveals the underlying problem that the centre remains an isolated venue. As the large investments in the prospective heritage centre were focused on the beautification of the Istana building and its compound alone (Figure 6.8), the Malay Heritage Foundation barely communicated its actual intention to uplift the Malay and Muslim community beyond the compound (Imran 2007). After the centre’s opening, the centre management did not foster strong ties to other economic or cultural initiatives at Kampong Glam; as a result, the appreciation of the MHC by commercial operators remains low.

---

68 The figure compares Bussorah Mall with Kandahar Street, which is centrally located between the mall and the heritage centre, as well as with the more peripheral streets Haji Lane and the Jalan Kecil area (the latter including shops along North Bridge Road). It shows that the rate for affirmative responses for all streets except Bussorah is relatively similar. The peak of rejection (57.1%) is at Jalan Kecil.
6.3.3 “Reaching the Young” – Mission Unaccomplished?

Of the local visitors to Kampong Glam, half of those surveyed had visited the centre. Ethnic affiliation and gender did not play a crucial role in the centre’s frequentation. The survey showed that 49.4% of Malays visited the centre compared with 50.9% of respondents of other ethnicities; 51% of males had visited as opposed to 48.9% of female respondents. But a cross tabulation of age and ethnicity respondents showed that only 29.4% of Malays in their twenties had visited the centre (local survey data, August - October 2008). This ratio deserves closer observation because the MHC is meant to be a vibrant centre for the Malay ethnic community (Shanmugaratnam 2006). In this context, its patronage by young Malays, 29.4%, is sub-optimal, because they visit the centre less frequently than other ethnicities. This shows that the Malay community, especially the younger generation, has not developed any special bond with the

---

69 This ratio is likely to increase over time as future generations of Malays in their twenties would have visited the centre as part of the learning journeys organised by their schools. Those who are now in the 20-to-30 age bracket did not go on the mandatory trip since the centre was not opened by the time of their schooling. The underlying problem that young people should actually be motivated to visit voluntarily, however, remains.
centre. Rather than evoking a sense of belonging, the heritage centre compound gets criticism about the decline of Malay culture in Singapore. A 24-year-old Singaporean-Malay visitor said, “The Malay Heritage Centre is just for namesake. There is almost no Malay culture left around here” (26 August 2008).

Young Malays still have reservations about the MHC in Kampong Glam. The cultural flagship has done little to lessen the scepticism about the “selling out” of culture in Kampong Glam. In the future, management initiatives could convince young people to pay a visit to gain a firsthand impression and perhaps subsequently develop a more positive attitude towards the centre and its representation of Malay heritage. Erica Danielson, a Canadian exhibition designer who is involved in the planning of numerous Singaporean museums, said: “With a good exhibition, word-of-mouth might spread – and rectify presumptuous attitudes of youngsters who did not actually visit the centre” (5 March 2009). However, this development path does not seem possible with the current showcase and design, which has received mediocre reviews about its appeal.

The weaknesses in the exhibition are not limited to the visual display of artefacts. The underlying concept is also contested since it lacks a coherent theme that links the history of the Sultan’s palace with Malay life in Singapore today. For instance, the exhibition tour ends at the replica of a Malay village house – a regress to the artificially rural display of heritage at Geylang Serai’s Malay village, which does not acknowledge the urban environment of Kampong Glam. The URA’s Kelvin Ang said:

We, as in the URA, have given the Malay Heritage Centre our architectural award for the great restoration work that has been done. Now that concerns the restoration works on the facades and on the structure of the building. Interior design is another matter and, let us say, I am not sure if the design work done inside matches the job restoration has done. (15 May 2008).
Exhibition designer Danielson added:

Many museums have to do without a historic venue. That means they have to construct a connection, a connection to the historical roots of whatever theme they have. But the Malay Heritage Centre is now located in the ex-palace of the Malay Sultan – that is a great opportunity, I mean, an opportunity to have the venue speak for itself. But what has been done? They put a reproduction of a village house and a HDB flat in, as if we were on the countryside or in the suburbs.

(5 March 2009)

Even though such conceptual thoughts are perhaps not obvious to the usual visitor of the Malay Heritage Centre, they too, evaluate the centre as mediocre. Figure 6.9 shows that most senior and middle-aged visitors think that the centre is “unattractive” (58.3% and 51.9%) respectively. Half of the respondents from the youngest age group evaluated the centre as mediocre. Only 16.7% of senior respondents and slightly fewer middle-aged visitors (11.1%) felt that the centre is attractive; these rates dropped to less than 10% for young respondents.

Figure 6.9: Evaluation of the MHC’s Attractiveness – A Local Perspective

Source: Author’s fieldwork, August – October 2008
These results showed that it is not just preconceived opinions that lead to the lack of popularity of the MHC. For instance, a Malay visitor said that the “the displays inside are too dry and text-heavy” (14 February 2008). Such negative feedback interferes with the government’s ambition to establish the centre as a cultural landmark and to reconnect the Malay-Muslim community with their heritage in Kampong Glam after a prolonged period of non-representation and fragmentation. Several government agencies, such as the Singapore Tourism Board, have become aware of the centre’s poor performance; for instance, the STB’s Kelvin Leong acknowledged problems with the centre’s outreach, saying that “the STB currently works on a strategy to improve attractions in Kampong Glam. Some of them are struggling, like the Malay Heritage Centre. We will help them with things like better signposting for example, when we implement our new strategy for the precinct by the end of next year” (16 April 2008). The tourism board’s concern is that if negative reviews about the current exhibition spread, the centre is likely to receive even less visitors.

Figure 6.10: Representation of Ethnic Culture in the MHC – A Lack of Variety

Again focusing on the lack of appeal of the MHC for the young, the Singapore government’s “committee on heritage” defined the official goals of heritage conservation as contributing to
“National Identity Development” by battling Westernisation and fighting “cultural disorientation of young Singaporeans” (Tay 1988, p.23). An affinity with their particular ethnic heritage was thought to be the “solution” to cultural disorientation. The MHC today, as a government-initiated heritage project, has not yet succeeded in this mission to be an ethnic-cultural “anchor” (Chang and Yeoh 1999). The heritage centre has not delivered a well-received exhibition nor has it measured up to the high expectations in terms of community involvement for the project. Many people surveyed see the museum’s exhibits as mediocre or unappealing. Likewise, reservations about the heritage centre persist among its neighbouring commercial operators. Most operators do not see any positive impact of the centre on their business returns. This limited outreach to commercial stakeholders and their customers, combined with the mediocre quality of its exhibits, does not allow for Kampong Glam’s regulars to form a strong attachment to the MHC. It remains an outsider in the district rather than its cultural epicentre. The Malay Heritage Foundation’s ambitions to strengthen the links of Singapore’s Malays to the heritage district with a cultural flagship project have not been met.

6.3.4 The MHC – the Latest Ethnic Attraction in a String of Failures?

The MHC would not be the first ethnically themed attraction in Singapore to fail. In the western part of Singapore, the theme park Tang Dynasty Village was designed from scratch with the help of the Jurong Town Council city-district administration in 1991 to showcase a Chinese heritage theme\(^\text{70}\), implementing a green field strategy on the outskirts of town at Jurong. After seven years, the park closed its doors to visitors in 1999 and has since slowly deteriorated (Figure 6.11) until it was finally torn down in late 2008.

---

\(^\text{70}\) Initially, the Singapore government and the Jurong Town Council planned to have the area used for film productions and sightseeing tours. But the filming plans did not take off due to tough competition from Hong Kong and Taipei (Olds and Yeung 2004). Hence, the role as a tourist attraction became increasingly important.
Another Chinese theme park, Dragon World, existed as a fee-based attraction from 1990 to 1996. But Dragon World was developed on the historic site of a famous overseas-Chinese merchant’s mansion and therefore gained attention in local heritage studies as a failed revamp of a historically significant venue (Teo and Yeoh 1997, Yeoh and Teo 1996). The Malay Village (section 4.3.4) is comparable with the Dragon World project in the sense that it has also been built as a theme park in a peripheral neighbourhood, in this case the traditional Malay settlement of Geylang Serai. The Malay Village was open to visitors from 1985 to 2008, outliving both Chinese theme parks. Yet, the projected visitor numbers were not reached and the underperformance bothered officials since the mid-1990s (Imran 2007).

The initial reactions to the underperformance of the Malay Village resulted in a blame game between its management and the Malay public. Instead of adjusting the theme of the attraction, the Malay kampong heritage, to meet popular demand, its management urged the Malay public to frequent “their” ethnic attraction with backup from the Singapore government (Imran 2007). There are parallels between the reactions to the low visitation of the Malay Village and the MHC.
Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s initial statements at the opening ceremony clarified that it is the responsibility of the Malay community to avoid the failure of the project. At the occasion, allegedly with the problems of forerunner projects such as the Malay Village and the Tang Dynasty Village in mind, the Prime Minister also cautioned on the importance of financial sustainability:

I therefore call on the Malay community to take ownership of the centre, tackle these challenges [fund raising and financial sustainability] and make this project a success. The centre is a cultural anchor point for the community.

(Lee 2005, p.2)

This was coupled with the appeal to cherish the new centre, directly targeted at the Malay audience in their mother tongue. The Prime Minister urged: “Masyarakat Melayu Singapura harus berbangga dengan tertubuhnya Taman Warisan Melayu ini, translated as “the Malay community of Singapore should be wholeheartedly proud of the heritage centre”. This opening statement is understandable given the high one-off costs of the conversion of the ex-Sultan’s palace into the heritage centre which were largely covered by the Singapore government. However, the same statement can also be interpreted as a request to the community to accept the representation of heritage in the centre as it is, rather than attempting to rework it. From the perspective of the Singapore government, Malay heritage has, both metaphorically and literally, attained a more central place than ever before in Singapore society with the opening of the centre (Narayanan 2004), and this `upgrading’ should be appreciated by the Malay community.

This interpretation is best understood in context with the demise of the Malay Village, where management complaints repeatedly addressed the low visitation rate by Malays urging them to come to see what had been constructed for their cultural enrichment. Other spokespeople of the Malay community retorted, expressing dissatisfaction with the representation of their heritage in the Malay Village. Their complaints, however, did not result in major adjustments. Instead, the Malay Village was shut down altogether. For many Malays, the alleged ineptness of state
agencies to portray an accurate picture of Malayness in contemporary Singapore equals a disregard for the Malay community by planning authorities (Imran 2007). However, the Chinese-themed ethnic attractions of the 1990s also failed. But the Malay community as a minority has special sensitivities when it comes to the representation of its heritage, since it is not as pervasive as mainstream Chinese cultural elements in Singapore (Kelvin Ang, 15 May 2008).

Given the pressure to succeed with the MHC, the Prime Minister’s admonishments are thus pre-emptive measures to forestall possible criticism from the Malay community. Tourism studies scholar Mark Hampton (2005) remarks that in the Southeast Asia of the 1990s, i.e. during the decade the MHC was first conceptualised, government attitudes on heritage conservation and planning “were often still in marked contrast” with bottom-up participatory approaches (p. 740). By contrast regional governments regularly planned heritage attractions on behalf of local community. For Indonesia, Hampton describes that the government expected these efforts to be honoured by the local community and that such expectations were often publically announced.

We have seen that Singapore government representatives similarly issued such appeals. In case of the MHC, however, the government also made concessions in terms of the targeted audience, after the disappointing experiences with ethnic theme parks in the 1990s. The government-initiated Malay Heritage Foundation as the task force in charge of the planning process would design the MHC as a cultural community centre for Malays rather than a tourist attraction. This time, even the Prime Minister promised a true community focus, in contrast to other-directed development targeted at sightseers. Hence, the Singapore government hoped that a reworking of “already community-orientated” representations of heritage would not be necessary. The government made this viewpoint publicly known repeatedly, starting with the Prime Minister’s opening statement.
6.3.5 Tourist Attraction and Community Centre – A Tricky Dual Role

The themes of the MHC should be relevant for Singapore’s contemporary Malay community. Where the Malay Village displayed rural culture and folkloristic artefacts, the new MHC would focus on bridging the gap to the urban Malay community of Singapore. Consequently, official reports about the MHC avoid the term “theme park” but make constant reference to the idea of a “community centre”. Through providing a forum for both traditional and contemporary Malay art and literature, the heritage centre acknowledged urban realities and integrated traditional cultural elements into modern context (Lee 2007). But while highlighting the importance of the cultural venue for nation-building and identity affirmation, the basic assumption was that the centre should generate revenues like a tourist attraction, or at least be self-sustaining.

The dilemma is that the centre’s management diverted financial resources that could be used to enhance communication with the Malay community into basic investments in tourism marketing because the management gave in to the pressure to attract paying customers beyond the local community (Imran 2007). Similar to the reserved reactions of locals, the centre also received mediocre reviews from foreign visitors. For example, two German tourists said a rare animated display, a slide show at the entrance, was poorly presented since it was “difficult to follow because it is played with accelerated speed” (14 February 2008). The existing design of the MHC does not seem to appeal to local and foreign visitors and a complete revamp might be appropriate, but this revamp cannot materialise without financial support. In spite of this, Dr. Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Media, Information, Communication and the Arts, largely ignored the shortcomings and instead affirmed the important role of the Malay community’s support of the heritage centre after two years in operation, while cautioning about financial thriftiness:
MHC will need the support of not just the government but also the strong support and participation from the private and people sectors. [...] Arts and cultural activities must resonate with the Malay community as well as reach out to all Singaporeans. This will help [...] to win wider community support. You will also have to seek more private sector support and endorsement for your heritage activities in order to establish sustainable programmes.

