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LANDSCAPE ALTERATION
IN
URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Landscape Architecture

at
Lincoln University
by
NOR ATIAH ISMAIL

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LANDSCAPE ALTERATION IN URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

by
Nor Atiah Ismail

A residential landscape is one expression of the intrinsic and cognitive values of a relationship between humans and their environment. ‘Experiential landscape’ is established when people shape and construct their living environment and in turn, they are shaped and constructed by this living environment. In Malaysia, the rural cultural landscape is one example of the above phenomenon. The rural cultural landscape is the result of human adaptation and subtle modification of the natural environment in the effort of creating preferred living settings. Rural villagers are communally involved in the establishment of place identity, developing sense of place and a sense of belonging towards their living places.

Urban dwellers who live in urban housing areas in Malaysia experience a contrasting situation. Their physical living environments are pre-constructed with homogenous characteristics by the residential developers. This includes not only the houses, but also the public landscapes surrounding the residential areas in which they live. These ‘prepared living settings’ present different living phenomena compared to the ‘naturally evolved’ rural cultural landscapes. In these conditions, the residents may experience a sense of alienation towards their outdoor living spaces and community members. It has long been known that urban dwellers in the majority of residential schemes in Selangor remove trees planted in public landscape areas and replace them with their desired species in order to create small orchards and herb gardens. I refer to this phenomenon as the ‘altered landscape’. This study investigates this occurrence, which has been given little attention by local landscape architects and in the landscape architecture literature.

I investigate the reasons for the alteration of the existing landscape by rural-urban migrants in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. The majority of migrants to Kuala Lumpur originated from rural areas and are strongly attached to the village cultural landscape. A comparative study of the original landscape submission plans (before development) and existing inventory plans was undertaken to document the changes that were made by the residents. In-dept interviews were also conducted with three parties; namely the policy makers (government body) who were responsible for the policies that lead to the development of the plans, the landscape architects who developed the plans and the migrants who live in the residential areas under investigation. The findings of this research provide evidence that the majority of residents’ made an effort to re-create meaningful home landscapes, which reflected their attachments and feeling of belonging to living
spaces. This research will contribute to an understanding of how the cultural landscape in an urban residential area provides a means of integrating people and place. This study will also contribute to promoting awareness among policy makers, landscape architects and developers of the importance of developing a responsive and conducive living environment for the community.

**Keywords**

Malaysia - Urban Residential Landscape - Landscape Alteration - Rural Landscape - The Everyday Landscape - Meanings in Landscape
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INTRODUCTION

When I started my career as a landscape consultant, my work primarily involved designing parks and gardens, the grounds of commercial skyscrapers and private gardens for the rich and famous. Over the years, with extensive experience in dealing with landscape for wealthy people I started to feel that conventional landscape practices in Malaysia, which are normally dictated by the developers and institutional rules, were leading me nowhere. I felt I was designing mainly for profit making, for artistic creations and to produce high-tech impressions rather than prioritizing the end-users’ well-being.

As a result of this dissatisfaction, I changed my career path and joined an academic institution. I strongly believed that this was the best platform from which to convey and practice the important message that landscape architecture should not just be associated with parks and gardens, but that it should involve a holistic environmental design for all the people, including those who can not afford such services. In Malaysia, ongoing, unresolved residential landscape issues have inspired me to come forward and contribute my landscape expertise. I want to mitigate the developers’ lack of concern for people’s needs through the design and development of sustainable living environments. The residents’ desire to live in socially, culturally and environmentally friendly environments can be understood through their ‘modified version’ or ‘landscape alteration’ that I discuss in this study.

Landscape alteration refers to the changes made by the residents to the existing homogenous landscape provided by developers in the new urban residential areas. The developers’ stereotypical landscapes fail to meet the needs and lifestyles of the majority of the residents who have migrated from rural to urban areas. The residents make changes by removing and replacing the existing trees with varieties that accord with their cultural and religious values. In general, the landscapes altered by the residents express considerable rural influence reflected in the selection of native and exotic plants and in their garden composition. This ‘common, everyday landscape’ is identified by researchers as the residents’ response to the ‘prepared living settings’ and one of their ways of expressing dissatisfaction and frustration at the unresponsive, homogenous landscape.

This begs the question as to why developers allocate significant sums of money to plant trees in the neighbourhood, when these plants are not appreciated by the dwellers. This is a
challenge to the Malaysian landscape architects who design and contribute to the
development of these ‘alienated spaces’. These landscape architects need to move out of
their comfortable office environments, and look at the reality of life for Malaysian
communities. Consequently this research aims to understand the characteristics, values and
meaning embedded in the residents’ altered landscapes in low, medium and high-cost
housing schemes. This study will also look at the potential of the altered landscapes to
contribute to the strengthening of social and ethnic integration in urban residential areas.

In conducting my field research in Bandar Kinrara, Selangor, I have been able to engage in
in-depth conversations with the residents. Plants and their altered garden layout were
recorded and in this way, I was able to obtain a detailed understanding of garden
characteristics. Analysis of data gathered in the low-cost housing areas reveals that
landscape alterations are made by these residents both to embellish their gardens and to
evoke rich memories which help to connect them with people in the village. The majority
of the respondents expressed their passion for, and understanding of, each of the plants.
They told me about their enjoyment of gardening, shared poignant stories and impressed
me with their experiences and knowledge of symbolic interactions between humans and
supernatural-beings. Altered landscapes in the medium-cost housing scheme are also
inspired by the residents’ rural experiences, but at the same time display significant
aesthetic and modern preferences. The medium-cost residents located their utilitarian and
food plants (these plants are associated with rural landscape characteristics) in between the
ornamental vegetation which dominated their plant selections. The high-cost residents, on
the other hand, prioritized ornamental species and aesthetic decorations. They favoured a
minimalist approach - simple garden design with fewer plant materials, a style that
connects with modern expressions. My findings indicate that altered landscapes possess
significant potential for enhancing social and ethnic integration in Malaysia. The residents
exchange their plant materials, share their gardening knowledge, enjoy the produce of their
plants and express their feelings of neighbourliness through these altered gardens.

This research suggests that residential landscape is not just another ‘designed space’ to be
looked at, but a ‘living place’ that can help to shape the residents’ identities, to fulfil their
aspirations and more importantly, to enable them to live without being alienated. This
research is my stepping stone to move forward, to spark ideas and discussions on the
importance of having a balanced and harmonious residential design in the local and
international arena.
Through this project, I am reminding myself and my landscape architect colleagues that we are designing for people and therefore our designs should contribute towards developing sustainable residential areas. Landscape design should provide a platform for community pleasure and relaxation; it should offer spaces that evoke intimate personal and community experiences. Francis and Hestor (1987, p. 250) believe some landscape architects perceive residential garden design to be unimportant. They, however, believe that garden design is “the root of our profession and provides an opportunity to reconnect our profession with the millions of people involved in gardening”. Hester and Randolph (1987, p. 266) argue that garden design symbolises the “starting point” of the profession. They claim that “if you can’t design a garden, you can’t design”. The ideas of Francis, Hestor and Randolph have supported and inspired me to study landscape alteration in urban residential areas in Malaysia:

…the garden is a comforting initiation metaphor for my profession. Aside from practical considerations like the need to experiment with space, agriculture and art, the incremental nature of starting small and gradually tackling larger and more complex public landscape is reassuring. It makes developmental sense. Don’t bite off more than you can chew.

(Hester and Randolph 1987, p. 266)

My study is presented in nine chapters which include Research Context, Literature Review, Research methodology, Data Interpretation and Conclusions.

**Chapter 1** discusses the **Research Context**. It provides an overview of Malaysian housing policy since the colonial period before 1975 until the most recent housing programme, through the Malaysian Vision Development Plan, for the period 2001-2010. The discussion continues with the main research issues including neglect of the low-cost residential landscape and the problems associated with a homogenous landscape in medium and high-cost residential areas. The research goal, research questions and research objectives are presented at the end of this chapter.

**Chapter 2** describes the characteristics of the **Rural Cultural Landscapes** belonging to the three major ethnicities in Malaysia, namely the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. Located in the inland area, the Malay villages are predominantly characterized by green paddy fields as well as verdant rubber plantations. The Malay communities demonstrate close-knit relationships and express significant neighbourhood qualities.
Chapter 3 Reviews the Literature on the making of ‘place identity’, ‘place attachment’ and the significance of the ‘everyday landscape’. These theoretical frameworks support an understanding of landscape alteration as a process that ‘anchors’ places and people.

Chapter 4 outlines my Research Methodology which employs a post-occupancy evaluation in urban residential landscape approach and a qualitative research approach which uses case studies as the instrument.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the Data Interpretation of my study. The interpretation is organised by themes: The residents’ efforts in re-creating a home landscape, The functional garden, The symbolic home landscape and Place and social integration.

The Conclusions and Implications make up my Chapter 9. The discussion in this chapter includes a summary of the characteristics of the altered landscapes in low, medium and high-cost residential areas and an outline of design recommendations and strategies to achieve a responsive urban residential living environment.
The house is the microcosm, the prime example of Man the Inhabitant’s effort to organize his environment, to create a landscape which will satisfy not only his biological but also his social and spiritual needs.

(Meinig, 1979a, p. 215)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 97)
1.0 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Over the past few decades the physical, social and economic aspects of housing and human settlement have been subject to substantial international, national and local attention. Internationally, for example, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992 provided important principles regarding human and sustainable living environments which may contribute to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature (United Nations, 1992). The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlement and the Habitat Agenda was established in 1996 with the mission of achieving sufficient shelter for all and moving towards sustainable human settlements in an urbanising world. Recently, the Global Report on Human Settlements, entitled *Planning Sustainable Cities*, was produced by the UN-Habitat to address “the effectiveness of urban planning as a tool for dealing with the unprecedented challenges facing 21st century cities and for enhancing sustainable urbanization” (UN-Habitat, 2009).

At the national level, Malaysia prioritized housing and human settlement in its social policy agenda, with the goal of developing an affordable housing scheme which enhances community living standards and well-being (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001). Malaysia, with a total population of 28.31 million, comprised of three major ethnicities namely Malay (Bumiputera) 65.1%, Chinese 26.0% and Indians 7.7%, has given particular attention in its housing policies to the settlement needs of urban residents. The proportion of the urban population has increased from 50.7% in 1991 to 65.4% in Census 2000. The urban population in Malaysia is estimated to rise to 75% by the year 2020 as shown in Figure 1.1. The most rapid urban population increase has occurred in the states of Kuala Lumpur (100%), Selangor (87.6%) and Pulau Pinang (80.1%) due to rapid industrialization and urban development. Social and rural migration from other states, especially Kelantan (34.2%), Perlis (34.3%) and Kedah (39.3%) which have a relatively low level of urbanization, has resulted in an increased demand for housing.
Historically, Malaysian housing policy was established during the British Colonial Period (1795-1957). The Malaysian government initiated public housing, known as ‘institutional quarters’ for British employees who worked in the public sector. The British administration was forced to introduce a public housing programme known as ‘new village’, throughout Malaysia during the Communist insurgencies in the mid 1950s. The intention of this initiative by the British was to weaken the Chinese community support for the Communists (Agus, 2002). Malaysian Five Year National Plans were introduced after independence in 1957, starting with the First Malaysian Plan (1966-1970) and extending to the most recent Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006-2010). These plans prioritized the housing sector as a major strategic concern with the mission of “promoting a home-owning democracy, a vision for the housing of all sections of society” (Agus, 2002). Consistent with this policy, various housing development programmes have been established through the joint efforts of both the government and private sectors.

At independence, the provision of the low-cost housing programme gave priority to those who lived under the poverty level earning below 300.00RM a month. Current Government agencies are directly responsible for providing housing for the poor in urban areas through the establishment of the State Economic Development Corporations and various urban development agencies. At present, in order to ensure that the private sector constructs low-

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Figure 1.1 Map of Malaysia and level of urbanization in Malaysia

Source: www.fomfeia.org.my

1 The first Malaysian Plan (1966-1970) was the first economic development plan implemented by the government of Malaysia after Independence. The Plan's objectives were to promote the welfare of all citizens, and improve the living conditions in rural and urban areas, particularly among low-income groups.
cost housing, the government, through local municipal authorities, imposes a 30% quota provision of low-cost housing in every residential development. This policy is enforced to ensure adequate housing supply to approximately 50% of the Malaysian population categorized as low income group\(^2\). However, despite such enforcement, the private sector in Malaysia is more inclined towards developing medium and high-cost residential areas in order to maximize their profits (Ezeanya, 2004; Malaysia, 2000). Developers compete among themselves to provide attractive landscaping in the residential developments.

