

The size and the shape base of organization in Asian cities has drastically transformed the physical and socioeconomic landscape. Urban population in East Asia have increased 3% per year while urban land expansion reached 2.4% per year.

This strain is intensifying and has destroyed many places of historical significance. Demand for real estate development has turned traditional villages into modern high rise buildings that are disconnected from the lifestyles of existing inhabitants. In many cases, communities have not been involved in the process of deciding how development should proceed. This video presents how a Malay community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia responds to a recent redevelopment effort of their village Kampong Bharu. The concerns and aspiration of the long-term residents, land owners, and community leaders were documented to identify their vision of the future of the urban village.

Kampong Bharu sits in the heart of the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan region. A kampong is defined as a Malay village or locality with 10,000 or fewer people under the leadership of Village Heads. Kampong Bharu was formed in the early 1900 when His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Sulaiman, granted the land to the Malay's under a special condition that the land could only be owned by the Malay people. The 223 acre Malay agricultural settlement survived under British Colonial rule and Japanese occupation.

As a Malay enclave, traditional Malay houses, microscale businesses, local food and delicacies has shaped its unique character. As Kuala Lumpur develops, the 116 year old kampong is now surrounded by high rise structure, including the iconic Petronas Tower and modern office buildings.

Despite piecemeal development and extension of commercial and residential units, the kampong still looks similar to its early years. Meanwhile, with only 35% of the original residents remaining, the area has become occupied mainly by immigrants. With the rising land value, the area has been subjected to the real state development scheme that would maximize the economic potential of the properties.

However, redevelopment efforts have been futile due to the issues of multiple land ownership, land price disparities, and resistance from residents and land owners. The initiative to redevelop the land resurfaced in 2012. With a strong commitment from the government, a comprehensive development master plan was prepared by the Kampong Bharu Development Corporation.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Under parliamentary Act 733, Kampong Bharu Development Corporation was established the facilitate the development of the area. The vision is to develop and to transform the real estate in creating a better living standard while balancing the requirement of preserving Kampong Bharu historical values, culture, and legacy. With a mission that no land owner or heir of Kampong Bharu land will be left behind in this development beyond 2020. Inspired by the Malay and Islamic culture, the master plan seeks to ensure holistic, inclusive, and balanced planning that benefits the key stakeholders.

Recent visits indicate that transformation of Kampong Bharu is now underway. But how do the community leaders, land owners, and residents respond to the redevelopment plan? What are their aspiration for the future of the village? Will the local community benefit from early development? Zamri Mohd Saharin, the deputy director of urban planning of Kampong Bharu Redevelopment Corporation said that the change would offer economic and social benefits.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Despite the advantage mentioned, the Kampong Bharu community is struggling to come to terms with redevelopment plans. As the skepticism and resistance persist, understanding the aspiration of the community may shed light on the community's concern. Conversation with the land owners, residents, and community leaders of Kampong Bharu highlight that various concern and expectations.

Land owners embrace the idea of change and redevelopment as long as it conforms to the needs and aspiration of the Malays. The economic sustainability and the continuity of social and cultural identity of the Malays were the main concern regarding the development. The Village Heads had their own views on how the future of Kampong Bharu should be.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Several land owners insisted that the development should reflect the Malay Islamic character and values in a modern form.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Islamic and Malay city center. That's [INAUDIBLE]. A Malay town. And the first of its kind in the whole world. [NON-ENGLISH]

New development should bring about positive change for a community. The land owners realize the need to improve the socioeconomic status of the Malays, but they were not convinced that the development could benefit the community. The chairman of the Secretariat of Trade and Businesses of Kampong Bharu expressed his concern about the redevelopment approach.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

On the other hand, a Malay real state developer was confident that the Malay will reap the benefit. The need is to have suitable business model to convince the land owners.

[INAUDIBLE] incentive. Once we have incentive, that mean the owner [INAUDIBLE] will get advantage as a land owner when you want to value land.

Both land owners and community leaders want that their interest to be safeguarded and their voices to be heard. They insisted that their rights to plan the future of the kampong should be acknowledged and integrated in the planning and decision making process.

They have to follow the [INAUDIBLE], the voice of the people of [INAUDIBLE]. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Dr. Shuhana Shamsuddin, a professor in urban design, shared her thoughts on the way forward in transforming the place.

The future development of Kampong Bharu will be more realistic if they were to push it on an incremental basis. But this will be done when and if the owners are ready.

If plans proceed, Kampong Bharu will be transformed on a massive scale. While the redevelopment is designed for economic and social sustainability, it may, in the end, benefit few. Without a collective agreement from engaged members of the community, the roadmap to a sustainable future of the kampong remains uncertain.

Despite the challenge, sustainability of an urban village is hinged on adapting to change while securing the economic, social, and cultural values of the place. The impact of the redevelopment depends on how people are informed about and engaged in the education of economic and social benefits. Giving greater voice to the people in such [INAUDIBLE] villages could better align city redevelopment objective with the interests and values of people living in the traditional enclave.

The road to a sustainable development could be paved effectively by integrating the principle for inclusive urban development, adopting a place specific planning approach, considering rights and ownership issues, planning for equity and community benefits, and empowering community through public participation and engagement. A framework for future development should allow for a place to transform naturally according to the current needs and aspiration of the local inhabitants.