(Lee 2007, p.2)

According to such statements, the new centre is now open for community-oriented cultural initiatives and locally-relevant heritage interpretations beyond the focus on the Middle East that is prevalent elsewhere in Kampong Glam. Despite this new openness for indigenous heritage, the public response of Singaporeans has been fairly negative (Figure 6.9) and the Malay community’s visitation rate remained poor, with the targeted group of young Malays showing a below-average rate. The Malay community thus reacts with resilience, accommodating to the new government-designed heritage landscape without much impetus (cf. Sparke 2008). As a consequence, the proclaimed adjustments towards more openness for community involvement have so far failed to produce considerably different results than from underperforming theme parks in the 1990s.

The government’s focus on the self-sustainability of the centre precluded a better performance in terms of cultural indicators, such as “community integration”. The Singapore government expected that the MHC fund its cultural initiatives from the revenues it generated. But precisely because the centre does not get funds from the government and has to generate profit from tourism and other profit-driven initiatives, its management is not able to implement many additional cultural initiatives. Although cultural centres rarely pay off financially, Kampong Glam’s MHC was expected to generate revenue beyond self-sustainability (Hong 2008).

Newspaper articles reported a profit of $800,000 in 2007 up from $600,000 in 2006 (Hong 2008, p.H4). But the total revenue grew inversely proportional to continuously falling visitor numbers; the increase in revenue is hence a result of repeatedly raised ticket prices, not increased
appreciation. Worse, the share of paying local visitors is now only half of what it was in 2005 when the centre opened its doors as it dropped from 15.5% in 2005 to 12.3% in 2006 and further to 7.7% (Table 5.1)\textsuperscript{71}.

As revenues from ticket sales to locals plunged despite the rise in prices, revenues from corporate sponsorship and tourism became more crucial for the survival of the centre. The orientation of the centre changed accordingly, and the ambitions of providing a community centre had to make way to satisfy tourism and corporate demands. Considering these developments, it is problematic to proclaim the MHC as a meeting point for the local Malay community since Singaporeans constituted less than 8% of its total visitors – the Singaporean-Malay share was even lower. Despite the fact that the MHC has officially been labelled a community centre and its management emphasises openness to community suggestions, the dictate of self sustainability precluded more cultural community initiatives. At the time of writing, the Malay Heritage Foundation announced a complete revamp of the heritage centre in partnership with Singapore’s National Heritage Board as the main provider of funds. A report of the design team commissioned with the revamp stated that the financial support will be increased. The revamp will include twice the amount of current state funding, hence providing the opportunity to revive the lost community focus (Erica Danielson, 5 March 2009). Although the MHC was started as a cultural centre for the local community, this focus had to be adjusted since profit-driven initiatives and tourism marketing for revenue increase had priority over costly cultural initiatives.

It is not clear whether the increased financial support of the Singapore’s National Heritage Board can reverse this order of priorities. The intended focus on the local Malay community has gradually been lost during the course of operations. Hence, reaching out to the Malay community

\textsuperscript{71} Mandatory “learning journeys” of school children to the MHC are excluded from this figure.
requires sincere new initiatives rather than redundant rhetoric. For the moment, it appears that such rhetoric of cultural policymakers emphasises the community centre role of the MHC while realistically, the underfunded cultural flagship is not capable of making a strong impact towards the more prominent representation of the Malay community in Singapore’s heritage landscape. This situation is reminiscent of the end of the 1980s, when Kampong Glam was endowed with “historic district” status to represent the Malay-Muslim community. There were no concrete measures to safeguard, let alone enhance, the ethnic characteristics of the area until the mid-1990s. However, revitalisation has taken place in certain areas of the URA’s conservation zone since then; similarly, it is hoped that the MHC will be able to fare better in the future after overcoming the difficult starting phase.

6.4 Preservation as Rhetoric? Voices from the District’s Periphery

6.4.1 The Social Value of Heritage Preserved? Two Areas Compared

Mindful of one initial key element of Singapore’s conservation project, i.e. the construction of a social identity rooted in Asian cultural heritage, proponents of conservation planning in the 1980s sought to preserve the socio-cultural values of ethnic heritage in historic districts, among other things (Lou 1985, Tay 1988, URA 1989). Officially labelled “social values of heritage”, this component is defined in conservation manuals as “the qualities for which a building [or area] has become a focus for spiritual, political or national cultural sentiment for the nation as a whole or for each racial group” (URA 1993, p.16).

Apart from this general mention of “cultural sentiments”, however, the preservation of lived culture and spatial practices are weak elements in conservation. The URA guidelines link the “social value of heritage” only indirectly to the implementation stage of conservation when they discuss the “rehabilitation” of a property by returning a building or place to a state of utility (ibid, p.27). The preservation of socio-cultural values of heritage is briefly addressed in early drafts for
Kampong Glam’s historic district as an objective of conservation, that is, “to retain and enhance the existing activities” (URA 1988, p.26). But it does not mention how to achieve this goal. There is little mention of everyday cultural practices in the official conservation discourse in Singapore. The following sections will examine Haji Lane and Jalan Kecil, focusing on their display of ethnic heritage and lived culture. I will explore whether the intended preservation of “social values” of heritage has succeeded in maintaining spatial practices, that is, conservation has led to the continuation of some traditional craftsmanship and trade. Alternatively conservation activities could help to mitigate against rapid modernisation by means of providing accompanying measures and a long term perspective for a locally sustainable heritage tourism development.

I assume that the preservation of “lived” components and not merely the conservation of buildings makes the Kampong Glam ethnic district a meaningful place for Malays and Muslims. This local acceptance of Kampong Glam as a relevant centre for community life is crucial because it is the basis for the district’s alternate function as an authentic ethnic tourism attraction. Kampong Glam’s success as an ethnic tourism venue heavily depends on its patronage by native Malays and Muslims, because such frequentation evokes interest to visit in “allocentric” cultural tourists, who enjoy experiencing local cultures and like to get in touch with the local population (Pearce 1987). In terms of methodology, I use an ethnographic approach in this section complementary to previous discussion of the commercial flagship development, evaluated through surveys, to better understand the lived culture across sub-zones at Kampong Glam (Figure 6.12).

---

72 Critical academic studies have identified this shortcoming, and analysed its impact focused on Chinatown (Yeoh and Kong 1994, Chia et al. 2000) and Little India (Chang 2000). In this tradition, I discuss the cultural heritage of Kampong Glam’s residents and commercial operators as a vital part of the conservation zone’s Malay and Muslim character.

73 According to Neil Carr (2002) “an allocentric tourist may be defined as an inquisitive and curious individual, who is self-confident and adventurous, which is the opposite of a psychocentric tourist” (p.321).
Fig 6.12: Kampong Glam sub-zones as identified by the business survey

- **Haji Lane/Ball Lane**: many Chinese shop owners; visitors are mixed, in the evenings high share of Malay customers.
- **Arab Street**: many Malay regulars, mixed with tourists shopping for textiles; shop owners are mostly of Indian and Arab origins.
- **Bussorah Street**: Mainly pedestrianized as 'Bussorah Mall'. High share of tourist customers; local reservations towards the Arab landscaping.
- **Kandahar Street**: One row of shops houses only, so limited development potential.
- **Jalan Kecil**: mostly Malay shop owners, highly frequented by Malays. Identification with Malay-Muslim culture, but neglected in planning initiatives.
- **South side of North Bridge Road**: mix of traditional Muslim shops and controversial Karaoke lounges (selling alcohol).
- **Aliwal Street (Chinese enclaves and Parking areas)**: land use not reflective of Malay and Muslim heritage, hinterland of the core conservation zone.
- **Jalan Sultan Area**: low commercial density, vacant lots and shop houses awaiting refurbishment, centre for Islamic education, Al-sagoff Madrasah.
Haji Lane has not been subject to direct state intervention after Kampong Glam’s re-zoning for conservation; but it is only two streets away from the Bussorah Mall commercial flagship project (Figure 6.12). From Figure 6.4, we have seen that 79.2% of shopowners affirmed the effectiveness of revitalisation, believing that economic vitality and socio-cultural characteristics of the district have been equitably enhanced. These underlying sentiments about the business climate shape the spatial practices of Haji Lane’s predominantly commercial community. Commercial life spills out from the shops onto the street and local shopowners are proud that their neighbourhood is so “different” from the rest of Singapore. The outlook on Haji Lane is positive, and some commercial operators are confident that they have played a part in rebuilding a community, which some describe as “matching” the historic atmosphere.

Similar to Haji Lane, the Singapore government has not made efforts to refurbish the shops on Jalan Kecil, but counted on private initiatives. The Jalan Kecil area across North Bridge Road consists of various small streets, but there are no shops at its back lanes. Since Jalan Kecil streets are narrow and have little vehicular traffic, their physical features are comparable with those of Haji Lane. Yet, the reactions of Jalan Kecil shopowners to conservation are different from Haji Lane’s. Most of the tenants at Jalan Kecil do not believe there is a balanced business mix and that traditional activities at Kampong Glam successfully preserved.

Although some sense of community exists among the commercial operators and few residents, the Jalan Kecil commercial community defines itself in opposition to the mainstream heritage displayed at Kampong Glam’s core zone rather than in agreement with it. Particularly, the marketing of exotic and cosmopolitan heritage in the core zone, combined with a lack of control on commercial uses, prompts negative comments. A Malay shopowner from Jalan Kecil said, “Most of the businesses along North Bridge Road and Bussorah Street are Chinese or Indian pubs
or the fake souvenir stalls of Bussorah. They are all unsuitable activities. Malay businesses like ours have not profited” (13 March 2008).

Despite being clear about what they do not want to be, i.e. like the “fake” businesses at the core zone, the stakeholders along Jalan Kecil are insecure about the future of their neighbourhood and how to ensure the continuity of the Malay and Muslim legacy. Due to the different attitudes of the community towards sightseers, the spatial practices vary strongly from the vivid display of family or work life in the five-foot walkways of some shophouses to hostile attitudes next door, often symbolised by locked doors and frosted glass. Other than at Haji Lane, non-Singaporeans are often seen as a potential threat to the character of the area. Nevertheless, the local concerns of Jalan Kecil stakeholders should be heard to ensure a sustainable development of Kampong Glam’s northern sub-zone. Despite being physically similar in structure, the communities at Haji Lane and Jalan Kecil have very different takes on the achievements or failures of heritage preservation.

6.4.2 Jalan Kecil and the Contestation of Government Plans

According to most Jalan Kecil shopowners, revitalisation efforts have been exhausted at Bussorah Street. Their criticism of the URA’s conservation efforts focuses on two things. First, many owners said that the URA has neglected the surrounding areas, which therefore are in a bad state causing potential customers to avoid the area. Second, people criticised the high-profile efforts to promote Bussorah Street as a business venue at the risk of jeopardising the Malay and Muslim character at the mosque’s doorstep. Jalan Kecil shopowners raised most of the criticisms about unsuitable commercial uses along Bussorah Mall (Table 6.1).
Table 6.1: Preservation – Voices from Kampong Glam’s Periphery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopowner from...</th>
<th>Opinions on Revitalisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jalan Klapa</td>
<td>“Now, it is all fashion on Haji Lane and on Bussorah. Everything is cosmopolitan, no more traditional. Only just around the mosque for prayer time it is Muslim in character.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalan Pinang</td>
<td>“There is almost nothing left from the Malay and Muslim culture, even the Heritage Centre is also only a shell”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalan Pisang</td>
<td>“The URA has allowed pubs and restaurants serving liquor into Bussorah Street and a “7-Eleven” as well. This did not happen [sic] five years ago”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalan Pisang</td>
<td>“Only Bussorah Street has been revamped. Elsewhere, the business is slow and traditional activities are dying. Like here, the URA has done nothing for us Malays. But the mosque also brings some people here”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s fieldwork, January – March 2008

Worse, the URA neglected the Jalan Kecil zone just across the street from the mosque and the MHC, ultimately contributing to the demise of many Malay and Muslim businesses that had persisted into the 1990s. Table 6.1 shows that many remaining commercial operators at Jalan Kecil consider it an important task to safeguard the preservation of Malay and Muslim culture at Kampong Glam. Despite the discontent with state-led developments, no proactive grassroots initiatives from Jalan Kecil stakeholders have stepped in to enhance the Malay and Muslim identity in the area. Many regard the long-term decline of Malay and Muslim culture in Kampong Glam to be irreversible. This is a typical form of ‘resilience’ as identified by political and cultural geographers in their discussion on local reaction to hegemonic cultural policies (cf. Katz 2004, Sparke 2008). It has been established that such policies are not sufficiently explained by a global-local dichotomy, but that “politics of heritage” by national governments can also be hegemonic and detached from the local level (cf. Su and Teo 2009).

The reactions from Jalan Kecil show disillusionment with conservation, many commercial actors and residents think that the Singapore government does not portray an accurate picture of Malay and Muslim culture in representation of heritage. Despite their disillusionment, most local businesses operators and residents do not believe that a joint effort will make a difference in
preserving cultural activities in the wake of the pervasive Arab marketing theme and the concentration of investment in the core conservation zone. The business operators and residents are overwhelmed by external influences. The hegemonic cultural policies in Singapore’s semi-authoritarian political environment do not allow for a local ‘reworking’ of initiatives on ethnic heritage (Hill 2000), especially since racial policies are a highly sensitive field within politics in Singapore (Chua 1995). The prevalent reaction of local actors on Jalan Kecial is thus ‘resilience’, struggling to get by and showing a weary attitude towards state-induced heritage preservation.