Malaysian Housing policy can be categorized in terms of five significant phases namely; the Colonial Period, Early Stage of Independence, New Economic Policy (NEP), National Development Plan (NDP) and Vision Development Plan (VDP) (see Table 1.1). Government efforts to improve the local housing sector started with the establishment of ad-hoc housing policies during the Colonial Period, prior to Malaysian Independence in 1957. During this period, the government was the key player in local housing provision. In the Early Stage of Independence (1957-1970), the government was still a key player especially for low-cost housing. Significant policy changes occurred in the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), which identified the private sector as a key player in housing provision including low-cost housing. The private sector however, was unsuccessful in developing quality housing, especially pertaining to the low cost housing issues. The National Development Plan (1991-2010) once again promoted the private sector as a key player in housing development; however, this sector was controlled by new government laws and guidelines for ensuring quality housing. Finally, in the Vision Development Plan 2001-2010, the government sector once again became the key player in low-cost housing provision. Table 1.1 illustrates these significant phases in detail.

\(^2\) Present poverty level is a monthly income below 1499.00 RM (Malaysian Housing Census 2000).
### Table 1.1 Malaysia Housing Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Colonial Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Before 1957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Focus of Attention** | • Housing for government staff quarters  
• Resettlement of people during Communist Insurgency War to new village  
• Resettlement of people to the FELDA scheme  
• Provision of housing especially for low income people in urban areas |
| **Strategies** | • Construction of government quarters  
• Building of houses in the new settlements with facilities for more than 500,000 people  
• Planning and development of the FELDA scheme with housing facilities  
• Setting-up of the Housing Trust in 1952 |
| **Key Documents** | • Briggs Plan, 1952  
• Land Resettlement Act, 1956  
• Housing Trust Ordinance, 1949  
• G. Rudduck Report, 1950s |
| **Policy Analysis** | • Government is the key player in housing provision  
• Ad-hoc policies |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Early Stage of Independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>1957 – 1970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Focus of Attention** | • Continuing the colonial government policies with minor improvement  
• Emphasis on housing especially for low income groups in urban areas  
• Personal sector involvement in housing provision  
• Improvement of basic infrastructure |
| **Strategies** | • Implementation follows the colonial policies with limited budgets  
• Housing Trusts actively involved in low-cost development in urban areas  
• Private sector to concentrate on medium and high-cost housing |
| **Key Documents** | • First and Second Malaya Plan (1955-1964; before independence)  
• First Malaysian plan (1965-1969; after independence) |
| **Policy Analysis** | • Government as a key player in housing provision especially low-cost  
• Private sector to focus on medium and high-cost housing |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>New Economic Policy (NEP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>1971-1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Focus of Attention** | • Eradication of poverty and restructuring of society  
• Implementation of the Human Settlement concept in housing development  
• Housing for low income groups was given priority in national policies  
• Private sector becomes the key player in housing provision |
| **Strategies** | • High rate of rural-urban migration  
• Private sector was responsible for building a large proportion of housing for people including low-cost  
• Ceiling price for low-cost housing was set at RM25,000 in 1982  
• Government established state agencies  
• Encouraged national unity in housing development |
| **Key Documents** | • New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971)  
• Second Malaysian Plan to Fifth Malaysian Plan (1971-1990) |
| **Policy Analysis** | • Private sector as key player in housing provision including low-cost |

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3 Communist Insurgency War in Malaysia (1948-1960) led to the establishment of the Briggs Plan by the British administration. The Briggs Plan included relocation of the Malay and Chinese communities to reside in a guarded camp to defeat insurgency called ‘new villages’.

4 FELDA: Federal Land Development Authority was established in 1960 to develop the rural areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>National Development Plan (NDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>1991-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Attention</td>
<td>• Continuing implementation of NEP policies and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Human settlement concept with emphasis on sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure all people regardless of their income live in decent houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Private sector continues to be responsible for housing provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>• Emphasis on building more affordable low and medium-cost housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low and medium-cost housing as a major component in housing provision since Seventh Malaysian Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on squatter elimination by the year 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government establishes new laws and guidelines to control the personal sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Documents</td>
<td>• National Development Plan (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sixth and Seventh Malaysian Plan (1991-2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agenda 21 (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Habitat Agenda (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>• Personal sector as a key player in housing development; but restricted by government laws and guidelines for quality housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Vision Development Plan (VDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>2001-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Attention</td>
<td>• Emphasis on sustainable urban development and adequate housing for all income groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Housing development will be integrated with other types of development such as industrial and commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT) facilities for communities in housing areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government as a key player in low-cost housing provision and private sector for medium and high-cost housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>• Continued effort to provide guidelines and inculcate citizen understanding of sustainable development and encourage citizens to participate in housing development in line with Local Agenda 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage more private developers to construct low and medium-cost houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Setting-up Human Settlement Research Institute (MAHSURI) to encourage research and development in housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Documents</td>
<td>• Vision Development Plan 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eighth Malaysian Plan 2001-2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>• Government as key player</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Agus, M. R. (2002), (Malaysia, Prime Minister's Department, Economic Planning Unit, 1996, 2001)

1.1.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR HOUSING AREAS IN MALAYSIA

Provision of adequate housing was the major concern of Malaysian housing policy before independence until the early stage of independence. The New Economic Policy (1971-1990) introduced a ‘human settlement concept’ with the intention of building a better living environment in which people could live, prosper and develop. Landscape design for residential areas is one of the ways that enable people to live in a pleasing environment.

The establishment of the National Landscape Department of Malaysia in 1996, with the mission of “landscaping the nation” led to the provision of a green policy for public spaces in urban residential landscape developments (Sreetheran et al., 2006). These public spaces
comprise of road medians, neighbourhood parks, parking spaces, children’s playgrounds and green buffer zones. In general practice, the landscape design of these housing schemes includes medium size trees, small and medium shrubs and turf planted along the roads and public parks to provide shade and to enhance aesthetic pleasure in the neighbourhoods (Sreetheran et al., 2006). In accordance with this policy, developers are responsible for providing landscape designs for these public spaces.

Municipal Councils in Malaysia do not regulate developers’ landscaping costs in the housing schemes. Landscape submission approval is obtained on condition that developers manage to fulfil their landscape submission requirements. I learned during an interview with the landscape architect of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council that landscape alteration in the semi-public spaces adjacent to the house was lawful as long as it only involved soft landscape changes during a post-occupancy period. These landscape changes were permitted as long as they were not potentially hazardous to the public (Azhar, 2008). I was told that the residents were allowed to make changes which would enhance their living settings - provided they were not using any utilitarian species such as the *Cymbopogon citratus* (Lemongrass). Residents were likely to be penalized for planting utilitarian species in semi-public spaces as that was seen as replicating the rural cultural landscape⁵. The local authority perceived rural cultural landscapes as messy and unorganized, in contrast to the idea of properly planned modern landscape design. On the other hand, providing residents applied to the local authority to alter their plant species, they were encouraged to enhance their living settings by utilizing good compositions of ornamental plants. A condition of making such landscape alteration was the prohibition on removing existing trees planted by developers.

In the initial development of the residential areas, landscape consultants were required to follow the landscape submission requirements of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council. One of the regulations was to include their official plants, namely *Mesua ferrea* (Ceylon Ironwood), *Psidium guajava* (Guava) as structural trees and *Cananga fruticosa* (Cananga) and *Codiaum variegatum* (Croton) to be planted in the Selangor urban areas.

My literature search, together with extensive personal involvement in the field of landscape architecture in Malaysia, enabled me to analyze landscape design plans

⁵ Rural cultural landscape is closely associated to vernacular landscape. Vernacular was defined by Jackson (1984, p. 85) as “something countrified, homemade, traditional”.


implemented by developers in low, medium and high-cost residential developments. Typically, the landscape design of low-cost housing aims primarily to fulfil the landscape plan submission requirements. In some cases, developers have appealed to Municipal Council to minimize or compromise the landscape submission requirements due to the minimal profit returns for this type of development. For example, developers have requested a reduction in playground equipment and in number of trees and shrubs to be planted in the public areas. As a result, the low income residents may experience inadequate green spaces and landscape facilities surrounding their housing areas (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001; Said, 2001a).

In contrast, medium and high-cost housing areas in Malaysia are designed with attractive landscape facilities and amenities. Developers invest significant resources in appealing and welcoming residential entrances and attractive landscape designs along the roadsides of the neighbouring vicinities. The playground areas are designed with contemporary and wide-ranging play equipment. Green buffer zones and road medians are connected with green linkages and open spaces include comprehensive planting compositions. In brief, developers are willing to spend money in landscape and beautification works in medium and high-cost residential areas; more than is required for landscape design approval by the Municipal Council.

Having outlined the main contrasts in landscape characteristics between low, medium and high-cost residential areas, my interest lies in the landscape alteration phenomenon that takes place in these three types of housing schemes (Said, 2001b). Research by Said (2001a) suggests that it is a normal and well accepted phenomenon among the residents to change the provided public landscape during their post-occupancy period. The green buffer zones and other green spaces adjacent to the houses are used to create small orchards with fruit trees such as *Musa spp.* (Banana), *Artocarpus heterophyleus* (Jackfruit), *Nephelium lappaceum* (Rambutan) as well as herbs and spices such as *Capsicum spp.* (Chilli), *Alpinia galanga* (Galangal), *Curcuma domestica* (Turmeric) and *Pandanus annaryllifolius* (Pandanus). Many of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods construct their personal carports and storage barns in these public areas. In less than a five year occupancy period, the overall public landscape can change dramatically, replacing the existing landscape that was designed by the landscape architects, approved by the local authorities and implemented by the developers (Said, 2001b). This phenomenon begs the question: Why has this happened? What is the significance of this landscape phenomenon? What are the
similarities in, and differences between, the patterns of alteration in low, medium and high-cost residential areas?

My study documents, investigates and interprets the alteration to the landscape made by the low, medium and high-cost housing residents. I adopted a post-occupancy evaluation method (POE), a research approach that aimed at understanding the end-users satisfaction with regard to the provided living environment. I analyze this phenomenon by a cross-comparative study of landscape alteration in these three types of housing schemes, involving residents of different socio-economic backgrounds. This observation is supported by Said (2001b) who identifies significant landscape alteration phenomenon that occurs in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. My research findings may help relevant government agencies and industry players to better understand the landscape issues and the community needs for each of these housing schemes, rather than providing a ‘one design fits all’. The following section will provide further explanation of common landscape characteristics of low, medium and high-cost housing schemes in Selangor, Malaysia.

1.1.2 LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR LOW-COST HOUSING AREAS

The majority of residents in low-cost housing schemes are rural-urban migrants who are categorized as a low-income group by the Malaysian government. Low-cost housing is classified based on its current selling price of 42,000.00RM per unit and prioritized for communities with monthly incomes below 1,500.00RM (Salleh, 2008). Relevant literature reveals that policy makers, planners and developers in the low-cost housing sector have focussed primarily on the planning and architectural matters of housing schemes including the size, design and quality of the houses, their quantities and prices, rather than on determining the levels of residential satisfaction (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001; Salleh, 2008).

The majority of residents in low-cost housing schemes have low academic qualifications and are less adaptable to the challenges of urban life. As a result, they are prone to various social problems such as drug abuse, loafing and truancy (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001).

The Malaysian housing development agencies have demonstrated little interest in the quality of social and cultural life (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001). Landscape design, as one of the environmental, social and cultural factors in low-cost housing, has never been a priority of the development (Said, 2001). My experience as a landscape architect indicates that any
landscape design in low-cost housing areas tends to be superficial development – greening the earth after the ‘land scraping’ works are completed. This ‘design for cosmetic’ purpose was enforced by the developers who never seemed to have any intention of spending money to produce a high quality outdoor living environment. The ‘standard’ planting design is executed mainly to fulfil the development approval procedures for the local authority. This is believed to limit the consultants’ creativity. As a result, the phenomenon of homogenous landscape drives the community members to stamp their personal identity by altering their landscape - not only in personal spaces, but also in the public landscapes surrounding their residential areas.

The issue of ‘hostile’ urban low-cost living environments was also discussed by Nurizan and Hashim (2001), who pointed out that developers are only willing to provide basic facilities for this type of housing scheme, due to the small return on their investments. Some of the low-cost housing areas in mixed development schemes do not have their own playgrounds, community or religious centres. The low-cost residential communities are required to share these common facilities, which are mainly provided for neighbouring medium-cost housing schemes. The medium-cost residents on the other hand, preferred not to share these basic community facilities, especially the playground areas. The low-cost residents were accused of committing vandalism and causing other social problems in these community areas.

1.1.3 LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR MEDIUM AND HIGH-COST HOUSING AREAS

Malaysian National Economic Policies in the 1970s encouraged rural-urban migration, especially among the Malays, to establish better living conditions in urban environments. Initially, migrants lived in squatters’ settlements around city areas and subsequently relocated to low-cost housing following government policies that aimed at improving the quality of life and contributing towards a caring society. The growth of urbanisation in the 1980s increased the numbers of rural-urban migrants and created the urgent need for urban housing settlements. As a consequence, a few residential areas in Selangor, for example Bandar Baru Bangi and Shah Alam, have been dominated by Malays migrating from rural areas (Agus, 2002).

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6 ‘Land scraping’ refers to the current housing development practice in Malaysia which is environmentally insensitive; scraping the land before development and re-landscaping the land after development is completed.
An increase in economic status and improved educational qualifications among the current generations of low-cost housing inhabitants has provided them with the opportunity to live in the medium to high-cost residential areas. In 1998 the Malaysian Ministry of Housing and Local Government specified 60,001.00RM per unit for the medium-cost and 100,000.00RM and above per unit for the high-cost. In contrast, the price per unit of the low-cost is 42,000.00RM, depending on its location (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 House Price Structure and Target Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>House Price Per Unit</th>
<th>Target Groups/Income per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-cost</td>
<td>Below 42,000RM (Depending on Location)</td>
<td>Below 1,500RM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-cost</td>
<td>60,001RM – 100,000RM</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-cost</td>
<td>More than 100,000RM</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Agus, 2002)

In order to compete in the real estate property market, developers in Malaysia continue to invest in new housing schemes that embrace human settlement concepts and include attractive landscape features for their communal and recreational facilities. The Doctrine of Holistic Planning and Housing Development (2000), established for the medium and high-cost residential areas by the Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia, has focussed on the association between Man and the Creator, Man and Man and Man and Environment. Consistent with these principles, each of the residential areas should be developed to encompass eight design principles namely - comfort, friendliness, beauty and quality, identity, affordability, cleanliness and harmony, completeness and safety. Changes in the government’s policy and increased demands for an appealing living environment in urban areas has resulted in the developers admitting that attractive landscape design adds value to property development (Ezeanya, 2004). This understanding has strengthened the environmental values in urban residential areas where the developers are willing to spend funds on the landscape characteristics for medium and high-cost housing schemes. Some of these residential areas aim to attract foreign investors to live in Malaysia in the “Malaysia my Second Home” programme (Malaysia, 2006). As a result, tourism and foreign investments have flourished in recent years (Salleh, 2008).
1.2 RESEARCH ISSUES

1.2.1 RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS IN THE URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREA

Substantial rural-urban migration in Malaysia occurred with the establishment of The Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975. During this period, more than two-thirds of rural-urban migrants were Malays (Bunnell, 2002). Migration to cities is underpinned by aspirations for better economic, educational and social opportunities. This policy is regarded as essential for the modernisation of the Malays and “considered as an exposure to the influences of an urban environment” (Bunnell, 2002, p. 1689). The shift to an urban area requires adaptation to a totally different environment. According to Bunnel (2002, p. 1691), the migrants who earlier lived in squatter settlements continue to practise kampong (village) values even after they have been relocated to newly planned residential areas. The kampong values referred to by Bunnel relate to the unsatisfactory practice of rubbish disposal by the residents who continue to practise “their habit of indiscriminate rubbish dumping” as they did in the village. The occurrence of kampong values in urban residential settings is also disapproved of by the local authority as the local government bodies are focussing towards developing “Kuala Lumpur [as a] globally oriented citiescape” (Bunnell, 2002, p. 1686). Thus, the kampong conduct is perceived as “out of place” (Bunnell, 2002, p. 1687) and “deemed unsuitable for urban life” (Bunnell, 2002, p. 1686).

Along with these negative images, the rural-urban migrants in Malaysia have been labelled as being poorly behaved, involved in immoral and criminal activities and unable to adapt themselves to urban social behaviour (Bunnell, 2002). They are also thought to remain attached to their rural hometowns (Thompson, 2003). The migrants who live in low-cost housing are considered second-class citizens by the policy makers and their outdoor living environments have been neglected in the country’s housing development programme. Nurizan and Hashim’s research (2001) revealed that uncomfortable living experiences both in indoor and outdoor spaces in low-cost housing areas was related to low achievement in education; only 11% of their children attended university. Small and crowded housing units and the noise created in their surrounding environment disrupted concentration and impeded focus on children’s study.

Similarly, the Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia has ignored low-cost housing in their Doctrine of Holistic Planning and Housing Development (2000). The scheme is introduced as a planning guideline mainly for medium and high-cost housing development which emphasises the locality, habitability and cultural adequacy of
housing in Malaysia. The doctrine aimed to develop unique residential areas, presenting their own ‘niche’ and identity in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the physical and social issues of the low-cost housing schemes remain unattended to.

1.2.2 NEGLECTING THE LOW-COST RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

The housing sector has been one of the important concerns in Malaysian social and economic development programmes over the last three decades, starting from the First Malaysia Plan in 1971. Malaysia has been proactive in providing social infrastructure including the Integrated People Housing Programme under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) and the Zero-Illegal Squatters policy, introduced by the Selangor Chief Minister, Dato’ Sri Dr Khir Toyo in the year 2000. These policies were established with the aim of eliminating slums and squatters’ settlements in Selangor’s urban areas by the year 2005 and providing a good quality of life and affordable housing to the Malaysian citizen (Suffian & Mohamad, 2009).

Despite these government efforts, Suffian and Mohamad (2009, pg. 114) reveal social reasons related to squatters’ reluctance or sometimes refusal to move out of their squatter settlements (even though these areas lack proper facilities and amenities) and occupy new low-cost housing. The reasons for this refusal include dissatisfaction at the size of new low-cost accommodation which was relatively smaller than their “single storey wooden bungalow”. The squatters “do not want to be divorced from their previous neighbours” and the majority of them were “involved in agricultural activities producing food crops” in the settlements (Suffian & Mohamad, 2009, p. 114) - creating landscape characteristics that embodied their way of life. Communal activities developed a strong sense of attachment and belonging in these illegal squatters’ settlements.

The mass production of the low-cost housing areas resulted in homogenous architectural and stereotype landscape characteristics, in contrast with the lively living environment in the squatters’ settlements. The government’s demolition of squatters’ settlements around the city areas provided no alternative for the squatters but to live in these newly developed housing schemes which resulted in a feeling of alienation. Nurizan and Hashim (2001) reveal that the ‘normal’ indoor family activities are difficult to perform in small, two bedroom low-cost houses, resulting in children and adolescents spending more time outdoors. A study by Salleh (2008) on residential satisfaction in the low-cost housing schemes in Malaysia revealed that the residents were dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities and the existing characteristics of their outdoor environment. However we know
that landscape has the potential to provide very effectively for the physical and emotional well-being of the residents (Said, 2001a). Given this, the developers’ approach to looking at the low-cost residential landscapes as only an act of ‘beautification’ after development need to be challenged. The residents should be given opportunities to express their sense of belonging and attachment to their new living places – on a par with what they have experienced earlier in the village and later, in the squatter settlements. Furthermore, a landscape setting that encourages positive social interactions and strengthens neighbourhood integration was argued by Crowe (2000, p. 1) as one of the ways to curb negative social influences such as drug abuse and truancy. Crowe, in his study in Florida, discussed this notion in his book on Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), explaining that:

\[
\text{Crime prevention need not amount to building isolated walled and fenced communities. On the contrary, the same design techniques that make communities more attractive and more neighbourly can also prevent crime.}
\]

(Crowe, 2000, p. 1)

In brief, Malaysian government policies and research on low-cost housing largely ignores the value of landscape in providing a conducive and comfortable outdoor environment. Landscape issues remain an unaddressed aspect of low-cost housing development with the exception of basic facilities and trees in the public areas merely for aesthetic value. This discussion therefore marks a point of departure for landscape research on low-cost housing areas.

1.2.3 THE HOMOGENEOUS LANDSCAPES IN MEDIUM AND HIGH-COST RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The medium and high-cost residential landscapes were endowed with bigger and more comprehensive networks of green spaces. The developers would normally enhance the overall characteristics of this housing environment with uniquely designed residential neighbourhoods, followed by extensive green buffer zones, public recreational facilities comprising a community centre and children’s playgrounds. All these areas were given special attention since an impressive façade promoted the developers’ identity and their levels of competitiveness. Research by Ezeanya (2004) revealed that the developers constructing impressive medium and high-cost residential areas made an effort to construct a “western image” (see pg. 155) in their property development – from the housing planning layout to the dwelling and landscape designs. Rashdi (2005, p. 18) refers to the impression
of homologous modern residential estate as a “forced architectural identity” prescribed by the client with their “manufactured fantasies”.

The existing landscape design of the semi-public spaces in medium and high-cost housing in Malaysia could be interpreted as ‘beautifying works’ reflecting the developers’, the government’s and the landscape architect’s ignorance of the importance of these spaces in promoting social coherence in neighbourhoods. Single ornamental trees with turf as a ground cover producing up a dull and homogenous appearance did not motivate residents to engage with outdoor activities in the public spaces and they preferred instead to spend home-time indoors (Rashdi, 2005). The upper status of these social classes encouraged them to spend their outdoor recreational activities in places away from their house areas such as the shopping complexes, cinemas and paid recreational theme parks rather than spending time with neighbourhood communities. The architectural design of the housing units, with fences surrounding the dwellings, discouraged the residents from getting to know their neighbours well. Indeed, the residents silently compete amongst themselves as to who will build the tallest concrete fences and manicured gates that will reflect their social status, creating a personal, exclusive and unfriendly environment (Rashdi, 2005).

This phenomenon was also discussed by local architect, Mohamad Tajuddin Mohamad Rashdi (1999) in his book Peranan, Kurikulum dan Rekabentuk Masjid sebagai Pusat Pembangunan Masyarakat which presents the idea of the “individualistic modern Malaysian community”. According to Rashdi (1999), the life of the modern Malaysian community is strongly assimilated with a western culture that does not encourage feelings of ‘brotherhood’. The challenging and demanding cost of living in the urban areas has resulted in the medium and high-cost communities spending more time in their work places, working hard for a better living standard and higher social status. House renovations and landscape alterations in semi-public spaces are symbolic of the residents’ economic achievements and desire to build the grandest house in the neighbourhood. Their altered gardens in the semi-public spaces were designed according to trendy landscapes that were seen as being able to highlight their social status and display their personalities and identities (Rashdi, 1999).

The residents’ efforts in renovating their houses and landscapes relate to Thwaites’s (2001) notion on identity. “[S]ense of identity” says Thwaites derives from “thematic continuity within variety” which applied to the neighbourhood areas, means that “touches of personalization [that] can contribute to the balance of variety and diversity, and therefore
the differentiation of neighbourhoods” (Thwaites, 2001). Most importantly, this phenomenon expresses a rejection of a ‘homogenous landscape’ in an urban environment that is typified by uniformity, characterlessness and illegibility as initiated by the Municipal Councils in Malaysia.

1.2.4 **THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPONSIVE RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPES**

My previous research (Ismail, 2003) reveals that the residential landscape means more than merely planting ornamental trees. Orians (1986) explains that residential areas promote certain feelings reflecting human adaptation to the spaces, creating a responsive living environment. This responsive environment is a space for inhabitants to express their physical activities, emotions, social and cultural demands.

Landscape architects in western countries however, have generally shown little interest in creating this type of living ambience (Thwaites, 2001). Similarly, Gillette’s comment provokes discussion with the question “Can Gardens Mean?” (Gillette, 2005, p. 85). She suggests that the current public landscape developments are “incapable of meaning anything or anything much” because “the garden designers express complex ideas using only the garden and which are certainly very difficult for an audience to “read”. She further explains that a public garden should be more than those gardens usually described in novels, “which must mean because they have no other function” (Gillette, 2005, p. 85). Both, Thwaites (2001) and Gillette’s (2005) ideas on the importance of meanings associated with landscape influenced my desire to explore landscape alteration in medium and high-cost urban residential areas. The findings of this study will hopefully drive a new design approach, which pays greater attention to the social and cultural impact of landscape practices on communities.

The residential landscape can be perceived as an expression of the intrinsic and cognitive values of a relationship between humans and their living environment (Said, 2001a). As an example, the Malay rural cultural garden reveals its significant intrinsic and cognitive values through its functional characteristics such as provision of food, medicine, cosmetics and shade. The importance of an intimate relationship between humans and gardens in residential areas has also been suggested by Proshansky, Ittelson and Rivlin (1970) who introduce the idea that landscape sometimes represents human personality and behaviour.

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7 Gillettes’s comment are highly debatable when she provoked landscape architects particularly, who produced landscape design with aesthetic pleasure rather than sharing its meanings and values with the end users.
Larsen and Harlan (2006), who conducted a study in Phoenix, Arizona, also suggested that personal gardens are the representation of social class, preference and behaviour.

Further, landscape is understood to enhance community identity and reflect its cultural heritage “linking the past with the present” (Gurstein, 1993; Stewart, Liebert, & Larkin, 2004, p. 316). Consistent with this, urban designer Gurstein (1993) recommended “cultural planning” to create a sense of community, by utilizing the physical arrangement and composition of the space. He noted that the physical environment can nurture a sense of community.

1.2.5 LANDSCAPE ALTERATION IN URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Figure 1.2 Typical low-cost housing unit (before renovation).