Accordingly, their criticism of the “fake” representations of culture at Bussorah Mall did not translate into action for a more “authentic” version of Malay and Muslim heritage, since hegemonic ethnic policies does not allow for such initiatives. Hence, there is an “explicit recognition of problems” (Katz 2004, p.247), but a lack of pragmatic action to tackle those problems – a rather typical local reaction to hegemonic policies (cf. Katz 2004). The resignation of many locals results in the rare sighting of Malay and Muslim cultural activities at the aforementioned streets. As such, Jalan Kecil remains a stronghold for Malay and Muslim commercial activities. There is no shortage of Malay retail outlets or Muslim restaurants (Figure 6.13)74. Therefore, the fear of commercial and cultural decline cannot be explained by the absence of a Malay-Muslim commercial community. The fear of decline is actually rooted in the resilience-strategy of locals to cope with hegemonic cultural policies, which focuses on struggling for survival but precludes pro-active commitment.

74 In Figure 6.13, the ethnicity of business owners is sorted according to the official CMIO-categories of the Singapore government. As an adjustment to local particularities at my field site, the ethnic groups “Malay” and “Other” are merged into the “Malay and Arab” column. This reflects the reality of Kampong Glam’s ethnic composition since all respondents of the business survey from the relevant streets who were CMIO-categorised as “Other” said that they would be “of Arab descent”. 
The figure demonstrates that Jalan Kecil is the only sub-zone of Kampong Glam where a high rate of Malay/Arab ownership is matched by a predominantly Malay customer base (cf. Figure 6.5). This presumably offers a solid basis for a prominent display of Malay and Muslim activities. But the pessimism among the commercial community prevents them from providing the area with a more energetic vibe; hence, the streets continue to be quiet. Stakeholders along Jalan Kecil are conscious about the public display of their everyday culture, for instance, the practice of sitting down and chit-chatting at the five-foot walkways of the shophouse arcades. Gatherings and commercial transactions are often held inside the buildings rather than on the five-foot walkways of the shop houses.

---

75 Their area is the only part of Kampong Glam where a distrust of outsiders occasionally hindered the documentation of local activities through photography – even the Malay photographer hired for the purpose of illustrating street life was asked to leave.
The inhabitants thus do not share their socio-cultural heritage with others such as visitors, neighbours or fellow commercial operators, undermining the purpose of an ethnic district. With few exceptions, most stretches of Jalan Kecil display no particular ethnic culture and in fact resemble the commercial zones of Singapore’s racially integrated New Towns (Chih 2003). Although conservation seems to have succeeded in bringing about economic revitalisation in Kampong Glam’s core zone, the preservation of Malay and Muslim socio-cultural heritage along Jalan Kecil has proved to be more problematic. The prospect of revitalising the area through a one-off investment in a central flagship project seems absurd to commercial operators along the streets. A shopowner said, “They [government planners] knocked down so much already, how to revitalise? Also, there needs to be rent-control in some selected streets in order to maintain traditional uses and activities” (7 April 2008). Another owner added that “the old activities and businesses are all gone, there are no more Malay herbal shops and no more layang-layang, gasing, songkok [kites, tops, traditional hats]”.

The discrepancy between empirical evidence for a strong Malay and Muslim presence at Jalan Kecil (Figure 6.12) and the strongly perceived vulnerability expressed by respondents can only be explained by the negative attitude of Malay commercial operators along Jalan Kecil towards cultural representation and the selective display of heritage. The URA and the STB, as the authorities in charge of Kampong Glam’s conservation, have not succeeded in the difficult task to motive Jalan Kecil ‘resilient’ stakeholders to take part in the promotion of heritage. For India, Joseph and Kavoori (2001) state that mediating the resistance of a host community, including subtle reactions such as ‘resilience’, is a key challenge of contemporary tourism development. An inclusion of local ideas about representations of heritage would be an imperative for a sustainable

---

76 This contention is not obvious from commercial listings, whose indicators suggest a fairly strong presence of Malay and Muslim character. But it is strongly backed by the insights gained from ethnographic documentation and business survey commentaries (Table 6.1).
and stable tourism development. In comparatively less authoritarian India, however, there might be more incentives for the local population to participate in tourism planning and possibly ‘rework’ hitherto hegemonic policies as compared to Singapore. The high life standard in the city-state, in combination with the relatively tightly controlled political environment, cause the widespread realisation to have little to gain but a lot to loose from providing a vocal feedback to government policies on ethnicity and heritage (Barr and Skrbis 2008). Even if prompted to respond to official representations of heritage and culture, local residents or commercial actors usually tend to remain silent. The prevalence of such “passive” attitudes is a possible explanation why the recent “invites” to come up with new ideas for cultural revitalisation by the MHC leadership and the URA’s conservation department had little response from local stakeholders.

Although most Malay and Muslim traders along Jalan Kecil consider themselves a “dying breed”, there are a few newly established Malay and Muslim businesses in the area. But since many newcomers were priced out of the small core conservation zone (Yeoh and Huang 1996), most had few resources and struggled for survival at Jalan Kecil rather than being newcomers with fresh energy to initiate a commercial revival of the area. They could not attract new customers, let alone infuse energy to enhance cultural activities. According to the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce, the area became the location of choice for Malay and Muslim businesses mostly due to cheap rents, rather than any special qualities or attractive features (Akbar Kadir, 25 February 2008).

6.4.3 Tapping a New Resource – A Commercial Alliance for Cultural Heritage

Before commercial operators can help enhance the Malay and Muslim character, the URA and STB should mobilise them to actively support conservation policies as well as motivate them to contribute their own ideas to the process of heritage preservation (cf. McKercher and Du Cros
2002). For instance, the URA and STB could try to involve the operators in a participatory approach of heritage preservation, an approach that has not been tried at Singapore’s conservation zones.

Critics, however, might argue that commercial operators are the wrong target group when seeking assistance to reach cultural aims — that is, the preservation of traditional activities and place-specific ethnic heritage\(^{77}\). In Singapore, sociologist and community researcher Kong Chong Ho (2006) criticised the dominance of a private-state alliance in shaping place identity via the construction of iconic structures. Simultaneously, he emphasised the need for complementary community-based cultural projects, ideally implemented by local residents. In the case of Kampong Glam, however, the commercial rezoning of the entire district precluded the involvement of a resident’s community – too few people reside in the heritage district and its role as a religious and cultural “hub” for local Malays and Muslim is, at best, seasonally limited (Rahil 2006). The Muslim community gather regularly at the mosque at Kampong Glam, but most worshippers do not come on a daily basis. Many go on Fridays or during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Hence, the Islamic community, albeit occasionally showing a strong presence, cannot compensate for the lack of a substantial residential community, which would, by definition, be located at Kampong Glam throughout the year. Business operators thus constitute a vital part of what can be labelled as the “community” of Kampong Glam.

For a less urbanised setting, Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2003) study of minority entrepreneurs in China showed that a community of business operators can play a vital part in the revival of local culture even if selected traditional production and selling practices are altered to satisfy consumer needs. Similarly, the business community of Malay and Muslim shopowners should not be

\(^{77}\) Brian Graham (2002) said that heritage has a cultural and a commercial-economic value, and that commercial operators and tourism brokers are regularly suspected to commodify and “sell out” the cultural value.
disregarded as potential partners to enhance the socio-cultural heritage of Kampong Glam; their commercial self-interest does not necessarily contradict preservation efforts. As a stronghold of Malay and Muslim businesses outlets, Jalan Kecil can potentially play a strong role in achieving this aim, given the willingness of the commercial community to cooperate. Jalan Kecil shopowners are vocal about the inaccurate representation of ethnic heritage at Bussorah Mall (Table 6.1). Yet, they are reluctant to take part in initiatives for heritage preservation along their streets, even though they could perhaps ensure a more accurate representation by providing their input and participating in the process.

To uncover the underlying reasons for their reluctance, I asked the shopowners in the conservation zone why they located their shops at Kampong Glam. Figure 6.14 differentiates between three categories of reasons for locating a business, highlighting the responses of shopowners from various sub-zones. The first category, “Pragmatic reasons”, includes specifications about the streets’ central location, proximity to a subway station as a public transport hub, and most cited the low rent levels, compared with pricier locations either within the district or outside Kampong Glam in Singapore’s central areas. In contrast to such pragmatic reasons, the second category “Historic atmosphere” is the umbrella term for responses that mention a historic character but not particularly the influence of a specific Malay and Muslim legacy. Examples included comments on the low-rise built environment, the quiet surroundings and the “quaint” character of Kampong Glam’s “Malay and Muslim heritage”.

The third category is only slightly different from the second, but the difference is important because it focuses on specific cultural aspects for the location. These include the proximity of the

---

78 I sorted the responses to “Why did you locate your shop or your restaurant at Kampong Glam?” into three categories, grouped according to the main locational reason. The underlying categories for the sorting were “pragmatic attitude” towards locating at Kampong Glam (Category 1), general appreciation of the “historic atmosphere” (Category 2), and culturally specific reasons, such as the Malay-Muslim legacy (Category 3).
mosque as a venue for prayers, the many Islamic restaurants and the agglomeration effects for Muslim businesses, i.e. a Malay/Muslim shop locating there because others are already in place, due to Kampong Glam’s long tradition as an Islamic trading hub.

Figure 6.14: Reasons for Locating Commercial Outlets in Present Location

![Figure 6.14: Reasons for Locating Commercial Outlets in Present Location](image)

Source: Author’s fieldwork, January -- March 2008

Figure 6.14 shows that Jalan Kecil shopowners rarely mentioned the second category, “historic atmosphere” as a reason for locating their shops. The majority, 57%, cited “pragmatic reasons” (Category 1) while a third referred specifically to the Malay and Muslim heritage of Kampong Glam as a decisive factor (Category 3). The 33.3% claimed that they located their shops in the historic district because of place-specific “heritage” among Jalan Kecil shopowners, a record high at Kampong Glam, suggesting that they in principle felt a sense of pride in the distinct Malay and Muslim characteristics of the district. Taking into account this frequent mention of Malay and Muslim qualities by the “heritage advocates”, many Jalan Kecil shopowners do not see their role as business operators as limited to purely commercial activities, but also as promoters of Malay and Muslim culture. But this potential has not been tapped since official promotional materials
about Kampong Glam leaves out the Jalan Kecil area (URA 2005). Therefore, only 8.3% of shopowners in the area named the second category, “historic atmosphere”, in Kampong Glam as a reason to locate their shops here.

This situation emphasised the importance of comprehensively signposting heritage districts for tourism (Moulin and Boniface 2001). Since all the walking tours bypassed the Jalan Kecil streets, which are not mentioned in the walking guides, the “quaint and historic” appraisals used by the URA’s promotional material are without practical relevance for many owners of these streets. In overlooking the “heritage advocates” of the third category, the URA has missed the opportunity to engage those who are potentially keen to participate in cultural initiatives enhancing Malay and Muslim heritage due to their cultural sensitivity in its previous attempts to highlight local culture. As a consequence, the “heritage advocates”, despite initial interest, have become disillusioned about heritage preservation and other initiatives to enhance the representation of Malay and Muslim heritage (Table 6.1).

An uneasy combination of disappointed enthusiasts and disinterested pragmatics has resulted in general ennui at Jalan Kecil. Many “pragmatic locators” are not receptive towards cultural initiatives under any circumstances while potential “heritage advocates” at Jalan Kecil said that their ideas and views do not matter to planners and cultural brokers. Those “heritage advocates” have thus lost confidence in a possible reworking of hegemonic ideas on the representation of heritage.

6.4.4 Haji Lane’s Enthusiasm – “Malay” Initiatives from an Unlikely Venue

The locational pattern of Haji Lane, highlighted in Figure 6.14, is different from Jalan Kecil. Half of Haji Lane’s commercial community, of which Malays or Muslims are a minority, named the historic qualities of Kampong Glam as a factor for locating their shops at Haji Lane. Although
only 9.5% of respondents mentioned the Malay and Muslim legacy of the district, 50% of shopowners expressed a “can-do” spirit concerning the promotion of local heritage. Most of them went ahead and showed their “lived culture” in public space; this display of their “every-day practices” is a vital component of socio-cultural heritage (Figure 6.15).

Figure 6.15: Muslim Street Life on Haji Lane – A Family Resting in Front of their Shop

This prominent display of lived culture is due to the fact that the high share of 50% of owners deemed the historic atmosphere the decisive factor to locate their shops at Kampong Glam and hence as crucial for the prospects of their businesses. Malay and non-Malay shopowners at Haji Lane said that their street has a distinct character and are proud to share their interpretations of a historic neighbourhood with others. Quek Ling Xiang from the STB’s attraction division said: “When we started to market Haji Lane as ‘Singapore’s narrowest street, we had a great response from shop owners; they put out sofas and couches on the streets in front of their units. They made it like a cosy living room. I wish that sort of response also came up for our other initiatives in the Kampong Glam precinct” (11 June 2009).
The Haji Lane community has rejuvenated itself by redefining Malayness in the heritage district. Malayness as an element of the lived culture at Haji Lane is less about the rigid rules of proper Muslim behaviour even though inhabitants still observe basic Islamic guidelines such as the prohibition of alcohol. It is also open to other races and visitors, who are invited to sit beside the resting owners and employees on the couches at the walkways, to experience a slow-paced and sociable lifestyle, something that has gradually disappeared in Singapore (Lim 2004). An Indonesian-Malay shopowner and resident of Haji Lane said: “I grew up in a kampong. This area really brings back my childhood memories because it is so peaceful. People had little kedai [shops] just in front of their home. So convenient. So, I thought why not do it with my own shop unit here, live at the back of my... store? With so many food places around, [it’s not a] problem, even though I have no kitchen” (8 April 2008).

Conceptually, the initiative of Haji Lane stakeholders to bring a kampong feeling back to Singapore’s Kampong Glam, albeit without essentialising Malay culture as village-bound, can be considered as an attempt of ‘reworking’ the Arab-cosmopolitan tourism development hype in the core zone of Kampong Glam. However, their initiative is informal and low-key and does not fundamentally challenge official representation of heritage. The main concern of Haji Lane’s stakeholders is simply to rework the Singapore government’s “buzzing” tourism development aims into a locally accepted version which draws a reasonable share of foreign customers without displaying alien tourism themes. But since Haji Lane’s stakeholders are not organised, it is unlikely that the informally pursued kampong initiative of some individuals will go very far. Ultimately, hegemonic ideas on representation will persist such initiatives are not nurtured as a forum to express local voices on tourism development (Joseph and Kavoori 2001).
The atmosphere at Haji Lane, in the afternoon attracting a mixed crowd, changes in the evening when the fashion boutiques close while the cafes remain open. The ratio of Malay patrons increases as the cafes fill up with customers, mostly Malay Singaporeans. If only food and beverage outlets are taken into account, the Malay customer ratio of 41% at Haji Lane is substantial\(^79\). The Arab-style *shisha* cafes are the most popular leisure venues for Malays during the evenings (Figure 6.16), but they attract a diverse clientele as well. A Malay cafe customer commented on the diversity of the crowd:

Haji Lane is not a non-Malay community, as some people say, it is still a nice mix of everything, but with lots of Malay character. There are many kinds of tourists and locals who come, there are Malay *shisha* cafes and Chinese boutiques in this neighbourhood – it is a good mix!

(7 April 2008)

Figure 6.16: Malays Gathering in the Five-foot Walkway

The young Malays, especially, frequent Kampong Glam and Haji Lane. Of the 21-30 age group, 32.4% visit every day or several times a week, compared with an average of 23.9% for

\(^79\) In terms of general customer share, Malays make up 27% of clients at Haji Lane, the average for Kampong Glam being 40% (business survey data, February – April 2008). Singapore’s Malays account for around 14% of the city state’s total population.
Singaporeans above 31 years old (local survey data, August – October 2008). Twelve years prior to my fieldwork, Yeoh and Huang (1996) highlighted the potential of Kampong Glam as a meeting place for young Malays, particularly students, because of the two Muslim schools in the area (Figure 6.17). Today, one of the schools has been included in the conservation area while the other madrasah has been rebuilt only 100 metres from its original location just outside the conservation boundary. A Javanese-Muslim woman from the Alsagoff religious school explained why she comes to Haji Lane:

I come for shopping mostly. The batik and traditional head-dress sold on Arab Street is much better [sic] than in Geylang Serai. But also, I want to buy accessories from here in Haji Lane. I used to go home from school directly, but I already heard from friends that Haji Lane has changed – so now, I regularly come here to shop and at the same time to have a look at the changes because I am so curious (8 April 2008).

Figure 6.17: Malay Student Shopping at Haji Lane Boutique

Despite the strong presence of young Malays at the street in the evening, their substantial number is not the only factor that contributes to the “rejuvenated” Malay character. Young Malays also
act as “trendsetters” for older generations and different races in Singapore, enticing them to come to Haji Lane as well. Another important factor is the great degree of openness of the Malay regulars towards other local sightseers and tourists.

6.4.5 A Venue for Cosmopolitan Malay Culture? – Opportunities and Limits

Being cosmopolitan is considered a crucial quality in contemporary Singapore (Yeoh 2004). The STB strives to portray a cosmopolitan image of Singapore, befitting its aspirations of being a global city. In this context, tourism developments have recently started to highlight the transnational Malay and Muslim heritage of Kampong Glam (section 4.4), albeit with an emphasis on Arab trading connections. The STB, for instance, also tried to “sell” a cosmopolitan feel at historic places through displaying the “Renaissance city” theme of merchant heritage, exhibiting suitable artefacts at carefully selected sites, such as the replica of a Bugis trading vessel within the MHC compound. Haji Lane possesses a cosmopolitan spirit that perhaps renders such engineering efforts unnecessary. The STB’s Kelvin Leong said:

Haji Lane is now a brand name now for cosmopolitan people here in Singapore. Initially, we came up with the “narrowest street idea”, but the community there takes care of things now. Like narrow street but broad mind – like cosmopolitan – I would say [laughs]. When it works out that way, it is best not to intervene any further (16 April 2008).

Along Haji Lane, interested individuals can easily soak in the experience of the Malay-inspired kampong lifestyle, which Serbian tourist Aleks said has “a relaxed country-side feel to it” (17 March 2008). This is not to say that Haji Lane is a rural enclave; it has had an urban setting ever since the foundation of Kampong Glam as part of the interconnected “Colonial Cosmopolis” of Singapore. The legacy of this rich international networking of the Malays and the Arabs is still noticeable today. The Kampong Glam Business Association’s Dr. Ameen Talib said:

---

80 Joseph Stimpfl’s (2006) analyses the role of young Malays in terms of music, lifestyle and popular culture and identifies them as “trendsetters”. Stimpfl said that young male Malays frequently lead their peers of other ethnicities in terms of informal leisure activities and discovering suitable venues for “hanging out” (ibid).
We can see that Haji Lane’s commercial community is diverse. Look, there are so many cafés owner by people from different countries. The small residential community here is also a mix of many Muslim cultures, the local Malay one got residents stay [sic] and, for example, the Al-Junied Singaporean Malay/Arab family also lives here (22 March 2008).

The loose understanding of Malayness as an umbrella term for diverse Muslim cultures invites visitors from various backgrounds to visit Haji Lane and experience the cosmopolitan street life. Most Chinese and Indian stakeholders not only accept but embrace the Malay and Muslim heritage idea and its emphasis on social gatherings in semi public-spaces such as the five-foot walkways. This interracial support of the evolving Malay-style nightlife renders the street a unique venue for the interaction of cultures, especially since the cosmopolitan representations of the Singapore government had largely ignored the Malay community, exemplified by the failure to incorporate Jalan Kecil shopowners. Moreover, in contrast to essentialist representations of Malay heritage in the Malay Village, Haji Lane is an urban and not “purely” Malay setting, an organically developed neighbourhood rather than a human-made attraction. Because of these qualities and distinct architectural features, such as being the narrowest street in Singapore, Haji Lane is seen as a “cosy and amiable place” (Kelvin Ang, 25 May 2008).

People who are interested in Malay culture and lifestyle recognise the rare coherence of social heritage and the built environment, i.e. the coherence of intangible and tangible elements of heritage, and have thus become regulars at Haji Lane’s retail outlets and cafes (Yong 2007). Haji Lane has become a trendy venue not just for young Malays but for many others, including aficionados of Indonesian and Malay culture. For this group, the street offers special theme stores, such as a record store with an extensive contemporary Malay music selection (Figure 6.18)\(^\text{81}\).

\(^{81}\) During preliminary fieldwork in 2007, this particular store moved to the neighbouring Bali Lane while other distinctive shops remain in place.
Highlighting the distinct atmosphere along Haji Lane, Dr. Talib described the qualities of the street as being “at the heart of a Bohemian Village as it welcomes all sorts of people of different backgrounds with an interest in Arab and Malay culture” (22 March 2008). Dr. Talib sees Haji Lane as a venue for young Singaporean Muslims to reconcile Islamic tradition and modern city-life. This observation is in accordance with recent tendencies of Malay and Muslim studies. Specifically addressing Malay minority culture in Singapore, anthropologist Joel Kahn (2006), for instance, rejects the irreconcilability of Malayness and cosmopolitanism. He particularly detects possibilities for Malay cosmopolitan practices in the field of popular and youth culture. Youth venues such as Haji Lane serve as “spaces for interaction, but more importantly, for shared sentiments and practices across the hardening racial divide” (ibid, p.171). Relevant for this discussion on everyday shared spaces, a Singaporean-Malay cafe customer said:

I am half-Arab, half-Malay. I am a Muslim but a non-practitioner, but not a non-believer. I have a lot of Chinese friends. I love my friends and I want to hang out with them when I am free. But I don’t like these very crowded places with a lot of Chinese, like pork-smelly hawker centres [laughs]. It is not the pork; I do not like the stress and the noise. Pork tastes like chicken. I eat it sometimes. See I can say that here, the people here are not finger-pointing. That is why I bring my [Chinese] friends here. Here, it is relaxed and quiet. No drunks and no smell. I feel so comfortable here. And my friends like it, too. That is why we are here.

(Local visitor to Haji Lane, 26 August 2008)
Despite the potential of cosmopolitan practices to bring about the revitalisation of ethnic culture, the cosmopolitan qualities of Haji Lane and Kampong Glam have their limits. A more critical perspective on Haji Lane’s cosmopolitan qualities revealed that they are focused around non-immediate wants of pleasure seekers rather than the basic necessities of Singaporean Malays (Rahil 2006). The cafes and boutiques are integrative in terms of the ethnic mix of their customers, but they cater mainly to leisure visitors. Because of the disregard of daily needs, Haji Lane’s Malay-cosmopolitan flair can be interpreted as exclusionary practices of a “selective” cosmopolitanism (Yeoh 2004), catering to the demands of an urban elite rather than being a functional commercial zone for the subsistence of the Malay community.

For now, this gap in business supply mitigates against Kampong Glam’s relevance for the local Malay and Muslim community. Similarly concerned with the problem of cosmopolitan bias, Kahn said that “genuine cosmopolitan practices”, such as shared experiences across ethnic groups in urban space, should take place if Malay and Muslim cultural heritage is to be reconciled with modernity (2006, p.168). Despite having a gap in business supply, Haji Lane has the potential to play a crucial role in this reconciliation process, providing a “global-national-local nexus” in the representation of heritage (Su and Teo 2009, p. 29).

The diverse mix of customers and the interaction between local and foreign visitors make Haji Lane stand out as a model for a rejuvenated Malayness that embraces a cosmopolitan dimension. It has been the conscious choice of shopowners, most of them Chinese, to accept the Malay and Muslim heritage theme as a response to the URA’s urban conservation and heritage awareness campaign. The modest attempt of local stakeholders to gradually ‘rework’ official representations of heritage can only be pursued if their voices are mediated but not suppressed (Bramwell and Meyer 2007).
In contrast to modest attempts of reworking on Haji Lane, stakeholders along Jalan Kecil react with complete ‘resilience’. They say that conservation has failed to retain a true Malay and Muslim character but believe that they have to get by with whichever official representation of heritage is applied to Kampong Glam. They have called recent flagship refurbishment projects in the conservation core zone “inauthentic”. But this harsh criticism has not translated into community initiatives for a more accurate representation of heritage at Jalan Kecil. Since the URA and the STB have neglected Jalan Kecil in their heritage planning efforts, inhabitants of the street have had little incentive to support subsequent state conservation initiatives. Although Haji Lane shows the potential to rework official representations and to incorporate local Malay-Muslim elements in contemporary cosmopolitan heritage display, Jalan Kecil stands as a caution that practices of “selective cosmopolitanism” risk leaving vital parts of the community out (Yeoh 2004), possibly perpetuating the marginalisation of the Malay community in the wake of external hegemonic forces.

6.5 Conclusion

Tourists and local business operators approve of the emphasis on an Arab character in the representations of Malay-Muslim heritage, engineered through an exotic landscaping of Kampong Glam’s major tourism artery Bussorah Mall. But this commercial flagship received mixed reviews from the local Malay community. In contrast, the MHC, as the complementary cultural flagship project, has been evaluated as being mediocre, with local Malays placing special emphasis on the dishonoured promise of installing a community centre within the premises. As for the peripheral areas of Jalan Kecil and Haji Lane, local stakeholders have given the free market approach of conservation policies mixed reviews. Many of Haji Lane’s young and ethnically mixed shopowners said that heritage conservation initiatives have benefitted Kampong Glam as a whole. In sharp contrast, Jalan Kecil’s predominantly Malay and Muslim commercial
community was critical of the commercial focus of conservation and complained of the distortions of local cultural characteristics brought about by Bussorah Street’s revamp.

The analysis showed that the local Malay-Muslim community has not fully benefitted from revitalisation. The government had hoped to promote the heritage district by revamping and ‘globalising’ the centre of Kampong Glam and thus generating the revitalisation of surrounding areas, where most of the Malay-Muslim commercial community is located, but they were ultimately not very successful. Hence, the more prominent display of Malay-Muslim heritage has remained gradual work-in-progress and is in principle enabled by the “Renaissance city” theme as proclaimed by STB during the cosmopolitan turn of Singapore’s cultural policies during the 1990s. But initiatives for adequate representation of heritage subsequently lost focus, so that a possible global-local nexus of tourism development and local cultural enhancement has not been attained till date (cf. Su and Teo 2009). For instance, planning authorities did not subsidise the preservation of Malay-Muslim commerce and activities nor did they provide accompanying measures for conservation-induced changes, and they generally emphasised market-driven development.