Figure 1.3 Example of a low-cost house after renovation.
The following discussion will be based on Figures 1.2 and 1.3. Figure 1.2 shows the layout of a low-cost housing unit before the renovation works were carried out. This single storey two-bedroom house was developed with typical floor dimensions of approximately 4.6 x 18.8m on a lot measuring 4.6 x 22.9m. The relatively small indoor space drove the homeowners to extend their house, utilizing the provided 1.5m backyard areas and 5m front garden areas as shown in Figure 1.3. Originally, the backyard area was utilized by the occupants to plant herbs and spices in a kitchen garden. The area might also be used for storage or to place unused house furniture such as cupboards, tables and chairs. Some residents use this space to house animals such as chickens or pets. The front garden area is occupied with decorative and traditional plants. It is also used as a carport and drying area. After the house had been extended, the majority of the houses were left without sufficient gardening areas. Consequently, some residents encroached on to public spaces such as the road medians and green buffer zones, for their gardening activities.

![Figure 1.4 Typical layout of a low-cost housing scheme](image)

**Source:** Hashim et al.(2006)

The poor quality of the external environment in the low-cost housing estates is outlined as one of the major issues in The Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (Government, 2004). This situation has resulted in social and environmental problems, related to high-density living. Typical planning of the low-cost residential areas in Kuala Lumpur is portrayed in Figure 1.4. The overall development area comprises large numbers of housing units, complemented with 10% of open and green spaces, as regulated by the Planning Guidelines and Standards, Department of Town and Country Planning of Peninsular
Malaysia. Inadequate green spaces in urban low-cost housing are considered comfortless when compared to the greenery and serenity of a rural living environment (Bunnell, 2002; Nurizan & Hashim, 2001). In brief, the inconvenience of living in tight indoor and outdoor low-cost housing areas, the desire to create a personal landscape in a constrained space and various negative social influences resulting from a lack of appropriate outdoor spaces, suggest that there is an urgent need to review existing characteristics of the residential landscape.

1.2.5 LANDSCAPE ALTERATION AS A SYMBOL OF DISSATISFACTION

The “Garden Nation” vision contained in the National Landscape Department of Malaysia has constituted formal requirements relating to the residential development process which requires the landscape consultant, on behalf of the developer, to submit a landscape design plan to be approved by the respective local council. This procedure must be carried out before landscape works can be implemented in residential areas. As discussed previously, the basic landscape layout usually consists of typical trees planted for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure and shade around the green networks, and some elaborated design in the neighbourhood park.

A study by Said (2001a) showed that in less than five years of the post-occupancy period, existing landscapes were subjected to considerable alteration by the residents in their desire to re-create personal landscape images. Research by Salleh (2008) on residential satisfaction reinforces Said’s findings by revealing that communities alter their everyday landscapes for a variety of reasons including living standards, social class, taste, preference and identity. This ‘personal landscape’ also known as ‘the altered landscape’ is understood to correlate with the residents’ social status. The changes made by the residents include replacing the existing ornamental plants with another species in accordance with their personal preference and tastes, while at the same time personalizing the adjacent road median (outside their fences). Some members of the Chinese community will use this space to place their religious red altar and locate burning incense, especially in the late afternoon (Said, 2001a).

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8 The “Garden Nation” vision is for a balance between the economic, physical, social and environmental development of the country, in order to harmonize and ensure a conducive, safe, healthy and beautiful environment for the people to live in (Government, 1999)
Landscape alteration in urban housing in Malaysia can be interpreted through the theoretical lens of “placelessness” (Relph, 1976). El-Shafie explains “placelessness” as one of the negative impacts of globalization and modernization, where places and spaces have become uniform. Watt (1982, p. 67) names this condition “overgeneralisation”. He argues that “textural and cultural diversity has declined in our cities, whether you compare different parts of the same city or different cities in different countries”. Werlen (1993) associates this phenomenon with “homogenisation”, described as “common characteristics”. These uniformed spaces are not conducive to creating a sense of place, community, neighbourhood and more recently, social sustainability (Al-Hathloul & Mughal, 1999; Hargreaves, 2004; Walmsley, Lewis & Walmsley, 1993). “Homogenisation” leads to feelings of dissatisfaction in the living environment (Clark & Ledwith, 2006). Clark and Ledwith (2006), in their research on residential mobility, highlighted that place alteration is an alternative way for people to create their preferred living space.

‘Placelessness, overgeneralization, homogenization and common characteristics’ of the residential landscape are possible reasons that drive a landscape alteration phenomenon that is taking place in the urban housing areas in Malaysia. Dissatisfaction with the outdoor living environment may arise due to a discrepancy between government policy and user needs. Generally, the landscape guidelines prepared by the National Landscape Department focus on ornamental plant species to be planted around the housing scheme.

In short, the above arguments suggest an incompatibility in the approaches and desired outcomes of policy makers, industry players and residents:

• the policy makers (government) who, with their eagerness to provide physical structure, have failed to address the social and cultural needs of the community;

• industry players (developers and landscape architects) who ignore the importance of creating a responsive landscape as there is little investment return and,

• the end user who seeks a residential landscape that is more than just planted ornamental trees.
1.2.6 LANDSCAPE DESIGN CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS SOCIAL AND ETHNIC INTEGRATION

Landscape architecture is a young profession in Malaysia. Professionally, this vocation is well respected by other fields such as architecture and engineering. However, its contribution to society since its official establishment as a professional body in 1981 has mainly been beautification works - planting trees after building construction has taken place. As has been discussed earlier on page 15, the Malaysian communities associate the local landscape profession with plants and gardens rather than one that will provide holistic environmental solutions (Maliki, 2008). This issue has long been debated by the landscape architects themselves, and was discussed thoroughly during the Annual General Meeting of The Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (Institute, 2006) that I attended. In current practices, landscape architects in Malaysia are more inclined or are being given more opportunities by developers and government bodies in projects that relate to aesthetic pleasure rather than social developments. With this focus, the local landscape architects tend to overlook their social and cultural obligation to the community, who are the end-users of the landscape development.

This issue is not new as it happens in other places in the world. Gillette (2005, p. 87) provides a similar example discussing existing works by western landscape architects, which also fail to represent meanings in the garden; “nothing beyond composing beautiful places in a continuing succession of styles meant to please the end users of the place”.

With this phenomenon in mind, my study looks into the ways that local landscape architects might shift their modus operandi by not only creating a beautiful landscape, but also a landscape meaningful to the end user. The importance of designing a meaningful and semiotic living environment was also discussed by Sime (1986) who stated that the environmental professionals are ethically responsible to not only design spaces, but indeed, to create place experiences that are able to evoke a sense of place and a feeling of attachment.

Designing a responsive residential landscape that at the same time may act as an environmental setting for social integration9 is one way for local landscape architects to fulfil their social obligations (Ahmad & Syed Abdul Rashid, 2005). The new Malaysia’s

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9 Social integration refers to the enabling of all social groups to live together in productive and cooperative harmony (United Nations ESCAP).
Economic Policy in regard to housing promotes social and ethnic merging within residential areas to enhance social relations between the three main ethnicities in Malaysia (Malays, Chinese and Indians). This policy is regulated through a quota system, with a mission to maintain political and economic stability. Ethnic conflict has been one of the difficult political and social issues since Malaysian independence in 1957. Gilley (2004, p. 1155) defines ethnic conflict as “ethnic war or ethnic violence – involving one or more groups which are identified by some marker of ethnic identity”. The well known case of inter-communal conflict on May 13, 1969 between the Malay and Chinese communities was one of the examples reflecting ethnic tensions in Malaysian politics. This incident ignited in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor where houses and cars were burned and wrecked and 196 people were killed. Following this riot on May 13 1969, a state of emergency was declared and parliament was suspended on May 14 and May 16. The National Operations Council (NOC) was established by the first Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman to address this tragedy (Lee, 2010).

Today, Malaysia has earned its 52 years of independence from Britain and still persists in investing great effort in ensuring continuous social and economic stability as the “ethnic tensions are on the boil in multiracial Malaysia” (Bukhari, 2006). Social mixing (the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities) in urban residential areas is considered one of the Malaysian government’s formulas for social integration since independence. Research by Ahmad and Syed Abdul Rashid (2005) highlights the potential of residential areas as platforms for establishing social contacts hence strengthening positive relationships between the various ethnic groups. Despite the fact that having these three ethnicities living together in one neighbourhood bonds them together, continuous negative incidents influenced by racial conflicts stimulated social chaos; especially that which relates to cultural and religious affairs (Kuppuswamy, 2001; Press, 2007). Local landscape architect, Said (2001a, p. 1) however, suggests that personal gardens created by the residents in urban neighbourhoods can be used to enhance social and ethnic integration. His findings affirmed that:
The making of residential gardens by Malays, Chinese and Indians is influenced by both cultural values and functional needs. There are few similarities and differences in planting composition, plant selection and garden accessories that reflect the strength of ethnicity and yet allow sharing of garden produce and create a sense of place for the community. This pluralism can be seen as a positive phenomenon to harmonize multi-ethnic society living in terrace housing neighbourhoods in Peninsular Malaysia.

(Said, 2001a, p. 1)

My own research (Ismail, 2003) reveals that the Malay rural cultural landscape helps to foster community integration in the village through sharing of plant materials and gardening information. For example, the villagers can share traditional plants gathered from their gardens for cooking or for medicinal purposes and, in the communal spirit of *gotong-royong* (shared labour) (Bunnell, 2002, p. 1696; Rahman, 1996), the communities can get together and carry out voluntary work around the village. On these occasions, men will get involved in cleaning the village public spaces such as cemetery areas and community centres and constructing new bridges around the village, whereas women will be busy preparing small feasts to celebrate these activities. Such occasions are identified as strongly contributing to villagers’ close-knit relationships (Bunnell, 2002; Ismail, 2003).

However, these activities are difficult to carry out in the public spaces of urban residential areas. The simplistic and superficial design of the newly planned residential areas is unable to provide platforms for the community to articulate their identities. The stereotyped public landscapes limit the opportunities for community interaction when compared with the responsive landscape of the rural areas (Ismail, 2003). Bunnell (2002, p. 1696) quoted Rahman’s (1996) point of view that it is “essential that *kampung* traits like neighbourliness, co-operation, willingness to help, *gotong-royong*, and courtesy be cultivated in city living”. Hull *et. al* (1994) explain that place identity may increase a sense of community that influences people’s connectedness or relatedness to a place. Stewart (2004) identified that a sense of locality revealed a connection between people and their environment. Ahmad and Syed Abdul Rashid (2005, p. 4) share the same view that “how a settlement is designed will affect the quality of social relationship in the area”.

In summary, this discussion reinforces the importance of creating culturally responsive landscapes in urban residential areas that have the potential to foster the social integration of the three main ethnicities in Malaysia.
1.3 RESEARCH GOAL

My study aims to understand the landscape alteration process and outcomes of rural-urban migrants living in urban housing in Selangor, Malaysia and how the migrants utilise their memories and experiences of the rural cultural landscape to enhance place attachment and place identity in urban residential areas.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are divided into 2 categories:
A. Landscape alteration; and
B. Landscape as an agent for social integration.

A. Landscape alteration components:
   • What are the differences between the original landscape submission plans and the landscapes that now exist?
   • Who made the changes to already established landscapes?
   • Why were these changes made?
   • What meanings and values do residents ascribe to these changes?
   • What are the similarities in, and differences between the patterns of landscape changes of low, medium and high-cost residential areas?

B. Landscape as social integration components:
   • What are the characteristics of the cultural landscape of the three main ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indians) living in the urban housing?
   • To what extent do landscapes contribute to fostering the integration of the ethnic communities?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following research objectives were formulated to address the research goal and research questions:

• To understand the original landscape development plans that have been approved by the local authority and implemented in the residential areas,
• To document the changes or alterations made by the community,
To examine reasons for these alterations,
To understand the influence of cultural and social identity in the newly altered landscape and,
To investigate the nature of ethnic integration and interaction within the social and cultural landscape

Addressing the research goal and the research question, my study will explain important cultural and social phenomena which exist within the urban housing communities. More importantly, this research will explore community needs in the public landscape. I will also look at the advantages of implementing mixed ethnicities’ policies in the urban residential areas.

This work will become a basis to review various existing planning and design implementation and policy issues in Malaysia. The research will contribute to:

- The government sector by suggesting improvements of the current policy which are ‘end-user unfriendly’ and by proposing the incorporation of sustainable landscape in the National Landscape Policy.
- Landscape architects, planners and built environment related professionals shifting to a new modus operandi, inclined to the needs and requirements of the end user, rather than only focussing on artistic design which can be meaningless to the communities.
- Studies of urban residential landscape which look at the possibilities of the landscape architecture profession contributing to social and ethnic development in Malaysia.
Heritage and identity are contingent on many factors, and the complexities of cultural exchange make the interpretation of such places challenging. For landscape architecture, these issues are further complicated by the superimposition of many versions of landscape identity, palimpsests of both grand ideas and gradual changes.