In its conservation efforts at Kampong Glam, the URA did not implement alternative plans to preserve traditional activities in a core zone through rent subsidies (Lou 1985). Hence, the Malay-Muslim presence has diminished since conservation started in 1989, especially at the core of the conservation area. Many interviewees from the Malay-Muslim minority think that they do not have the resources to compete with the Chinese majority, especially if conservation were reduced to a business-friendly makeover of historic areas through commercial rezoning. The MHC, which was intended to compensate for the Bussorah Mall’s commercial focus, has so far not been able to
succeed in its role as a homestead for the Malay-Muslim community due to financial constraints in terms of the running costs and a subsequent focus on tourists as paying customers.

Despite the differences in public reactions, there are important parallels between the commercial and cultural flagship projects. Neither Bussorah Mall nor the MHC was integrated into a comprehensive plan for the enhancement of Kampong Glam. The URA’s conservation manuals were rich in architectural details, but they did not mention how tourists and local sightseers were to be guided through Kampong Glam or how the local Malay and Muslim community were to be involved. Furthermore, both flagship projects started with the eviction of local Malays from their premises. The URA’s way of implementing conservation has not fully taken the opportunity to entice the Malay and Muslim community to foster closer ties with its own ethnic heritage, as proclaimed in official statements about nation-building and identity enhancement (Tay 1988); despite a recent re-thinking of previously unchallenged ‘top-down’ approaches by the authority itself.

For tourism, the inclusion of cosmopolitan characteristics of Malay culture in official representations of heritage remains at its infancy. Few state-sponsored awareness campaigns have so far been complemented by formal or informal citizens’ initiatives. A ‘reworking’ of the Singapore government’s “politics of heritage” is a relatively rare phenomenon as compared to the local strategy of ‘resilience’ (cf. Katz 2004). ‘Resilience’-reactions in Kampong Glam include struggling to ‘survive’ as a shop owner in a competitive environment actively promoted to external investors or being able to stay as a resident in a largely re-zoned neighborhood. In both cases, the local reactions are pre-determined by the difficult circumstances and unequal power

---

82 Neither does the centre have a coherent concept for its exhibition (section 6.3.3). At least its historical urban setting, in a palace with Western architectural influences, is not reflected in the set-up of the exhibition which continues to feature rural Malay heritage as a main element (Imran 2007).
relationships (Bianchi 2009). As a consequence, open resistance is non-existent and also the ‘reworking’ of the hegemonic ethno-cultural government policies is rarely observable.

The situation on Haji Lane, hailed as a “locally-constructed” cosmopolitan venue for Malay-Muslim youth culture in Singapore (Yong 2007), is only slightly different. Some indicators show a local ‘reworking’ of the essentialising ethnic policies on Malayness applied by the Singapore government. However, those reactions are overshadowed by the more central role of Bussorah Mall, where the heritage display continues to insinuate that Arabs contribute more to cosmopolitan Muslim culture than local Malays do. Neither ‘reworking’ on Haji Lane nor the MHC as a community centre designated for the Malays have so far been able to rectify this not entirely accurate representation.

The difficulties of changing representations of heritage can be explained by recent postcolonial scholarship. As Cindy Katz (2004) states, active ‘resistance’ to dominant ideologies, such as heritage themes, tend to be over-emphasised by some proponents of activist research. In reality, she cautions, ‘resistance’ is rare, since it presupposes a political motivation and intent of local actors to change global-national-local power relationships. In Singapore context, for instance, the government ‘de-politicised’ representations of ethnic heritage along with ethnic policies in general (Chua 1998 and 1995). This de-politisation meant that public commentary on the topic was discouraged by severe sanctions for “offenders”. As a consequence, local actors in Kampong Glam would not engage in open ‘resistance’ to ethnic policies and their impacts in the heritage district. Instead locals in Kampong Glam, too, would more frequently show ‘resilience’ and, to some degree, ‘reworking’ as prevalent reactions to representation of heritage.

The key difference in local reactions within Kampong Glam between Jalan Kecil (‘resilience’) and Haji Lane (‘reworking’) is that ‘reworking’on the latter street, alongwith most projects of ‘reworking’, is “driven by the explicit recognition of problematic conditions” (Katz 2004, p.
and hence offers “focused, often pragmatic responses to them” (ibid). In contrast, the ‘resilient’ actors on Jalan Kecil lack this pragmatic and problem solving attitude, even though they also realise that they have been sidelined by existing representations of Malay-Muslim heritage. The complete lack of open resistance to hegemonic representations in Singapore’s Kampong Glam is thus only partially rooted in place-specific particularities of governance. The particular situation in the heritage district is in accordance with the postcolonial recognition of the rarity of such open resistance (cf. Katz 2004).
Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1 Synthesis of Findings

In heritage and tourism studies, researchers usually explain “the special post-colonial crises of identity”, i.e. the difficulties of constructing a national identity for a citizenry of former colonial subjects, with migration and displacement in colonial contexts as complicating factors for nation building (Ashcroft et al 1989, p.9). My research has dealt with a variation of this theme. As it focused on the Malays, as the native ethnic group of Malaysia and Singapore, it is about a community that has not been displaced but nonetheless has been deeply impacted by colonial era migration. The constant influx of migrants put the Malay community in the place of an ethnic minority after Singapore’s independence, and the city-state’s government then considered the representation of the community’s heritage as non-essential for nation-building and similarly believed that it was of limited value for tourism promotion. This bold notion, however, does not accurately explain all underlying processes of (self)-identification of the Malays with their heritage and related embellishments of tourism representations.

After Singapore’s independence, today’s concept of Malay-Muslim heritage remains rooted in presumptions dating back to the colonial era (Alatas 1977). Eventually, the ideological concepts of heritage, especially the presumptions of the “rural” Malay legacy, i.e. categorising Malays as village-dwellers, will manifest in space with particular representations of heritage, most visibly in the form of cultural landmarks (Lefebvre 1991). When the local community reacts to these representations, whether its support for or disapproval of state-endorsed cultural initiatives, these local actors can shape the changes in the use of space.
I have discussed in detail these three steps of representing heritage; shaping an ideological concept, its materialisation in urban space, and reactions and modifications to it by local actors at heritage sites. Both a government’s re-interpretations of history with their spatially relevant “politics of heritage” in the context of nation-building and the tourism broker’s commodification of cultural assets for marketing purposes are factors that affect the representations of heritage. For each step of the analysis, I considered these factors by linking the research traditions of the post-colonial discourse with practices of tourism studies. For instance, I linked the postcolonial discourse on self-orientalisation, in a regional context meaning that Asian governments defined their societal values in conscious opposition to Western values, to an analysis of the image portrayed for tourism marketing.

For Singapore, I showed that tourism marketing researchers identified the need to compensate for at times robotic, dull and restrictive images. The self-orientalised city-state of the 1980s, whose government cautioned its citizens against identifying with Western cultures and their focus on individualism and self-fulfilment, had lost some tourism appeal. The marketing researchers had to make up for the restrictive self-orientalisation by constantly underlining possible fun activities and excitement. I also uncovered that tourism agencies, such as the STB, quickly internalised the change in the policy framework when the Singapore government started to phase out self-orientalisation for the new nation-building element of “cosmopolising” society by highlighting international connections (Yeoh 2004). With this cosmopolitan turn, representations of heritage were free from the xenophobic undertones which frequently surfaced during the self-orientalising Asian values debate of the 1980s.

This was especially good news for the STB because of spatial constraints in Singapore. As Chang (1999) pointed out, those spatial constraints are a major factor that affects the representation of heritage in Singapore. The STB’s heritage attractions have to convey a consistent message
relevant for locals as well as foreigners; a distinction between “local” and “international” venues is almost impossible since Singapore’s territory is only 698 square kilometres. After the cosmopolitan turn, the STB could highlight interconnected heritage and a legacy of global connections, rather than having to work within the narrow scope of “Asian distinctiveness” to attract both local and international visitors. For former trading centres such as the Kampong Glam heritage district, this new focus was an opportunity to achieve a more prominent representation.

Beyond the space constraints, “politics of heritage” is a vital factor in most post-colonial nations and the role of tourism in shaping representations of ethnic heritage is often overestimated. The underlying concepts of nation-building with its “politics of heritage” are pervasive even in cases where upon first impression; heritage development seems to be tourism-driven. Philp and Mercer (1999) discuss how Buddhism is “commodified” in Myanmar (Burma). Their “commodification”, however, is not initiated by tourism brokers, but by agents of the central government, intending to portray a culturally and religiously united country where a reality check reveals divisions along ethnic and religious fault lines. For Kampong Glam, tourism brokers lobby for the re-engineering of Bussorah Mall to emphasise a Middle Eastern/ Arab heritage, in part because there has been noticeable success using this representation due to the demand for an exotic ambience like that of “One Thousand and One Nights” by tourists. Based on their extensive research in China, Yan and Santos (2009) deduce that self-orientalising is a powerful trend across Asia, whose particularities can nonetheless only be understood in context with locally applicable representation of heritage.

Kampong Glam’s business association also continuously pushes for an emphasis on Arab themes. But this substitution of Arab for Malay heritage was only possible because Singapore’s cultural policy did not specifically identify a Malay contribution to nation-building efforts in the 1980s. Subsequently, Singapore’s cosmopolitan aspirations of the 1990s highlighted international connections so that the Arab trading legacy filled in the gap for the perceived ineptness of the
Malays to represent interconnected urban heritage. Thus, the URA designed Bussorah Mall with tourism demand in mind, but the basics for the representation of Malay heritage have been sketched out by the Singaporean government’s ideological concept of “rural” Malays, inherited from the colonial era. Such an underlying concept, however, largely ruled out displays of Malay heritage elements at central locations such as Bussorah Mall, in this case before its actual planning process started. It therefore makes sense to consider both factors, i.e. tourism inputs and national cultural policy, with a thorough analysis of nation-building as the decisive factor for underlying ideological concepts of ethnicity. Su and Teo (2009), for instance, come to speak of a “global-national-local nexus” (p. 29) instead of a dialectical global-local relationship in their comprehensive review on the representations of minority heritage in Southwestern China.

Chapter 4 discussed the ideological concepts of Malay heritage since the 1900s. Applying a historical-geographical perspective, I examined whether the perception of Malay “failure” to function in an urban society is rooted in administrative practices of the colonial era, when other Muslim migrants regularly communicated with British leaders to settle disputes on behalf of the Malay community before World War I. Malay reformers attempted to change this system. But when their proposed Malay emancipation did not show immediate success in the 1920s, the colonial administration saw this as evidence that the Malays were indeed unsuitable for urban economic and cultural life. The situation for Malays in other neighbouring post-colonial states has changed, but the Singapore society still subscribes to this biased view that the Malays are incapable of taking part in modern urban life. Today, the Singapore media frequently label the Malay community as “problematic” with regard to its “difficult” integration into the cosmopolitan culture of Singapore as a global city (Rahim 1998).

83 Malaysia, in contrast, proclaimed an era of “Malay Modernity” in the 1970s and announced special privileges for Malays to boost their entrepreneurship and economic standing (Bunnell 2002). Ironically, sociologist Terence Chong (2005) said that this has led to disadvantages for the Malaysian Chinese and Indian population groups.
In terms of socio-demographic indicators, this negative attitude quickly became a self-fulfilling prophecy contributing to the marginalisation of Malays because employers considered their economic capabilities limited. Hence, employers often choose to hire people from other ethnic groups or to pay Malays less than others in the same position (Stimpfl 2006, 1997). Regarding the representations of heritage, there would seldom be displays of urban Malay heritage, such as of the inner-city historic district of Kampong Glam, or if they are displayed, they are not prominent and therefore seldom refurbished (Sim 1996). When the Singapore government finally identified urban Malay and Muslim heritage as a useful contribution to nation-building efforts in the early 1990s, the heritage sites were often in squalid condition and then better be complemented by the heritage of the Arab or Indian-Muslim trading legacies for a more glamorous and appealing presentation.

These historical insights are highly relevant for the analysis of heritage tourism today. In Singapore, the core zones of former ethnic enclaves were re-engineered into street malls. At Kampong Glam specifically, the government relocated former Malay residents to make way for an appealing but inaccurate representation of Malay and Muslim heritage. Tourists appreciate the landscaping today, but replacing Malay street culture with an emphasis on Arab heritage is more than pure commodification for tourism and rooted in the non-acceptance of Malay urban culture by the Singapore government’s ideological concept of rural Malayness.

Chapter 5 used a perspective from urban geography. I discussed urban renewal and resettlement policies targeted at the inner-city residents of ethnic enclaves such as the Malays of Kampong Glam. It linked them with the underlying ideological concept of rural and peripheral Malay heritage in Singapore as discussed in Chapter 4. To assess materialisations of this ideological concept, I first discussed the elements of culture that were left out of current representations of heritage at Kampong Glam. Since the Singapore government did not define a specific Malay
contribution to Singapore’s social identity and nation-building, the government considered the representation of Malay heritage to be low-priority. As a consequence, the list of “vanished” components of Malay-Muslim heritage is extensive. The maritime legacy, a cultural centre for Javanese drama and the regional-style Kampong Bahru Mosque and the entire neighbourhood surrounding it are lost. That has three implications.

First, the Malay-Muslim trading legacy of international maritime connections cannot easily be represented in urban space today after land reclamation with the shoreline out of sight. Instead, the maritime legacy has to be evoked with reconstructed artefacts such as the Bugis trading vessel replica. Although these artefacts might be carefully and skilfully designed, they often seem “stranded”, since there is no visible connection between Kampong Glam and any water body today. Second, instead of nurturing its development out of existing community meeting venues, the government built a contemporary cultural centre. Third, spatial representations of regional Islamic practices have vanished with the demolition of the tiered-roofed mosque. The mosque’s architecture incorporated elements of former Hindu-Buddhist civilisations found in Southeast Asia, especially in Java and Bali (Imran 2007), and was typical of the mosques in the region and hence an indigenous venue for Islamic prayers different from its Middle Eastern counterparts. In addition to these losses, other cultural venues have been separated from their spatial context, such as the zone for Islamic education and commemoration, which is excluded from the conservation zone, or Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, now hidden within the concrete jungle of an urban renewal pilot project.

What is left then? This answer implicitly informs the selective appreciation of heritage, that is, the preference for certain elements of Malay-Muslim culture such as the Arab trading legacy. Three main landmarks remain at Kampong Glam, either in original use (the Sultan Mosque) or re-engineered as heritage attractions (Bussorah Mall and the Malay Heritage Centre). To implement
both flagship projects, the government had to evict former Malay residents, which was a troublesome start for the enhanced representation of Malay-Muslim heritage since it had to mitigate local resistance. A professional mediation of resistance with the aim of a sustainable compromise between government intentions and local interests, however, is a policy technique which has not been applied in the discourse on Singapore’s representations of heritage. This is because participatory planning approaches are still at an infant stage in the city-state, in contrast to some other Asian countries, like India for instance (cf. Joseph and Kavoori 2001). For Kampong Glam, the continuing Malay legacy has been diminished to an Indo-Saracenic mosque built according to the architectural fashion of the late British Empire, a “One Thousand and One Night” shopping street with a Middle Eastern theme and a beautifully refurbished but underappreciated heritage centre.

Chapter 6 discusses the reactions of various interest groups to these contemporary representations of heritage at Kampong Glam. Incorporating a community development perspective from urban anthropology, it differentiates between various stakeholders, tourists, local visitors, the local commercial community and the Singapore planning and tourism authorities. Commercial flagship Bussorah Mall gets mixed reviews, whereas the complementary cultural flagship, the Malay Heritage Centre, can so far neither convince tourists and local sightseers nor the commercial community about the cultural benefits of the centre.

I put special emphasis on incorporating a local perspective from the periphery on the representation of heritage in the district, articulated by mostly Malay shopowners and some remaining residents. There remains a strong Malay commercial presence at Jalan Kecil, at the northern part of the conservation zone. The Jalan Kecil shop owners evaluate the re-engineering of ethnic space at the centre of Kampong Glam as shallow, whereas Haji Lane’s ethnically more diverse shopowners consider the district as being successfully revitalised while retaining its
historic character. Occasionally, some actors along Haji Lane even attempt to complement state-endorsed representations of heritage with a local twist. Those initiatives could be interpreted as modest attempts of `reworking´ the policy framework on ethnic representation, but ultimately the informal initiatives of select individuals are limited in scope since the initiators are not organised in a formal interest group.

At Jalan Kecil, where most Malay-owned shops are located, revitalisation is weakest and the affirmation of conservation lowest. Jalan Kecil´s local commercial and residential community reacts with resilience, i.e. its attitude is that official representations of heritage, albeit partly inaccurate, cannot be changed so it is pointless to start initiatives tackling the shortcomings. The shopowners said that the URA’s heritage enhancement initiatives have bypassed their neighbourhood. It seemed that the Malay community itself has benefitted the least from conservation efforts.

The contribution of the native Malay community to urban society has to be reassessed before representations of heritage can portray an accurate picture of Malayness. The national government holds the key to shaping basic cultural policy. The study has shown the agency of post-colonial states to construct particular concepts of heritage and subsequently shape space into representational landscapes according to ideals of nation-building. It has demonstrated that the cultural politics of nation-building are a powerful factor in shaping space. For instance, at Kampong Glam’s conservation zone for Malay heritage, which the Singapore government long considered as “problematic” to integrate into a modern urban society (Rahim 1998), there are three major surviving monuments of renewal policies. These policies were targeted at erasing ethnic enclaves altogether but came to a halt in the 1980s (Chih 2003). Cultural policies to underline particular representations of ethnic heritage, while neglecting others, continue to shape urban space in Singapore and elsewhere. Forty years after decolonisation, nation-building is an
ongoing exercise that continues to influence tourism spaces in destination countries, especially in former colonies of the global South. For a synthetical discussion of spatially relevant factors on tourism development from various levels, Su and Teo (2009) introduce their “global-national-local nexus” as a framework for analysis, expanding on earlier discussion on global-local connections in tourism. This perspective deserves further scrutiny in future research, as the final section shows.

7.2 Research Findings and Implications for Policy

For the core conservation zone of Kampong Glam, the URA’s role as the facilitator of Bussorah Mall is now limited – it fashions itself as a mediator, reconciling conflicts between profit-maximising owners and stakeholders emphasising the local Malay and Muslim character. Bussorah Street’s character as an Islamic tourism hub had been steadily declining since the 1960s, but the 1990s revamp irrevocably interrupted continuity. If Bussorah Street is to develop into a tourism street with appeal to Islamic visitors again, the URA must tread carefully as mediator. In the future, URA might in some instances be forced to take a stand against commercially viable uses which violate legal restrictions, such as the alcohol ban which prohibits a locally contested activity.

As for the cultural flagship, some conceptual changes could help to ensure a sustainable mode of operation with integration of community initiatives in the future. The MHC is an ambitious cultural project and has been in operation for four years. The fact that visitation has been steadily declining so far (see Table 5.1) does not mean that it is superfluous; rather, new strategies for better community outreach, especially towards previous resident members of Kampong Glam’s Malay community should be evermore emphasised. If the heritage centre did not fare well in previous years, it is time to rethink some strategies. During an interview-cum-private tour of the former Istana, the senior manager of the heritage centre, Khalid Shukur Bakri, did not deny
problems with community outreach and expressed openness for new approaches (16 January 2008). He also highlighted dancing classes and musical events as a means to draw young Malays to the centre. This sincerity in raising community involvement to make the heritage centre a lively place could perhaps serve as an example for other planners and cultural brokers in Singapore.

For a balanced heritage tourism development in Kampong Glam in the future, the URA and other state agencies involved in conservation should take additional measures if the entire district, including its periphery across North Bridge Road, is to benefit from revitalisation. The relatively low approval rating for revitalisation of Jalan Kecil shopowners, 42.9%, showed that they have not yet benefitted substantially. Rather than focusing state investments on Bussorah Street, the government must improve urban design and pedestrian access on all lanes to facilitate spillover effects across the entire heritage district. Even though the conservation manuals for Kampong Glam (URA 1989, 1999) include a diagram of anticipated pedestrian flows, the URA has taken no action to allow for this except for the pedestrian space at Bussorah Mall.

Figure 7.1: North Bridge Road – No Design Elements or Pedestrian Crossing
For instance, North Bridge Road, a main artery for vehicular traffic, does not have any pedestrian crossings. There are no aesthetic design elements to beautify the main street itself. Furthermore, there is no convenient access to the MHC from the North (perhaps a fact that also adversely affects its visitor numbers).

Concerning the representations of ethnic heritage on a more general level, native Malay-Muslim heritage can only make a true contribution to Singapore as a global and cosmopolitan city-state if the respective components of this heritage such as traditional Malay trades and their role as explorers are more prominently presented. This requires increased funding for the MHC as a serious cultural flagship to balance the existing commercial focus of conservation but also an incorporation of Malay-Muslim actors at Kampong Glam’s periphery along Jalan Kecil in heritage preservation. The Malay contributions to urban life in Singapore, for instance their share in the pilgrim trade, have to be clearly acknowledged, and the practice of substituting Malay achievements with an emphasis on other Muslim groups has to be remedied in order to achieve a fair representation of heritage.

In terms of cosmopolitan cultural representation, anthropologist Joel Kahn (2006) suggested to bridge the gaps to other ethnicities and between Muslim sub-cultures for a revitalisation of Malay and Muslim heritage so that the diversity within the Malay-Muslim community is considered an opportunity, not a complicating factor. Similarly, other researchers have also recognised the potential to re-incorporate the Malay-Muslim communities’ cosmopolitan legacy into the current cultural discourse in Singapore (Rahim 1998, Reid 2004). It is hope that such a re-incorporation will lessen the marginalisation of the community in the future.
7.3 Contributions to the Post-Colonial Discourse on Heritage

Tourism researchers Hall and Tucker (2004) identify the relatively weak link between cultural studies on nation-building and tourism research on the commodification of heritage as a gap in the literature. But there is increasing research in the area of cultural studies of postcolonial nation-building and its exclusions in the global South, for instance on Myanmar (Hudson-Rodd 2009) and on Malaysia (Kim 2008). In Southeast Asia, this area of research, which concentrates on the region’s many multi-ethnic states with their diverse population requiring particularly careful construction of nation-building, might be able to reconcile majority and minority ethnic groups (Brown 1994).

For the representation of heritage in these states, their multi-ethnic composition brings about two complications. First, all cultures have to be presented adequately. Hence, no culture should be sidelined or completely left out in representations of heritage. Second, for every culture, heritage has to be displayed accurately, thus colonial stereotypes such as those of Malays as “non-enterprising” and rural dwellers have to be challenged (Alatas 1977). Indeed, migration in the colonial era has heavily affected the region, raising the existing diversity of cultures. In the British Empire, migrants were shipped into the Southeast Asian colonies from other parts of the Empire and protectorates, such as the Arabs from Hadramaut in Yemen, but also people from China were accepted to stay in Southeast Asia. Eventually, the Chinese became a substantial minority on the Malay Peninsula, the biggest ethnic group in British-Borneo and the majority of the population, at 77%, in Singapore.

After independence, the newly independent states had to shape a cohesive society out of the native population and the migrant groups. Carolyn Cartier (1998) provides insights into a reconciliation process of representations of heritage from Malaysia’s historic city of Melaka,
where the native legacy of the Malay Sultanate had to be balanced with a due representation of the substantial role of the Chinese migrant community in shaping the city’s development. Singapore is a special case of a settling society, where settlers, in this case Chinese migrants, eventually became the majority of the population. Cultural studies described the nation-building processes in Malaysia and Singapore in detail (Lian 2006). Most make the point that either the Chinese minority in Malaysia or the Malay minority in Singapore face difficulties with the designated construction of nationhood (Chong 2005, Rahim 1998).

There are indeed countless studies of how the independent countries, namely the Singaporean and Malaysian governments, have attempted to manage ethnicity since independence despite those difficulties (Brown 1994). Most studies focus on ethnic representation in politics, the economy or in the arts. But the spatial effects of ethnic policies in all of these studies have only occasionally been considered. Some post-colonial studies claimed to have engaged with “place” and “space” in depth (Ashcroft et al. 1989), but this engagement has often focused on feelings about displacement or living in diasporas. It did not extensively discuss the actual impact of cultural representation in urban open space, apart from the general fact that former colonies are making increasing contributions to global culture.

Cultural geographer Jane Jacobs (2002) is one of the relatively few researchers who engage with the topic, providing a general analysis of postcolonial urban spaces with her work. She and a colleague also discuss a Singaporean case study (Jacobs and Cairns 2008), albeit with a focus on interior design and high rise architecture. Many other analyses, however, built mainly on methods of textual analysis. Cultural researchers scrutinised speeches of government representatives and state guidelines on multicultural policy or evaluated statistics about the social standing of ethnic groups (Chong 2005, Lee 2006). In contrast, how concepts of race and culture have materialised in urban space with representations of ethnic heritage is rarely discussed.
Many post-colonial cultural studies, despite their goal to gain insights about society and space in former colonies, have also focused on the analysis of secondary data, texts and statistics. Often, primary data collection for the analyses of ethnic representation centred on interviews with select stakeholders, that is, community representatives, in a well-intended effort to reach beyond textual analysis (e.g. Rahim 1998). Yet, most studies stopped short of analysing spatial patterns of ethnic representation. Such a perspective, however, does not adequately recognise the continuing relevance of particular districts for each ethnic group in the urban centres of postcolonial states, especially with regard to recent efforts to enhance ethnic representation of heritage in select inner-city areas in Singapore and other Asian cities (Dallen and Prideaux 2004).

Since the 1980s, tourism studies have more rigorously engaged with spatial changes in destination countries, mostly former colonies, in the global South. The studies identified global tourism trends as helping cultural globalisation. Tourism studies are, however, split over the issue whether cultural globalisation equals worldwide homogenisation, meaning the “destruction of local uniqueness” leading to globally uniform waterfronts or “festival marketplaces” (Britton 1991), or whether cultural globalisation can have place-specific outcomes because “the global-local nexus” applies, such as when heritage districts continue to be locally unique even though they cater to similar tourism crowds. But a common feature of both schools of thought is that nation-building is a minor consideration. Proponents of both believed that tourism has brought about most of the spatial changes in the urban environment, through commodification and the reshaping of representations of heritage towards tourist demands.