(Bowring, Egoz, & Ignatieva, JOLA Spring 2009, p. 13)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 102)
2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the current image of the rural cultural landscapes of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Research by Said (2001a) suggests that landscape alteration performed by the rural-urban migrants in urban residential areas is possibly aimed at imitating the rural cultural landscape, especially through the planting selections. In my study I examine to what extent this phenomenon happens in the urban residential areas. Literature on the rural cultural landscape of these three ethnic groups is briefly explored in order to better understand the cultural roots of the rural-urban migrants in Malaysia. The importance of discovering these cultural roots relates to the term “rootedness” coined by Relph:

To have roots in place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one’s own position in the order of things and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment in somewhere in particular. The places to which we are most attached are literally fields of care, settings in which we have had a multiplicity of experiences and which call forth an entire complex of affection and responses. But to care for a place involves more than having a concern for it that is based on certain past experiences and future expectations - there is also a real responsibility and respect for that place both for itself and for what it is to yourself and to others. There is, in fact, a complete commitment to that place, a commitment that is as profound as any that a person can make, for caretaking is indeed “the basis of man’s relation to the world.”

(Relph, 1976, P.33)

Historically, the Colonial administration before Malaysian independence settled the three ethnic groups into three different regions, to maximize the profits of the British industry shareholders. For this reason, Malays who were located in the rural areas were involved in agricultural activities, the Chinese resided in urban areas to work in mining and the Indians lived and worked in the rubber and oil plantations (Nurizan & Hashim, 2001).

2.1 THE MALAY RURAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Traditionally, the culture of the Malays “is manifested in landscape through religion and belief, values and norms and custom and behaviour” (Ismail, 2003). The Malay tradition was strongly influenced by Hindu culture, prior to the arrival of Islam in the 1400s. The Islamic religion enhanced the Malays’ tendency to be humble and to respect nature, expressing a close association between them and their surrounding environment (Harun,
2004). This interrelationship is creatively articulated in the Malay traditional culture – for example in music, tales, arts and crafts, myths and beliefs.

The historical characteristics of the Malay rural cultural landscape were also documented during the seventeenth century in *Bustan Al-Salatin*\(^{10}\), by Nuruddin al-Raniri\(^{11}\), one of the earliest writers in traditional Malay literature (Harun, 2004; Salleh, 1992). *Bustan Al-Salatin*, literally translated as a garden of Kings was common in Islamic history, focused on the “spiritual guidance for the kings and the court officials to carry out their duties properly” (Harun, 2004, p. 28). The *Taman Ghairah* (pleasure garden) was developed by The Royal Iskandar Thani\(^{12}\) surrounding the palace areas, was part of the overall discussion in this literature, explaining in detail the characteristics of the Malay garden that include a river known as *Dar-Al Isyki* and a hill by the name of *Gegunungan menara* (Salleh, 1992). There were 56 flowering plants that included *Michelia champaka* (Chempaka), *Canang a odorata* (Cananga), *Jasminium sambac* (Jasmine) and 44 species of fruit trees such as *Durio zibathinus* (Durian), *Nephelium lappaceum* (Rambutan), *Punica gratum* (Pomegranate) and *Musa spp.* (Banana), used as soft landscape elements in the garden. *Bustan Al-Salatin* reflected the significance of the garden in the Malay royals and possibly the aristocrats as well.

The Malay poetic form, known as Pantun, is an example of one of the traditional oral forms of expression. Pantun is a written art form transmitting information about the Malay community. This includes cultural norms, religious matters and advice. Pantun is comprised of articulated lyrics, ranging from two to four lines. The first and second lines are the descriptive container and the next two lines express intended messages. The intimate relationship between humans and their environment strongly influences the first two lines of the pantun, which is the descriptive container. For example, pantun 1 uses *Pulau Pandan* which is the name of an island, and *Gunung Daik*, the name of a mountain as its descriptive container. Pantun 2 and 3 reveal a bonding with wildlife and nature. Pantun 4 relates to dwellings and pantun 5 represents an intimacy with plants.

\(^{10}\) The *Bustan Al-Salatin* “is one of the great products of the Malay-Achehnese court literary tradition during the rise of Islam in the Malay world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Harun, 2004, p. 43).

\(^{11}\) Nuruddin al-Raniri was one of the earliest writers, an Islamic scholar from Gujarat, India, who arrived in Acheh in 1637.

\(^{12}\) The Royal Iskandar Thani Alauddin Mughayat Shah, a strong ruler who died in 1641, was the son of the Sultan of Pahang, one of the states in East Malaysia.
Table 2.1 provides details of this rhythmic poetry, obtained from the Pantun Portal by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Irwan, 2006).

Table 2.1 Selection of traditional Malay pantun.

Source: Irwan (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Traditional Malay pantun</th>
<th>Translated English version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Pulau Pandan jauh ke tengah</em>&lt;br&gt;gunung Daik bercabang tiga&lt;br&gt;<em>Hancur badan dikandung tanah</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>budi yang baik dikenang juga.</em></td>
<td>Pulau Pandan far out the sea&lt;br&gt;gunung Daik with its three peal crest&lt;br&gt;With a soul done laid to rest free&lt;br&gt;all the good deeds forever reminisced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Anak Punai anak Merbah</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>hinggap di tonggak membuat sarang</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Anak sungai lagi berubah</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>inikan pula hati orang</em></td>
<td>A little dove and a little pigeon&lt;br&gt;perch on a branch nest on the making&lt;br&gt;Even the stream changes direction&lt;br&gt;what so ever more of human feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Tinggi tinggi si matahari</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>anak kerbau mati tertambat</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Sudah lama saya mencari</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>baru kini saya mendapat</em></td>
<td>Up in the sky the sun is shining&lt;br&gt;little buffalo died strapped to the twine&lt;br&gt;It’s been a while I’ve been searching&lt;br&gt;as up till now had I gotten mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Rumah kecil tiang seribu</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>rumah besar tiang sebatang</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Kecil kecil ditimang ibu</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>sudah besar ditimang gelombang</em></td>
<td>A little quarter with a thousand pillars&lt;br&gt;a big bungalow with none but single&lt;br&gt;As little toddlers cuddled by mothers&lt;br&gt;as did they grow hovers on tidal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Hendak gugur, gugurlah nangka</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>jangan menimpa si ranting pauh</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Hendak tidur, tidurlah mata</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>jangan mengenang orang yang jauh</em></td>
<td>Should it wither, wither the jackfruit&lt;br&gt;don’t ever fall on branch of mango&lt;br&gt;Should you go slumber, slumbers eyes&lt;br&gt;should&lt;br&gt;don’t ever recall the one you forgo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example of traditional art form that represents the intimacy of humans and the environment is recorded in the traditional Malay folk stories. I translated one of these stories, *Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup* (Ismail, 2003, pp. 20-21).
This old folk story expresses the characteristics of the lives of the traditional Malay community with their animistic beliefs, prior to the arrival of Islam. This belief was closely intertwined with nature for sustenance as well as for spiritual and emotional comfort.

Today, the Malay rural cultural landscape continues to be an example of the responsive living environment. An investigation that I carried out in rural villages in Perak (one of the states in the north of Malaysia) revealed that the Malays continue to hold on to their traditions, alongside the influence of urbanization (Ismail, 2003). For instance, the villagers are still involved with agricultural activities such as farming in the paddy fields. An example of the typical scenery in the paddy field is shown in Figure 2.2. Rubber

Figure 2.1 Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup.

Source:http://www1.moe.edu

A pregnant mother yearned to eat the roes of a particular fish which she finally caught. After cooking she saved the dish into two portions – one to be eaten by her children and the other part was for her to eat after work in the paddy field. When she returned, to her dismay, she found that her two young children had eaten the entire dish, including her portion. In her disheartenment, she rushed into the forest with an intention to kill herself by being crushed in between a split boulder. The giant sacred piece of boulder located in the deep forest was split open upon her frantic request and the desire to end her life.

This old folk story expresses the characteristics of the lives of the traditional Malay community with their animistic beliefs, prior to the arrival of Islam. This belief was closely intertwined with nature for sustenance as well as for spiritual and emotional comfort.
tapping is another traditional farming activity that intimately connects the villagers with their environment, as shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.2 Paddy field in the village.
Source: http://www.pbase.com/boon3887

Figure 2.3 Rubber tapping in the village.
Source: http://www.uk.holidaysguide.yahoo.com
The villagers continue to commercialise their traditional crafts such as the *labu sayong*. Figure 2.4 shows examples of the traditional pots made of clay to store drinking water under the Small Village Industries programme supported by the local government.

![The labu Sayong.](www.bookrags.com/history/labu-sayong)

**Figure 2.4 The labu Sayong.**

*Source: www.bookrags.com/history/labu-sayong*

The Malay rural-urban migrants who live in urban areas normally return to their hometown at least once a year to visit parents and relatives, to celebrate festive seasons and to take a rest from the mental fatigue they experience in their daily urban life. This is known as *balik kampong*. Figure 2.5 shows one of the activities during *Hari Raya* festival, which is visiting family members and neighbours.

![Visiting parents and relatives during Hari Raya celebration.](http://allmalaysia.info/msiaknow/festivals/rayapuasa.asp)

**Figure 2.5 Visiting parents and relatives during Hari Raya celebration.**

The Malay rural cultural landscape is typified by its greenery and close-knit community. My previous research associated the serene and tranquil attributes of the Malay rural settings with the notion of “restorative landscape” (Ismail, 2003). Kaplan and Kaplan (1987, p. 89) define a restorative landscape as “an environment that can foster fatigue recovery”. This landscape is characterized by three main criteria. The first is the tangible benefit of the landscape. The second is the desire to work the soil and see things grow and the third involves sustained interest which enables people to see participation in the environment as a valuable way to spend time and as a diversion from their routines. Figure 2.6 and Figure 2.7 illustrate examples of the scenery in one of the villages in Selangor, Kampong Sabak Bernam that characterizes the restorative landscape. Stretches of paddy fields in the village permeate a delicate green panoramic horizon. Gentle breezes rustling through the coconut and bamboo groves create a welcome to the village. The paddy field is part and parcel of the villagers’ lives. A house in the middle of the paddy field is another expression of seamless attachment between humans and their environment.

Figure 2.6 Typical scenery in the paddy field reflects an expression of seamless attachment between humans and the environment.

Source: Author, 2007
Figure 2.7 A house in the middle of a paddy field in the village (kampong).

Source: Author, 2007

Figure 2.8 Colourful plants that create a sense of welcome to a traditional house in the village.

Source: Author, 2007
Figure 2.7 illustrates Kampung or a village environment. Figure 2.8 shows a typical example of a house that is characterized by cultural landscapes. There are three types of gardens which surround the house - the front garden, side gardens and the backyard garden. A combination of native and exotic plants enrich their gardens (Ismail, 2003). Figure 2.9 depicts one of the important centres for the community, the village mosque. It is compulsory for the males to perform Friday prayers in the mosque. At the same time, this place is used to hold events such as festive gatherings also known as kenduri.

2.2 THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE CHINESE

The Chinese community developed their settlements, which were called ‘Chinese new villages’, in the mid 1950s. These villages were developed during British rule to segregate the Chinese communities from the Communist insurgents during the Malayan Emergency, before Independence. The Chinese immigrants, who were from Southern China, worked as laborers in mining, as rubber farmers, tappers, loggers and associated themselves with business. This community remains intricately linked to its traditional religion and culture inherited from its ancestors from the mainland of China (Said, 2001a). Traditional Chinese villages are scattered, particularly in Selangor, Perak, Pulau Pinang and Melaka. Some of the villages are located near the sea, and known as Chinese fishing

13 The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960)
villages. Figures 2.10 and 2.11 show typical scenery in the Chinese fishing village. Most of the communities are involved in commercial fishing activities, producing dried salted seafood under the Small Village Industries programme and as shopkeepers in the village. Deep sea fishing is part and parcel of their lives, revealing the strong foundation of interaction between humans and the environment.

Figure 2.10 A dramatic view during the sunset in the village’s jetty.

Source: http://www.what2seeonline.com

Figure 2.11 Cultural expressions in the Chinese village

Source: http://www.what2seeonline.com
Another example of a Chinese fishing village is Pulau Ketam as shown in Figure 2.13. Floating houses on about 3-5 foot stilts characterize this village. A very close-knit community, Pulau Ketam evolved to be one of the most popular Chinese fishing villages in Selangor. The village is a self-contained community with government schools, a small town that includes banks and an arcade. It is famous for its seafood restaurants.

Figure 2.12 Typical grocery shop in the village
Source: http://www.what2seeonline.com

Figure 2.13 Scenery in another Chinese fishing village, Pulau Ketam
Source: http://www.tanhockseng.multiply.com

Another example of a Chinese fishing village is Pulau Ketam as shown in Figure 2.13. Floating houses on about 3-5 foot stilts characterize this village. A very close-knit community, Pulau Ketam evolved to be one of the most popular Chinese fishing villages in Selangor. The village is a self-contained community with government schools, a small town that includes banks and an arcade. It is famous for its seafood restaurants.
There are two main temples in this village. Nang Thiam Keng Temple as shown in Figure 2.14 is popular among villagers for holding wedding ceremonies and Hock Leng Keng Temple as illustrated in Figure 2.15 is the biggest temple on this island. The community celebrates big events such as Chinese Operas and Mini Concerts in these temples. Jetties, bridges, fish dealer centres, wooden fishing boat factories and fish farms are among the important spatial elements, and are positioned artistically in the verdant green mangrove.