Although it is crucial for critical tourism studies to acknowledge the cultural impact of increasing tourism flows, there is a continuing neglect of the agency of destination countries in many of them. In most tourism studies nation-building policies of destination countries, which have long been acknowledged in cultural studies, are still believed to be of minor importance in terms of
spatial effects. Many of those studies are thus preoccupied with the profit-driven commodification of cultural assets into heritage attractions for foreign visitors. Such a perspective cannot accurately explain the underlying dynamics of nation-building in post-colonial nations. The link between such “politics of heritage” and tourism-induced cultural changes, as the two factors shaping spatial representations of ethnic heritage, has not been sufficiently explored. Su and Teo’s (2009) repeatedly mentioned analysis of heritage tourism in Southwest China is one of a few notable exceptions providing a link. The authors also conceptualize this link as the “global-national-local” nexus, implicating that both global tourism trends and national “politics of heritage” shape the local environments of historic districts.

Hall and Tucker (2004) presented an agenda for future research, combining elements of tourism and post-colonial studies. They called for tourism researchers to incorporate the “special post-colonial crises of identity” (p.12) into their work and to consider the destination countries’ policies of nation-building in-depth. This “crises of identity” has prompted post-colonial states to engage in the construction of a national identity. As part of this endeavour, their government had to create a widely accepted version of national history and to apply “politics of heritage” to reshape tangible elements of culture into heritage landscapes which support this particular version of history. The resulting representations of heritage are thus mainly targeted at local visitors, who are supposed to find their cultural roots through such highlighted venues or monuments. For too long, this inherent component of nation-building and identity construction has been misinterpreted as commodification for tourism purposes.

Recalling the link between heritage, history and commodification, Ashworth (1994, p.16) stated that “history is the remembered record of the past: heritage is a contemporary commodity purposefully created to satisfy contemporary consumption” – but consumption by whom? Many tourism studies, especially before the mid-1990s (Nash 1989, Millman 1991, Morris 1995),
believed the “consumption” of heritage to be tantamount to tourist “consumption” of heritage. But local sightseers and even frequent visitors of historic areas are also consumers of heritage. In other words, tourism research has to engage with “politics of heritage” as a key element of nation-building, acknowledging that spatial changes around heritage attractions could also be the result of factors other than tourism. The post-colonial discourse on nation-building, in turn, will have to overcome its tendency to disregard spatial developments. The discourse should no longer be limited to the textual analyses of government statements on cultural heritage but must engage more profoundly with the spatial effects of the particular ideologies (cf. Jacobs 2008, Su and Teo 2009).

For Singapore, too, an undifferentiated reference to Singapore as a whole as a “post-colonial site” undergoing “Re-Ethnicisation” (Chua 2000, p.279) is an insufficient approach to explain the rediscovery of ethnic heritage and what this means for its representations in urban space. Considering nation-building and tourism policies as two separate but interrelated factors for the interpretation of ethnic heritage is crucial for understanding the changing representations of this heritage (Chang 2005). Post-colonial heritage in contemporary urban space is a theme that has become even more significant with the rise of Asia’s major cities as cosmopolitan centres for tourism and migration. Yet, in many instances, the discourse on post-colonial landscapes and tourism has not gone far beyond an exploratory stage.

Teo and Chang’s (2009) study of boutique hotels in Singapore, for instance, offers a spatial focus, incorporating various dimensions of a post-colonial society’s tangible heritage against a backdrop of cultural globalisation and global tourism. The different perspectives from hotel owners typically highlight the importance of local heritage in a globally interconnected city. The authors explain that the hotels capitalise on the cosmopolitan experiences of their owners and link the eclectic mix of modern and traditionally Chinese design elements to the owners sojourning
overseas. At the same time, the traditional elements account for the desire of customers, Singaporeans and foreigners, to experience a heritage landscape. For this case study on boutique hotels, it appears that “politics of heritage”, i.e. the government’s emphasis on cosmopolitanism and the achievements of cosmopolitan Singaporeans (Yeoh 2004) have been fairly similar to the aims of tourism brokers’ to commodify heritage through providing an appealing historical environment to which tourists and local visitors can relate. This means that both factors now jointly shape representations of heritage into a new cohesive heritage space, unifying nation-building goals with tourism objectives.

Beyond the case study, however, it remains questionable whether most post-colonial nations indeed overcame possible discrepancies between the display of commodified and appealing heritage for tourism display and the nation-building target of socio-cultural management of their ethnic groups, i.e. whether they provided adequate representations of all ethnic cultures, and accurately displayed each particular ethnic heritage (cf. Kim 2008, Philp and Mercer 1999). At Kampong Glam, for instance, the appealing display of Middle Eastern heritage along Bussorah Street has substituted the more accurate display of a Malay residential neighbourhood. A goal of nation-building is to safeguard ethnic spaces for local rootedness in Singapore. The government’s committee on heritage defined Kampong Glam as a primarily Malay place for the cultural awareness of this population group (Tay 1988). What Malayness contributes to nation building, i.e. which elements of Malay ethnic heritage to represent, has not been defined. A concept of how to make Malay tangible heritage represent a particular quality of Singapore society, and hence make it more relevant for interested tourists and local visitors, is thus missing.

In contrast, tourism brokers usually know what they want. They usually want a commodified tourism landscape that appeals to tourists with an interest in “the exotic”, as Yan and Santos (2009, p. 303) state in their article on self-orientalising in China. For Singapore’s Kampong
Glam, tourism brokers such as the STB and the KGBA subsequently pushed for an emphasis on the Middle Eastern and Arab theme. The Singapore government and the URA as its conservation authority, however, were increasingly concerned about the lack of Malay presence in a Malay and Muslim heritage district. The URA therefore opposed the further emphasis on Middle Eastern themes, for example, covering Bussorah Street with linen in the style of an Arab market, a Souk. The Singapore government wanted to adjust the Middle Eastern bias by raising the profile of the Malay community with a prominent representation of their heritage in the new Malay Heritage Centre, complementing the commercial and Arab theme of Bussorah Street. The government thus promised a true community centre for locals, not a tourism-focus in development. But this locally designated focus also gradually changed towards a stronger tourism orientation, but the centre’s management keeps on working to strengthen community connections, organizing festivals and events for Singaporean Malays.

In the case of Kampong Glam, “politics of heritage” for nation-building and commodification plans of tourism brokers had conflicting interests. A balanced ethnic representation according to the CMIO nation-building scheme called for a representation of Malay heritage, tourism brokers preferred an exotic focus so that they wished to expand the Arab legacy into a One Thousand and One Night theme of representation. These tensions have materialised in different and at times mutually contradicting representations of heritage in urban space. To uncover such contradictions, researchers of heritage display and local identity need to reach beyond particularistic perspectives on either tourism marketing or national “politics of heritage”. They must combine elements of post-colonial policy evaluation and tourism research while considering urban public spaces – historic areas where heritage is highlighted for local and international visitors, not limited to indoor exhibition spaces or hotel lobbies (Chang and Yeoh 1999).
In many multi-ethnic states of post-colonial Southeast Asia, governments continue to prefer particular interpretations of ethnic heritage over other cultural elements in representation for tourists and locals. In the aforementioned Singapore study on post-colonial landscapes and boutique hotels, Chinatown is identified as the new hot spot for cosmopolitan representations of heritage of the city-state (Teo and Chang 2009). This spatial focus is also because the government has only recently deemed the heritage of Singapore’s minorities, such as the Malays, fit to match the cosmopolitan dimension of representation (Kahn 2006). In contrast, Chinese tourism entrepreneurs have considered themselves a vital component of cosmopolitan Singapore for two decades (Teo and Chang 2009), and they do not shy away from adding their own interpretations to the Chinatown heritage landscape with their personalised design of boutique hotels, for instance.

Although post-colonial governments have agency in the representations of ethnic heritage and although their concepts do regularly shape tourism-scapes, cultural globalisation affects such representations, too. Cultural globalisation has prompted those government’s tourism authorities to highlight a cosmopolitan legacy of international interconnections in heritage display, for Singapore’s Kampong Glam, the STB and its partners added artefacts of Bugis trading vessels or Malay cartographic items showing seafaring routes throughout the regions to Kampong Glam’s heritage landscape. The new cosmopolitan focus of the representations of heritage is an opportunity for the enhanced display of migrant and minority heritage, potentially including aspects of hybrid cultural interaction (Yeoh 2004). At Kampong Glam, it is an opportunity to complement the Middle Eastern/Arab-themed heritage at Bussorah Street with the native heritage of the Malays as newly highlighted in their state-sponsored cultural centre. Thus, it is an opportunity to reconcile ambitions of tourism commodification with cultural policies of nation-building.
But for a successful reconciliation of tourism development aims and national cultural policy, postcolonial governments also have to address and discuss the “problematic” aspects of ethnic culture, as Bunnell (2008, 2004) shows for the reconciliation process of Malayness, Islam and modernity in Malaysia. Similarly, the Singapore government should tackle these problematic aspects and avoid “blank pages” on the definition of a Malay contribution to nation-building. Otherwise, as my study has shown, minority heritage like that of the Malays, cannot compete with more closely defined “mainstream” contributions, such as the more prevalent adaptations of the Confucian ethic of hard-working merchants and labourers at Chinatown’s heritage centre (Chia et al. 2000).

In parts of Kampong Glam, the “Malay-Muslim” heritage has been re-interpreted as a mainly Middle Eastern and Arab merchant street in the hopes that such a theme would appeal to tourists. Other state agencies, such as the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have also underlined the Arab commercial legacy in their publications with an illustration of Bussorah Mall. This is in line with nation-building and cultural policy ambitions to showcase a historic track record of cosmopolitan connections and global interconnectedness. Bussorah Mall’s design is an example of such “Arab” interconnectedness (Figure 4.6), whereas Malay transnational connections are still sidelined to a certain extent, despite some recent changes in their cultural representation (Kahn 2006).

As a consequence, the new Arab emphasis of Bussorah is not merely a tourism marketing move or a plain example of the commodification of heritage. Rather, a synthesis of a spatially informed post-colonial perspective with tourism research on the motives for commodification of tourism brokers has allowed us to see the underlying reasons for the initial neglect of Malay components in heritage display as a combination of two factors. First, nation-building policy did not exactly identify Malay contributions for Singapore national identity and left colonial stereotypes
unchallenged. Second, tourism brokers’ plans for commodification identified the Arab trading legacy as potentially appealing for tourists while at the same time matching the new cosmopolitan element of cultural policies, albeit at the cost of neglecting Malay contributions to Singapore society. My analysis of the intersection of post-colonial cultural studies and heritage tourism research has uncovered these conflicting interests in the hope that Middle Eastern and Malay representation of heritage can be better considered to complement each other in a comprehensive representation of Malay and Muslim heritage in Kampong Glam in the future.

According to Hall and Tucker’s (2004) agenda to link cultural studies on “the postcolonial crises of identity” and tourism research on the commodification of heritage, I hope that this synthesis will be fruitfully applied to more heritage tourism case studies. Such case studies can enrich cultural geography with fresh insights about the interaction of cultural policies of nation-building with cultural globalisation and its tourism-driven commodification of heritage in postcolonial societies.
References


Hudson-Rodd, N. (2009). When was Burma? Military Rules since 1962. In R. Ismail, B. Shaw and G. L. Ooi (Eds.), Southeast Asian Culture and Heritage in a globalising World: diverging Identities in a dynamic Region (pp. 139-170). Burlington: Ashgate


Independent – Asia. (2007). ‘For tomorrow’s big Names, head for Haji Lane - Visitors to Singapore are told to shop in Orchard Road. Yet the Place to go is this little Street of Shophouses’, Accessed 20 October 2007, from http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/asia/singapore-for-tomorrows-big-names-head-for-haji-lane-396868.html.


295


Heritage in a Globalising World: Diverging Identities in a Dynamic Region (pp. 19-42). Burlington: Ashgate.


Politics, participation and (re)presentation (pp. 104-123). Toronto: Channel View Publications.


APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The following questions constitute the interview guide with which I approached interviewees. All interviews were semi-structured and I occasionally added other questions on the spot or possibly left the question from this interview guide out.

1. The URA has labelled Kampong Glam a “historic district” along with Chinatown and Little India. What is the relevance of this term for you?

2. Please name other ethnic heritage landscapes in Singapore you are familiar with.

3. Among those districts, what is the position of Kampong Glam, i.e. whose heritage does it represent and what attributes does it stand for?

4. Kampong Glam has been marketed as an “ethnic quarter” for shopping. Do you think that the present business mix caters to the needs of the local community? Or, does it cater more to tourists?

5. Do you think that recent campaigning, led by the STB’s efforts to market Kampong Glam for ethnic heritage tourism, has improved the business situation in the district? Has the area recently gained or lost popularity?

6. Can you elaborate on the diversity of customers in the district? What is the approximate share of tourists? What is the share of Singaporeans and Singaporean Malays?

7. Kampong Glam has also been promoted as showcasing an “Arabian Buzz in Singapore”. Do you think this is a strategy to tap new tourism potential from within Asia,
albeit from a relatively distant region (the Middle East)? Or, is it a usual campaign like many others?

8. The STB now markets two quarters as “Malay Ethnic Districts”, Geylang Serai and Kampong Glam. What are the distinct features of the respective districts? How is Kampong Glam then different from Geylang?