Figure 2.14 The Nam Thiam Keng Temple.
Source: http://www.malaxi.com

Figure 2.15 The Hock Leng Keng Temple.
Source: http://www.tanhockseng.multiply.com

There are two main temples in this village. Nang Thiam Keng Temple as shown in Figure 2.14 is popular among villagers for holding wedding ceremonies and Hock Leng Keng Temple as illustrated in Figure 2.15 is the biggest temple on this island. The community celebrates big events such as Chinese Operas and Mini Concerts in these temples. Jetties, bridges, fish dealer centres, wooden fishing boat factories and fish farms are among the important spatial elements, and are positioned artistically in the verdant green mangrove.
The Chinese rely on Feng Shui, which embodies the principles of human and environmental spatial relationship as practised in the home and workspace. Good Feng Shui requires a balance between Yang which represents the male and hard elements such as rocks, and Ying which represents the female and soft elements such as water and wind. The Chinese cultural landscape is based on these principles which are believed to bring good fortune for the residents and are still strongly practised by today’s Chinese communities in Malaysia (Said, 2001a). Red coloured elements dominate the cultural landscape. This applies not only to the architectural elements of their temples, but also to their house gardens. Figure 2.16 shows an example of the red lanterns surrounding the temple areas.

![Red lanterns surrounding the temple areas.](http://www.mrblurster.blogspot.com)

**Figure 2.16 Red lanterns surrounding the temple areas.**

**Source:** http://www.mrblurster.blogspot.com

The plant materials are chosen from species that include red colours. For example, the Cyrtostachys renda, locally known as the Sealing Wax Palm or Red Palms, Bougainvillea and Ixora species are planted in various locations. Figure 2.17 shows a picture of the Red Palm while Figure 2.18 illustrates little Buddha meditating in the Chinese landscape.
A religious altar is placed at the corner of the front garden to symbolize happiness and prosperity. *Feng Shui* gardens embody harmony and balance in the environment. It is customary to have a curvilinear path. This is believed to encourage the *Chi*, also known as good energy, to move slowly and freely. Plants allow the *Chi* to circulate freely around them. Besides that, plants in the garden are important to provide privacy and protection. The Chinese hang a red cloth and a mirror in the front door as protective lucky charms.

![Figure 2.17 Cyrtostachys renda with red trunks are believed to bring good fortune.](http://www.westdalenurseries.co.uk/collection.html)

![Figure 2.18 Little Buddha in the garden.](http://www.mrblurster.blogspot.com)
Besides that, they decorate their gardens with pots and plant containers with dragon symbols on them. Small fountains and ponds with gold and white carps are also part of their garden components, as these are important in Feng Shui for good luck. The public areas in the parks and gardens are used for their Tai-Chi exercises in the morning and evening as shown in Figure 2.19. The Chinese community continues to celebrate its traditional and religious events such as the Chinese New Year and perform related cultural events from time to time.

Figure 2.19 Tai-Chi exercises in the garden.
Source: http://www.mrblurster.blogspot.com

2.3 THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE INDIANS

Historically, Indian civilization played a pivotal role in Malaysia. The Indians’ heritage as traders and travellers in Malaysia has been documented for more than 2000 years. British acquisition in Malaya before Independence continued the inflow of Indian migrants from Southern India between 1860 and 1957. The Indian community referred to themselves as the ‘Malaysian Indians’. They engaged in agricultural work and resided in agricultural settlements called estates. The estates are located far away from the urban areas, and they are isolated from other communities. Figure 2.20 illustrates a typical journey through an oil palm plantation before entering an Indian settlement. Examples of the estates in Selangor are Bukit Tinggi Estate, Klang and Bukit Tinggi Cattle Rearers that were established on the past 50 years. The Indian community practises Hinduism. The innate relationship with their ancestors’ religion and traditions are apparent in their lifestyles today. Figure 2.21
shows a typical dwelling in the Indian village. The house gardens grow sacred plant species together with ornamental flowery plants that are also used to create floral garlands for religious ceremonies.

Figure 2.20 Typical journey through the oil palm estate before entering the Indian village.

Source: http://rattlingcommunicator.blogspot.com

Figure 2.21 Typical house in the estate settlement.

Source: http://rattlingcommunicator.blogspot.com

Figure 2.22 shows another example of an Indian village, known as Chitty Melakas or Malacca Straits-born Hindus (Peranakan) in Malaysia. This village is located in Malacca,
one of the popular tourist cultural destinations and is comprised of homes and three main temples.

Figure 2.22 The main gateway to Indian Chitty Malakas Village, Malaysia.

Source: http://2.bp.blogspot.com

Figure 2.23 Another temple in Indian village.

Source: http://www.geocities.com/mlkachittii1u2/dpage3

The landscape of the Indian community represents their cultural and religious beliefs. *Vaastu Shastra* is the principle underpinning the Indians’ cultural landscape. By definition, *Vaastu Shastra* is the science of living that has some similarities with *Feng Shui* principles. It combines all the five elements of nature, namely fire, earth, water, air and space;
utilizing these for the benefit of mankind. This principle is utilized in the architectural, planning and landscaping of Indian communities. It is connected to both the cosmic energies present in the environment and to the energy field of the occupants. *Vaastu* is the science of building to bring health, prosperity, happiness and peace of mind.

*Vaastu* provides character to the Indian cultural landscapes. It possesses a strong relationship with plants surrounding community living areas. At the same time, gardening to the Indian community is “reminiscent of the landscapes from their past in their native India” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008, p. 7). Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2008) explain that Hindus possess intimacy with the flora as they believe that God pervades all living things. Therefore, they believe that “many trees, plants, flowers, fruits and even blades of grass are sacred” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008, p. 7). The common species which characterize their gardens in Malaysia include *Moringa ptergosperma* (Kacang Kelo) and *Ocimum sanctum* (Thulsi, one of the most sacred plants) that supply fruit or leaves for cooking. A bunch of deliciously fragrant *Ervatamia coronaria* (Susun Kelapa), *Rosea spp.* (Roses) as shown in Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.25 and *Gardenia jaminoides* (Jasmine) will be tied together on a single string to create floral garlands and placed around the deities during religious rites, as illustrated in Figure 2.26.

![Ervatamia coronaria](https://www.agri.ruh.ac.lk/...plants/wathusudda.html)
Musa accuminata (Banana) and Cocos nucifera (Coconut) are used during religious ceremonies and wedding events. Coconut is used as one of their offerings to God. In brief, the Indian communities prefer to have gardens that reflect their medicinal and ritual purposes, rather than merely for beauty.

Figure 2.25 Red roses are also used in the Hindu’s religious ceremonies.

Source: http://hortiplex.gardenweb.com

Figure 2.26 Flowers from the garden artistically arranged around the déities.


Musa accuminata (Banana) and Cocos nucifera (Coconut) are used during religious ceremonies and wedding events. Coconut is used as one of their offerings to God. In brief, the Indian communities prefer to have gardens that reflect their medicinal and ritual purposes, rather than merely for beauty.
It is customary for the Indian community to hang fresh Mango leaves tied with horizontal string, and place them on the top of the front door as shown in Figure 2.27. This is believed to ward off negative influences entering the house. The strong character of the Indian cultural landscape is enhanced with hard landscape elements, including various types of statues such as elephants and goddesses. Figure 2.28 illustrates one of the popular sacred Hindu Temples in Batu Caves, Selangor Malaysia.

Figure 2.27 Fresh Mango leaves hang on the top of the front door.
Source: http://www.gunny88.com

Figure 2.28 Sacred temple Batu Caves.
Source: www.backpackinglemataysia.com
SUMMARY

In brief, the rural cultural landscapes strongly represent the characteristics of the three main ethnicities in Malaysia. The landscape setting is a representation of cultural values and ritual beliefs, manifesting a balance between aesthetic and pragmatic values. Table 2.2 summarizes the similarities and differences in native plant usage by these three ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Table 2.2 Similarities and differences in native plant usage by the three ethnic groups in the rural cultural landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Plant Species in Rural House Garden</th>
<th>Usage of Plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Alpinia galanga</em> (Galangal)</td>
<td>F,M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Axonopus compressus</em> (Cow Grass)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Cocos nucifera</em> (Coconut)</td>
<td>F,M,C,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Capsicum minimum</em> (Capsicum)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Cymbopogun citratu</em> (Lemongrass)</td>
<td>F,M,C,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Caladium spp.</em> (Caladium)</td>
<td>F,M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Cordyline terminalis</em> (Medang Teja)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Codieum variegatum</em> (Croton)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Eugenia densiflora</em> (Guava)</td>
<td>F,M,C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Psidium guajava</em> (Guava)</td>
<td>F,M,C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Garcinia mangostana</em> (Mangosteen)</td>
<td>F,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>Mangifera indica</em> (Mango)</td>
<td>F,M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Species</td>
<td>Uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><em>Musa spp.</em> (Banana)</td>
<td>F,M,C,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>Murraya koenigii</em> (Curry Leaf)</td>
<td>F,M,C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><em>Manihot utilissima</em> (Tapioca)</td>
<td>F,M,C,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><em>Pandanus annaryllifolius</em> (Pandanus)</td>
<td>F,M,C,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><em>Saccherum officinarum</em> (Sugarcane)</td>
<td>F,M,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>Nephelium lappaceum</em> (Rambutan)</td>
<td>F,R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend**

- **F** Food
- **M** Medicine
- **C** Cosmetic
- **D** Decoration
- **R** Religious and cultural

**Source:** (Ismail, 2003)

The following chapter focuses on a theoretical understanding of place identity, place attachment and the significance of everyday landscape.
The attachment comes from people and experience, the landscape is the setting

(Riley, 1992, p. 19)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 97)
3.0 INTRODUCTION

Interest in complex relationships between tangible and intangible elements in the living environment has become significant in various disciplines, for example the design-based fields such as architecture, planning and urban design (Kallus & Law-Yone, 2000, p. 311). Such interest has been rooted in the phenomenology arena since 1964 and provides insights into this research area (Altman & Low, 1992). Altman and Low (1992, p. 2) in their study on place attachment emphasize the “unique emotional experiences and bonds of people with places”. Place identity studies by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983) provide a basis from which to explore issues of people and physical settings and undertake research on place meanings. Beck (1970) and Manzo (2005) establish a foundation for understanding “the kinds of places that are meaningful to people” (Beck, 1970, p. 34) and “the nature of people’s emotional relationships to places” (Manzo, 2005, p. 67).

Research by Said (2001a) suggests that landscape alteration performed by the rural-urban migrants in urban residential areas is an attempt to imitate the characteristics of the rural cultural landscape, especially through the planting selections. Cooper (1976, pp. 436-437) reinforces the idea of replicating meaningful living ambience with her statement:

…..in trying to comprehend the most basic of archetypes - self – to give it concrete substance, man grasps at physical forms of symbols which are close and meaningful to him, and which are visible and definable.

(Cooper, 1976, pp.436-437)

3.1.1 LANDSCAPE ALTERATION TOWARDS THE MAKING OF PLACE IDENTITY

The notion of ‘identity’ is one of the leading contemporary issues, debated especially by philosophers, social scientists and psychologists (Bauman, 2001). In the field of landscape architecture particularly, this idea has become a recurring topic discussed in international scientific conferences and workshops. The current landscape changes that “are characterized by the loss of diversity, coherence and identity” are perceived negatively (Antrop, 2005, p. 22). Relph (1976) and Stewart et al., (2004) defined ‘identity’ as a constant similarity and coherence which enables each item to be distinguished on its own.

This study will focus on the ‘identity of place’, one of the physical environmental expressions of where humans dwell. Kevin Lynch (1960, p. 6) defines identity of place as “that which provides its individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the
basis for its recognition as a separable entity”. Relph (1976, p. 45) stresses that the importance of place identity represents a sense of belonging, reflecting whether you are an “insider” or “outsider” in a space. Norberg Schluz (1980, p. 20) expresses his concerns on the importance of place identity in this modern world with this notion:

In primitive societies we find that even the smallest environmental details are known to be meaningful, and that they make up complex spatial structures. In modern society, however, attention has most exclusively been concentrated on the ‘practical’ function of orientation, whereas identification has been left to chance. As a result true dwelling, in a psychological sense, has been substituted by alienation. It is therefore urgently needed to arrive at a fuller understanding of the concepts of ‘identification’ and ‘character’.

(Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p. 20)

Lending support to this notion, other researchers have provided arguments and evidence that communities alter their existing landscapes as a means of creating identity and sense of place. Wood and Handley (2001) and Larsen and Harlan (2006) believe that landscape alteration is performed for a variety of reasons, including culture, religion and economic status. This idea is consistent with Hinds and Sparks’ (2008, p. 116) assertion that “people often identify with what they care about”. Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983, p. 57) explain the concept of place identity and argue that:

The development of self identity is not restricted to making distinctions between oneself and others, but extends with no less importance to objects and things, and the very spaces and places in which they are found.

(Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 57)

Stewart, Liebert and Larkin (2004) suggest that landscape alteration in residential areas is a reflection of community identity, heritage and relationship with others. Smith, Nelischer, and Perkins (1997, p. 233) support the importance of this phenomenon by saying:

The character, genius loci or spirit of place is unique to all communities, and to those who perceive them. Character is described by sense of place, warmth (friendliness), sense of time (how the present is linked to the past), stability, and aesthetics. Sense of place is the distinguishing quality that differentiates one place from another, made from a collective representation of a community identity, where residents have a sense of belonging, and can identify with.

(Smith et al., 1997, p. 233)
Despite the importance of having genius loci, Rishbeth (2001) suggests that little research has been conducted in regard to cultural ethnicities and their identities in landscape. She believes that landscape architects and other related professionals should consider cultural significance in the design of, and decision-making around, the built environment. The cultural landscape is able to promote place attachment and strengthen the meanings of place. Relph (1976, pp. 122-123) identifies the meaning of place as another important basic element in the living environment. He suggests that “experiential landscape” means more than just “objects, landforms, houses and plants”. It is a “particular set of personal and cultural attitudes and intentions that give meaning to that setting”. Hull, Lam and Vigo (1994) suggest that symbols of place features, such as objects of the past, are more important than how people function in a setting. This idea is rejected by Kaltenborn (2002), Norberg-Schulz (1980, p. 65) and Stewart (2004) who believe that “meaning of place is more than a location and symbols. It is an environmental character”.

3.1.2 PLACE ATTACHMENT

Cultural landscape and traditional landscape are strongly associated with intrinsic understanding between humans and environment (Antrop, 1997; Ismail, 2003; Said, 2001a). Humans are continuously changing the surrounding natural landscape to shape the environment that suits their living demands (Ismail, 2003; Said, 2001a). These processes, that are established through a period of time, result in an intimate bonding between humans and environment; creating place attachment and identity that reveals the significance of natural, cultural and aesthetical values (Antrop, 2005). This understanding is supported by Knez (2005, p. 208) who quotes Ryden (1993, pp. 37-38). “A place is: …much more than a point of space…it takes in the meanings which people assign to that landscape through the process of living in it”.

The Malay rural cultural landscape in Malaysia is an example of the above phenomenon. Through my own work I discovered that “the evolution of the Malay village is the result of the interrelationship between Man and his surroundings, Man and his inherent cultural attributes and the need to survive” (Ismail, 2003, p. 17). The structure of a traditional settlement in the village is determined through ritual ceremony that is believed to appease the spirit, assuring the peacefulness and well-being of the occupants.

Klemn (1985) and McNeely and Pitt (1985) emphasize that these rituals, practised in the cultural landscape, embody a respect for nature symbolised by the inhabitants’ cultural belief and “taboos” thus ensuring protection of the green landscape. Indeed, this cultural
process includes feelings that create attachment to the place. This is similar to what Tuan (1974, p. 4) coined as Topophilia. The term Topophilia is defined as “the affective bond between people and place or setting” and it represents “human love of place”. Tuan (1977) claimed that feeling and objects are always inseparable.

A study of place attachment by Altman and Low (1992) focuses on the external environment that represents a “cultural and emotional” connection. Riley (1992, p. 42) defines attachment as an “affective relationship between people and the landscape that goes beyond cognition, preference, or judgment”. In much the same way, he agrees that the concept of landscape attachment is set by the influence of human culture (Ahrentzen, 1992; 1976; Altman & Low, 1992). In addition, “a sense of place” evokes a positive “social impression such as a feeling of belonging to an environment and being part of a neighbourhood” (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 52). Attachment to place is perceived as more than a “physical container”; it resembles a social and cultural process simultaneously (La Gory & Pipkin, 1981). Relph (1976, p. 53) explains attachment as a value of “behavioural insideness”, with people “being in place and seeing it as a set of objects, views, activities arranged in certain ways and having certain observable qualities”. Riley (1992, p. 45) suggests that “the attachment comes from people and experience; and the landscape is the setting of that experience”. The everyday landscape is the foundation of “shared meaning and emotion, whether liked or disliked, whether tasteful or ugly, because it is shared experience” (Riley, 1992, p. 18). This notion confirms the significance of investigating the everyday landscape and aligns with the research goal of this study, which is to understand the landscape alteration process and outcomes made by the rural-urban migrants living in urban terrace housing areas. In this way the influence of rural cultural landscapes in enhancing place attachment and place identity in urban areas will be addressed.

3.1.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVERYDAY LANDSCAPE

Said (2001) suggests that landscape alteration is an everyday community experience and provides an example of this everyday landscape phenomenon in Taman Rakyat, Merlimau, Melaka. The community in this residential area removed the existing shade trees along the local road and replaced them with Mango trees. Community members would compete to produce the best fruit and during the month of April, they would get together to taste the variety of Mango fruits. This event has become an activity which is believed to strengthen the community’s communal relationship and extend their associations with environment. It is learned that altered landscapes enriched the feelings of belonging in their living spaces.
and through this, residents successfully created a meaningful home ambience. I describe this occurrence with the Malaysian proverb that translates as “home; is where the heart is” or the place that you love most. Further readings on the concept of ‘home’ in the Malay society can be found in Maliki (2008). Maliki presents a literature review of the concept and discusses the idea of ‘home’ as that rooted in life memories of the rural-urban migrants (2008, p. 21). She also highlights the importance of home landscape in the rural villages as the place “where people give meanings to [their] life live” (2008, p. 146). These occurrences are consistent with Lowenthal and Prince (1979) who suggest that the association between humans and environment is profoundly based on everyday experiences. Ittelson, Frank and O’Hanlon (1979, pp. 201-205) summarize the significance of the everyday environment:

i. **Environment as an external physical place** where people present their “sense of autonomous self”;

ii. **Environment as self** reveals that the everyday landscape “not only can be identified with physical objects or with physical properties of the world, but also with one’s experience and action in the environment”;

iii. **Environment as social system**

   Certain “environments may lead human beings to develop relationships with other people”;

iv. **Environment as emotional territory**

   The direct emotional impact of a situation is probably part of all environmental experience, but sometimes becomes the dominant mode of experience so that a certain environment is able to represent emotions and associations that one feels;

v. **Environment as setting for action**

   “The environment affects action and action affects environment”. As an analogy, environment is said to be a stage for the actors to perform any respective roles.

Laurie (1987, p. 242) similarly observed:

> Historical places, houses and gardens, are important because they are expressions of particular time, place and the values of society and of the particular people involved in making them.

(Laurie, 1987, p. 242)
Harkness (1987, p. 290) argues that house and garden portray the “every day experience”. This experience comprises “social as well as physical elements intrinsic to the region… exploring the meaning, memory and power of yesterday’s and today’s landscape”. His focus on the everyday American landscape was based on the principle that “the common cultural-physical landscape often is a container and reflector of diverse, diffuse, and often ambiguous cultural meanings and symbolism”. Lewis (1987, p. 35) too maintains that a garden is more than just a platform of “visual experience”, it is also a “reservoir of feelings such as pleasure, displeasure, awe, and fascination”. He further explains that gardening can be conceptualised as a conscious activity in deciding which plants to grow, plant placement organization and composition. Furthermore, Lewis (1987, pp. 37-38), suggests that this action involves “human spirit” and “personal commitment” in tending the garden over a certain period of time. At the same time, a garden is a social ground allowing people to share their plants and to convey the secrets of producing excellent vegetables and flowers. It is “a setting where a person can take first steps toward self-confidence” (Lewis, 1987, p. 38).

Francis and Hestor (1987, p. 252) argue that “gardens exist very much inside people; their minds and their heart”. People derive satisfaction from creating their own physical experience - embedding their cultural beliefs and experiences and personal practices in organizing this special piece of land. Francis and Hestor (1990, pp. 252-255) also outline the importance of gardening activities, namely:

i. **Platform to be inventive**: “Gardens as places for personal expression and renewal”. Gardens and gardening offer a sense of belonging and responsibility while providing a space to reveal the individual’s spiritual and inner feelings.

ii. **Refuge of leisure**: Gardening provides an escape from the daily rat-race of life. People are willing to allocate their free time to do the gardening work as it will release their stress while enabling close attachment to the environment.

iii. **Personal enjoyment**: Gardening activities enable people to work alone, while having other people (especially family members) around.

iv. **A communal ground**: The garden is a place for social attachment where people discuss their garden and share information in the neighbourhood.

v. **Continuation of personal “history”**: The garden is a reservoir of sentimental values. Certain elements, including plants and other garden accessories, embody the past.
vi. **Space for personification**: The green platform is a conscious “extension of personality”. People can be understood by looking at their garden.

vii. **A functional site**: A garden should be designed to grow vegetables and flowers that benefit the household.

viii. **Representation of nurture**: Attachment to gardens and tending their elements enhances people’s love and care for others.

ix. **Symbol of natural degradation**: Gardens reveal the differences in their traditional characters which were moulded in their natural habitat; compared to the contemporary garden which is more manicured.

**SUMMARY**

Various authors have addressed issues which provide a background understanding to this study. Literature on the cultural landscapes of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians, provides an important research context. Information on landscape alteration as a way of achieving place identity and as an expression of place attachment provides a context for understanding people’s intention and practices. And finally, the significance of the everyday landscape justifies the importance of conducting post-occupancy research in urban housing areas. Understandings of ethnic cultural identities, together with the theoretical frameworks presented in this chapter have helped me to formulate my ‘Research Methodology’ which will be discussed in the following chapter.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(Ismail, 2003, p. 98)
4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodological framework for my study. I adopt a qualitative approach in order to explore the main ideas about everyday landscapes and to contribute to an understanding of the significance of landscape alteration in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. The study has involved multiple data collection methods. These methods include a post-occupancy evaluation, a case study approach and in-depth interviews complemented with drawings that document the ‘before’ (see Appendix II) and ‘after’ altered landscapes (see Appendix III).

4.1 POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION IN URBAN HOUSING LANDSCAPE

Landscape alteration in low, medium and high-cost housing areas in Malaysia is a dynamic phenomenon. The landscape elements change through time, expressing personal preferences and needs while reflecting the community’s cultural articulation of their living settings. Landscape alteration is performed by the communities during the post-occupancy period; it portrays a relationship between humans and the environment. With this understanding, I chose to engage with the post-occupancy evaluation approach, also known as the POE method.

This data collection method has been introduced over the past quarter-century and is able to provide “useful feedback on building and building-related activities…after a defined period of use such as 12 months to 2 years” (Carthey, 2006, p. 60). The post-occupancy method is “recognized and valued as a process that can improve, and help explain the performance of the built environment” (Rabinowtz, 1989, p. 9). White (1989, p. 20) suggests a significant paradigm shift of post-occupancy research from “the evaluation of buildings to service to the client”.

My study on landscape alteration in urban residential areas adopts the post-occupancy method because this approach helps the researcher to understand the user’s needs, and to uncover their feelings about the existing (provided by developer) and altered (changes made by residents) landscapes. This method has enabled me to undertake a systematic evaluation of opinions and preferences relating to the responsive residential landscape settings.
4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The aim of my study is to understand landscape alteration process and outcomes. I adopted a qualitative research approach because this enabled me to interact with respondents and investigate human events and activities in their natural settings.

Qualitative research is characterised by sets of research questions, issues and a search for patterns, in contrast to the hypothetical-deductive approach requiring the specification of main variables and a research hypothesis. Qualitative research in my study comprises structured interviews, case studies and analysis of archival material. These techniques enabled me to discuss with residents the reasons for, and processes surrounding, the changed landscape. At the same time, this process enabled me to understand the meanings of tangible elements embedded in the residents’ gardens and to read the intangible experiences involving feelings and emotions belonging to garden owners.

At the same time, employing a qualitative research approach allowed me to examine particular issues, cases and data in depth and detail by talking to the community and coming to understand their opinions from their own frames of reference (Gaber, 1993; Patton, 1987). Landscape alteration that is made by the community is, in part, a response to their social, cultural and religious needs. This reinforces the need for me to get an “insider’s” perspective, “allowing for open-ended responses to understand the world as seen by the respondents” (Gaber, 1993, p. 139). This process ensures rigorous data collection that is “valid, real, rich and deep” (Gaber, 1993, p. 139).

Pitt (1985) supports this approach by saying that the qualitative model is one of the best methods for research in the areas of conservation and environmental planning. Scholars in social anthropology share the same opinion. They believe that this method enables the researcher to engage in “close participant observation” and to grasp “more readily both the reality of life and the cultural context” (Lofland, 2006, p. 18).

Walker (1985, p. 3) further stresses that “qualitative techniques are intended more to determine what things ‘exist’ than to determine how many such things there are”. In addition, a qualitative approach is designed to be flexible and is therefore, “more responsive to the needs of respondents and to the nature of the subject matter” than a quantitative approach. Steward, Liebert and Larkin (2004, p. 319) in their research entitled Community identities as vision for landscape change adopted this method and suggested that, “qualitative methods produce rich data with powerful expressions of individuals”.