9. The STB states that Geylang Serai is the “cultural heart of the Malay community” in Singapore. How would you, as a stakeholder in Kampong Glam, define the identity of Kampong Glam?

10. How has the relatively recent completion of the Malay Heritage Centre influenced the market potential of Kampong Glam? Is there a comprehensive plan to market the entire district? How did it affect the business situation?

11. As a result of urban redevelopment, ethnic districts such as Little India and Chinatown or Kampong Glam have been promoted as heritage attractions. For Kampong Glam, how does that affect the attachment of the local community to the place?
APPENDIX 2

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES FOR BUSINESS OWNERS, TOURISTS AND LOCAL VISITORS

A) Kampong Glam Business Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Retailers and Merchants Working at Kampong Glam

Dear respondent,

I am conducting a research survey for my PhD dissertation in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Part of my research focuses on urban heritage conservation, identity and tourism marketing at Kampong Glam, and I would be grateful if you could spare a moment to answer this questionnaire. The data collected will be confidential and used only for research purposes. Thank you for your time and effort.

1. Do you think conservation at Kampong Glam has helped to preserve the Malay/Muslim characteristics of the area?
   a. Yes (    ) => go to 1.1
   b. No (    ) => go to 1.2
   c. No idea (    )

1.1. How do you think conservation has preserved the Malay and Muslim character and identity of the area?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________
1.2. Why do you think conservation has not preserved the Malay/Muslim character and identity of the area?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

2. One of the government’s aims in the conservation of ethnic heritage districts such as Kampong Glam is to provide traditional and modern activities and businesses. Do you think conservation has been successful in bringing about this mix of activities and businesses?
   a. Yes, there has been a mix of old and new => go to 2.1
   b. No, there has not been a mix of old and new => go to 2.2
   c. No opinion.

2.1 Why do you think the mix has been achieved?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

2.2 Why do you think the desired mix of old and new has not been achieved?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

3. Would you say that the conservation of Kampong Glam (e.g. Bussorah Street) has been successful? Please consider whether the area is aesthetically pleasing and culturally authentic, or merely economically viable, or a combination of the above. Please circle:
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. No opinion
3.1. In what ways has conservation been successful?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
3.2. In what ways has conservation not been successful?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

4. Please provide me with some information about rations of different customer groups!
4.1 What proportion of your customers are Singaporeans?
_____________%

4.2 Can you estimate the percentage of Malays of your total number of customers?
_____________%

4.3 Among the tourists patronising your outlet, what is the ratio of Asian visitors as opposed to “Westerners”?
_____________%

5. What is the main reason for locating your shop/restaurant at the Kampong Glam conservation district?
__________________________________________________________________

6. How important is tourism as a factor in the decision to locate your shop/restaurant here at Kampong Glam?
   a) Very important (   )
   b) Important (   )
   c) Not very important (   )
   d) Not important at all (   )
7. Where was your shop located originally, before 1989 and zoning for conservation?

   a) Exact location as today
   b) At Kampong Glam, but at a different site
   c) Outside Kampong Glam
   d) Shop opened after 1989
B) Kampong Glam Tourism Survey Questionnaire

7.3.1 Questionnaire for tourists at Bussorah Street Mall at Kampong Glam

Dear respondent,

I am undertaking a research survey for my Ph.D. dissertation in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Part of my research focuses on Malay/Muslim heritage, identity and tourism here at Kampong Glam. I would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to respond to the questions. The data collected will be confidential and used only for research purposes. Thank you for your time and effort.

1. *Are you traveling as part of a tour group?*
   
   Yes ( ) No ( )

2. *How did you hear about this heritage district?*
   
   a. Read about it in my guidebook ( )
   b. Friends’ recommendation ( )
   c. Brochure ( ) *By whom?___________*
   d. Internet ( ) *Which website?_________
   e. Tour guide, part of tour schedule ( )
   f. By accident ( )
   g. Other reasons______________ ( )

3. *What is your main reason for coming to Kampong Glam?*

   __________________________________________________________

4. *Have you already visited the two other ethnic heritage districts of Singapore, Chinatown and/or Little India?*

   a. Only Chinatown ( )  → please go to Question 5
   b. Only Little India ( )  → please go to Question 5
   c. None ( )  → please go to Question 5
d. Both ( ) can you rank all three in terms of attractiveness?
   1) ___________________
   2) ___________________
   3) ___________________ → go to Question 6

5. Based on your experiences at Kampong Glam so far, do you also want to visit one or the other heritage districts?
   a. More inclined to do so ( )
   b. Indifferent ( )
   c. Less inclined to do so ( )
   d. Have no idea ( )

6. Have you already visited the “other” Malay heritage district, Geylang Serai?
   a. Yes ( )
   b. No, but planning to do so ( )
   c. No, one is enough ( )
   d. Never heard of it! ( )

7. How much did you know about Kampong Glam before coming here?
   a. I read/heard quite a bit about it ( )
   b. I briefly read/overheard something ( )
   c. I have no idea ( )

For the following statements, please indicate the attitude most relevant to you:

8. The city planners’ conservation aims to refurbish old houses and redecorate the streets around the mosque have been achieved:
   a. strongly agree ( )
   b. agree ( )
   c. neutral ( )
   d. disagree ( )
   e. strongly disagree ( )
9. “I feel like I’m in a venue for enclave tourism. I cannot see any Malay and Muslim heritage or street culture other than the mosque in front of us”.
   a. strongly agree (  )
   b. agree (  )
   c. neutral (  )
   d. disagree (  )
   e. strongly disagree (  )

10. There is an interesting variety of shops at Kampong Glam, selling both modern items and traditional goods:
    a. strongly agree (  )
    b. agree (  )
    c. neutral (  )
    d. disagree (  )
    e. strongly disagree (  )

11. Kampong Glam offers interesting and unique street life in a pleasant environment, so it is convenient to spend one or a couple of hours here:
    a. strongly agree (  )
    b. agree (  )
    c. neutral (  )
    d. disagree (  )
    e. strongly disagree (  )

12. Because of all the historic houses and many shops, Kampong Glam is a tourist attraction rather than a place for local Malays and Muslims:
    a. strongly agree (  )
    b. agree (  )
    c. neutral (  )
    d. disagree (  )
    e. strongly disagree (  )
Finally, a few general questions about your impressions of the area:

13. **Do you think the conservation of old buildings at Kampong Glam has helped to preserve the Malay and Muslim character and identity of Kampong Glam?**

   Yes ( )  No ( )  no opinion ( )

14. The Malay Heritage Centre used to be a palace inhabited by descendants of the regional Sultan until the 1990s, and therefore it was not accessible to the public…

   HOWEVER …

   ...“Today it is open to the public and serves as a museum and heritage centre, but the connection with Malay Royalty is merely symbolic, since their descendants have been relocated to different parts of town.”

**What do you think about the new use of the building in relation to its former role?**

   Change for the better ( )  Change for the worse ( )
   Both uses are good ( )  No opinion ( )

**Any other comments?**

________________________________________________________________________

*Please provide me with some personal data, which will be treated with strictest confidence.*

a. **Country of origin:** __________________
b. **Sex:**
   Male ( )
   Female ( )
c. **Age group:**
   20 years and below ( )
   21-30 years ( )
   31-40 years ( )
41-50 years ( )
51-60 years ( )
over 61 years ( )

d. Have you visited Singapore before?
- Yes, once ( )
- Yes, several times ( )
- No ( )
- Cannot remember ( )

e. Have you visited Kampong Glam before?
- Yes, once ( )
- Yes, several times ( )
- No ( )
- Cannot remember ( )

Thanks a lot for your time and effort! Have a nice day/holiday!
C) Kampong Glam Local Visitor Survey Questionnaire

7.3.2 Questionnaire for locals at Bussorah Street Mall at Kampong Glam

Dear respondent,

I am conducting a research survey for my Ph.D. dissertation in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Part of my research focuses on Malay/Muslim heritage and culture here in Kampong Glam. I would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to respond to the questions. The data collected will be confidential and used only for research purposes. Thank you for your time and effort.

1. Did you come here alone or with friends, colleagues, your partner or your family?

(     ) Alone      (     ) Friends   (     ) Colleagues (     ) Partner    (     ) Family

2. What prompted you to come to Bussorah Street at Kampong Glam? How did you first hear about this area – the shops, makan places etc.?

   a. I always knew about the area               (     )
   b. Recommended by friends or family        (     )
   c. Received a flyer about activities in the area (     ) From who?
       ______________
   d. Came across it on the Internet          (     ) Which website?_________
   e. Came on a school excursion, learning journey (     )
   f. Came across by accident                  (     )
   g. Read about it in a newspaper/magazine    (     )
   h. Other reason_______________________________ (     )

3. What is your main reason for coming to Kampong Glam?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
4. Do you also visit the other ethnic heritage districts of Singapore – Chinatown and Little India – on a regular basis?
   a. Only Chinatown ( )
   b. Only Little India ( )
   c. None ( )
   d. Both ( )

5. Can you rank all three in terms of appeal, from the one you like best to the least?

   Examples:
   1) Kampong Glam____ OR 1) Chinatown______
   2) Chinatown________ 2) Little India_______
   3) Little India________ 3) Kampong Glam____

   Please state your preference here:
   1)_____________________
   2)_____________________
   3)_____________________

6. Based on your experiences at Kampong Glam – with shopping, eating, sightseeing or relaxing here in this heritage district for instance – how motivated are you to visit one or the other heritage districts?
   a. More inclined to do so ( )
   b. Indifferent ( )
   c. Less inclined to do so ( )
   d. Have no idea ( )

7. Do you also visit the other Malay heritage district, Geylang Serai, on a regular basis?
   a. Yes ( )
   b. No, but I would not mind going ( )
   c. I never/hardly ever go there! ( )
8. How much did you know about Kampong Glam’s history and heritage before coming here?
   a. I read/heard quite a bit about it ( )
   b. I briefly read/overheard something ( )
   c. I have no idea; I just came here for leisure ( )

For the following statements, please indicate the attitude most relevant to you:

9. The city planners’ conservation aims to refurbish old houses and redecorate the streets around the mosque have been achieved:
   a. strongly agree ( )
   b. agree ( )
   c. neutral ( )
   d. disagree ( )
   e. strongly disagree ( )

10. “I feel like I’m stepping into a venue for enclave tourism here. I do not see any other representative of Malay and Muslim heritage other than the mosque in front of us.”
    a. strongly agree ( )
    b. agree ( )
    c. neutral ( )
    d. disagree ( )
    e. strongly disagree ( )

11. There is an interesting variety of shops at Kampong Glam, selling both modern items and traditional goods:
    a. strongly agree ( )
    b. agree ( )
    c. neutral ( )
    d. disagree ( )
    e. strongly disagree ( )
12. *Kampong Glam offers interesting and unique street life in a pleasant environment, so it is pleasant to spend one or a couple of hours here:*

   a. strongly agree ( )
   b. agree ( )
   c. neutral ( )
   d. disagree ( )
   e. strongly disagree ( )

13. *Because of all the historic houses and many souvenir shops, Kampong Glam is a tourist attraction rather than a place for local Malays and Muslims:*

   a. strongly agree ( )
   b. agree ( )
   c. neutral ( )
   d. disagree ( )
   e. strongly disagree ( )

Finally, a few general questions about your impression of the area:

14. *In your opinion, do you think the conservation of old buildings in Kampong Glam has helped preserve the Malay and Muslim character and identity of Kampong Glam?*

   Yes ( )  No ( )  no opinion ( )

15. The Malay Heritage Centre used to be a palace inhabited by descendants of the regional Sultan until the 1990s, and therefore it was not accessible to the public… HOWEVER ...

   ...“Today it is open to the public and serves as a museum and heritage centre, but the connection with Malay Royalty is merely symbolic, since their descendants have been relocated to different parts of town.”

   *What do you think about the new use of the building in relation to its former role?*

   Better use today ( )  Change for the worse ( )

   Both uses are good ( )  No opinion ( )
Any other comments? __________________________________________________

16. Have you visited the MHC?
   
   Yes (   ) No (   ) => please proceed directly to next page

If so, could you please rank the attractiveness of the centre's exhibits on a five-point scale from 1 to 5, from not attractive (1) to very attractive (5). Please tick one box below. The exhibition...

   1, is not attractive at all (   )
   2, has few attractive aspects (   )
   3, is somewhat attractive (   )
   4, has many attractive aspects (   )
   5, is extraordinarily attractive (   )

Any special comments about your likes or dislikes of the heritage centre?
_____________________________________________________________________

17. Please provide me some personal data, which will be treated with strictest confidence (data is collected on separate sheet and will be detached and coded).

   a. Please tick your ethnicity: Chinese (   ) Malay (   ) Indian (   ) Other (   )
   
   b. Sex:

   Male (   )
   Female (   )
   
   c. Age group:

   20 years and below (   )
   21-30 years (   )
   31-40 years (   )
   41-50 years (   )
   51-60 years (   )
   61 years and above (   )
d. Have you visited Kampong Glam before?

Yes, once ( )
Yes, several times ( )
No ( )
Cannot remember ( )

e. How often do you come to Kampong Glam?

Everyday/several times a week ( )
Once a week ( )
Several times a month ( )
Once a month or less ( )

Thanks a lot for your time and effort! Have a nice day!