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Patton (1987, p. 11) also believes that qualitative methods “are intuitive to the extent that the evaluator does not attempt to manipulate the program or its participants for purpose of the evaluation”. Patton (2002, p. 27) states that:

Qualitative enquiry offers opportunities not only to learn about experiences of others but also examine the experiences that the enquirer brings to the enquiry, experiences that will, to some extent, affect what is studied and help shape, for better or worse, what is discovered…In that sense, qualitative enquiry can be thought as mapping experiences, our own as well as those of others.

(Patton, 2002, p. 27)

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: A CASE STUDY

This study aims to understand the reasons for landscape alteration by the rural-urban migrants in urban terrace housing areas. Landscape alteration by the residents, in accordance with their social and cultural values and as influenced by their experiences in the villages, may enhance place attachment and place identity in the newly developed residential estates.

Along with this aim, this study requires a detailed understanding of “information specific to the particular study object and context, rather than information easily generalized to a large population” (Zeisel, 1984, p. 65). Therefore, this research adopts a case study method as it aims to understand the situation, needs and satisfaction of users towards the existing landscape in the urban housing areas. It is hoped that these findings will help to improve government policies and enable the fine-tuning of user-friendly developments.

Francis (2000) stresses that “the case study analysis is a particularly useful research method in a profession such as landscape architecture, architecture and urban planning where the real world context makes more controlled empirical study difficult”. This understanding is supported by Zeisel (1984, p.65) who says that:

Investigators use case studies to describe and diagnose single, internally complex objects: individuals, buildings, episodes, institution, processes, and societies. In case studies investigators delineate boundaries of an object and then observe such things as the elements it comprises, relations among elements, the development of the object, and contextual influences.

(Zeisel, 1984, p. 65)
Yin (2003, p.2) argues that:

The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study method slows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries.

(Yin, 2003, p. 2)

Yin (2003, p. 13) emphasises the importance of the case study approach by stating that, “case studies investigate real-life events in their natural setting”. Patton (1987) further explains that going into the field means having direct and personal contact with participants in their own environments. A natural setting offers researchers the unique opportunity to observe people engaging in activities in settings of their own choice. Zeisel (1984) argues that natural settings are particularly appropriate for diagnosis studies in which investigators want to find out what is actually going on. This research, based as it is on “how” and “why” questions, is categorized as explanatory research (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

4.4 RESEARCH SETTINGS

My research aims to investigate the tangible and intangible values that lie beyond the aesthetic appearances of the domestic landscapes and to analyze their meanings in the lives of residents domiciled in urban communities. The term ‘landscape’ in this study is perceived as the setting of everyday experiences. It is the place where residents express their attachment to the garden while extending their creative aspirations. Lowenthal (1967, p. 20) asserts that, “judgement of landscape quality, even more than those who work with art, involves beholders’ active participation”. Kobayashi agrees that:

The significant of landscape value lies not in identification, but the action of its formulation and articulation…The art form provides concrete access to the complex web of relation by which each individual in the society connects to others. This web of relations is established by actions instigated toward what things hold for the individual.

(Kobayashi, 1980, p. 17)

My data collection was carried out after receiving approval from the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. Technically, this research was conducted in the everyday landscape setting in three different housing schemes, namely low, medium and high-cost...
housing in Bandar Kinrara of Selangor, Malaysia. As it may take some time for landscape alteration to establish, the residential areas in which this case study was based had been inhabited by the community for at least five years. This timeframe allows for significant landscape alteration to have been initiated (Said, 2001). The availability of landscape submission plans from the local authorities played a significant role in this study, as outlined in my research objectives on page 24. Landscape plans submitted by the landscape consultant to the local authorities as part of the process of obtaining project development approval, provided me with evidence of the existing landscape characteristics of the residential areas.

In the beginning of my data collection processes, I had difficulty in finding a landscape submission plan for residential developments that had been carried out in the past ten years. This problem arose because landscape design plans were officially required as part of planning and development approval only after the establishment of the National Landscape Department of Malaysia in May 1996. After several appointments with various local authorities, my appointment with the landscape architect of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council was rewarded and I was able to acquire information related to Bandar Kinrara, of Selangor, Malaysia.

Selection of the case study areas was also based on the understanding that appreciating landscape values should be more than classifying their aesthetic display. For this reason, a mixed-development project in Bandar Kinrara; with three different housing settings and associated social status, and located within the same neighbourhood environment, provided me with a multi-faceted landscape investigation. In addition, the three major ethnicities in Malaysia - the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities who live in this comprehensive and established residential development - contributed to my investigation in terms of their cultural and social interrelationships.

Bandar Kinrara is located within the governance of Subang Jaya Municipal Council. Subang Jaya Municipal Council has a population over 1,000,000 with land area of 70 square kilometres, including Puchong and Seri Kembangan in Selangor as shown in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1 Map of Selangor showing the location of Petaling District.

Source: www.seacen.org/training/roadMap.aspx

Figure 4.2 The location map of Bandar Kinrara.

Source: www.dromoz.com
Bandar Kinrara is one of the mixed and integrated township developments initiated by the prominent property developers, Island and Peninsular Berhad, as illustrated in Figure 4.2. Its first township was launched in 1991 on 1,904 acres of land area in the heart of Puchong. The land area was approximately 85% developed by 2008. There will be a total 13,552 units of homes with an expected population of 54,208. There are seven sections in the overall development and the low-cost residential areas are located as part of the areas in BK1 and BK4. The medium-cost housing was developed to be part and parcel of BK3, BK4 and BK5 while the bungalows and semi-detached housing units of BK6 and BK7 constituted the high-cost residential areas. This fast growing development includes hypermarkets, public fields, the Al-Ehsan mosque, the district police station, schools and 18 hole golf course, in a comprehensive modern environment as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Integrated development of Bandar Kinrara of Selangor, Malaysia.
Source: sierraresidency.blogspot.com/2007

4.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS

4.5.1 DOCUMENTING PHYSICAL TRACES

My field-work began with a visit to the Subang Jaya Municipal Council to obtain the landscape submission plans for low, medium and high-cost residential schemes in Bandar
Kinrara. An example of the landscape submission plan for the low-cost housing is illustrated in Figure 4.4. Submission plans for the medium and high-cost housing schemes can be found in Appendix II. I conducted my first site visit to these residential areas in order to understand the nature and extent of the landscape alteration that has taken place in the semi-public spaces. During this visit I identified houses in low, medium and high-cost areas with extensive landscape alteration works, whose residents could be potential participants in this study. I noted the house addresses and returned to the Subang Jaya Municipal Council to search for their telephone numbers. My intention was to call and introduce myself and the purpose of my study before making official appointments with each of the participants or visiting their houses.

As I expected, it was difficult to communicate with prospective participants by telephone, since they were very suspicious of strangers and hesitant about exchanging information over the telephone - even though I informed them at the very beginning of our conversation that their telephone numbers had been provided by the Local Municipal Council for the purpose of my research. As a local woman, I could understand this suspicion, knowing of the many occasions when telephone calls are used for marketing commercial products. Instead I mailed potential participants my Research Information sheet, with the intention of giving them more time to understand the purpose of the research. I provided my contact number in case they agreed to participate in the study. The results were once again disappointing, as I obtained no responses.

My third option was to approach the residents by visiting their houses and introducing myself and the purpose of the study. I carried my Lincoln University student identification card and Research Information Sheet to prove I was a genuine researcher. In this way I managed to recruit fifteen participants from each of the housing schemes. It was a challenging experience as not all residents were willing to entertain a stranger in their homes, but I believe that approaching people directly and communicating my sincere interest in exploring the reasons behind their altered gardens was really helpful. This approach was also helpful in that I was then introduced to a few of the participants’ neighbours, opening up an opportunity to employ a ‘snowball’ approach to recruiting participants. Snowballing, in this instance, involved the participants suggesting that their friends and neighbours might be included in the sample, and they, subsequently, suggested more respondents for the sampling pool. This method was very helpful in increasing the sample in my study. The majority of my fieldwork was carried out in the afternoon, normally from 3pm onwards on weekdays, as I found most of the residents spent their
afternoon gardening while keeping an eye on their children who were engaged in outdoor activities.

During my first visit I sketched the landscape plan of the residents’ semi-public spaces in my note book, took photographs and set appointments for the interview sessions at a time convenient to the residents. The sketches and photos were digitally documented using Microsoft Publisher software and printed out on A3 size coloured plan drawings, together with photographs as shown in Figure 4.5. I classified these plans as inventory plans. This approach is referred to as “observing physical traces” (Walker, 1985). Walker describes this method as systematically looking at physical surroundings to find reflections of previous activity not produced in order to be measured by the researcher. Observing traces is an exceptionally useful research tool that can produce valuable insights at the beginning of a project, test research questions in the middle and be a source of ideas and new concepts throughout. From the trace, questions can be asked about what caused it, what the person who created the trace intended, and what sequence of events led up to the trace. Meinig (1979b, p. 176), a prominent geographer, confirmed the reliability of this method in investigating landscape characteristics:

Most social scientists would likely start with people and ask them questions which might reveal their attitudes about such matters, but I think geographers might best start with the landscape itself to see what we can find there of how substance is shaped by the symbolic. That allows us to deal with results rather than opinions, with the past as well as the present, and is the logical point of departure for a field which is fundamentally concerned with environment and places.

(Meinig, 1979b, p. 176)

In short, the investigation process included obtaining the original Landscape Submission Plans of low, medium and high-cost residential areas from the Subang Jaya Municipal Council as the secondary data (see Appendix II) and documenting forty five (45) altered landscapes in the semi-public spaces belonging to 15 units of low, 15 units of medium and 15 units of high-cost residences (see Appendix III).
Figure 4.4 Typical landscape submission plan of the low-cost housing areas.

Figure 4.5 Inventory plan documenting landscape alteration made in the semi-public space.
This was followed by annotated diagrams, which enabled me to record traces and thus signify changes. Zeisel (1984, p. 94) argues that such a “method of producing drawings can be extremely useful in final reports because they are highly imaginable and inexpensive to reproduce”. He further elaborates on the advantages of engaging with this method:

1. **Unobtrusive**
   Particularly valuable when gathering data about which respondents are sensitive or when respondents have a stake in a certain answer.

2. **Durable**
   They do not easily disappear. Investigators can return to a research site for more observations or counting and can document traces with photographs or drawings.

3. **Easy**
   Generally inexpensive and may quickly yield interesting information.

(Zeisel, 1984, pp. 92-93)

**4.5.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS COMPLEMENTED BY LANDSCAPE PLAN**

In-depth interviews (complemented by landscape plans and photos) were carried out with the three parties; namely the policy makers (Subang Jaya Municipal Council), the landscape architects who have been involved in producing the landscape submission plans and the rural-migrants who live in the case study areas. Following consent from participants, all the interviews were tape-recorded and I also took notes of the respondents’ non-verbal expressions (for example, pointing towards plant specimens). Morton-Williams (1985) believes that it is essential to tape-record such interviews as one’s memory is likely to be highly distorted by such factors as the emotional intensity with which views are expressed or the loudness of voice or even by one’s own preconceptions.

I took a series of photographs in the case study areas and these, together with the existing landscape plans, helped to facilitate communication and conversation during the in-depth interviews with the policy makers and the landscape architects. This method proved to be very helpful as my interviews with the developer and the landscape architects were conducted in places away from the case study areas. For example, my interviews with the Chief Executive Officer of Island and Peninsular Berhad, the developer for Bandar Kinrara, and the landscape architect of Subang Jaya Municipal Council, were held in their offices and I found that these photographs helped to stimulate our conversations. Furthermore, this project had been completed in early 2002 and it would have been
difficult for them to discuss it without the plans and photographs taken earlier on the sites. Walker (1985), Jones (1985) and Morton-Williams (1985) explain that photographs of physical traces taken at the beginning of a research project can give all parties an initial overview of the types of things they are likely to see in the field. Photographs can be used as a catalyst in focused interviews.

In-depth interviews with the residents were carried out in the altered gardens within the residential areas. Having the interviews in the gardens helped to elicit the residents’ perspectives on the landscape alteration which, in turn, enabled me to understand the reasons behind landscape alteration and the residents’ attachment to the newly cultivated landscape. The residents were happy to tell me about each of the plant materials and at the same time to tell me about their personal experience in the rural living environment. Some of the participants would tidy their garden, while talking about their plants and their experiences. This homely atmosphere in the residents’ settings contributed to more relaxed, spontaneous and friendly conversations. In a few cases, the neighbours, who were curious about our conversation, joined us and talked about their own experiences of sharing plant elements in the garden. At the end of the session, I would usually be invited to continue the discussion in the respondents’ houses. This allowed me to talk to other family members while having tea or coffee and hear about their personal experiences that related to the garden and garden elements.

Morton-Williams (1985, p. 25) suggests that, “samples in qualitative research are usually purposive; that is small numbers of people with specific characteristics, behaviour or experiences are selected to facilitate broad comparisons between certain groups that the researcher thinks likely to be important”. I managed to conduct 36 interviews with the respondents – 15 interviews in low-cost, 13 in medium-cost and 8 in high-cost residential areas. To ensure the smoothness of the interview sessions, I also prepared an interview guide that included a set of topics, elements, patterns and relationships that I intended to cover. As a result, a “conversation in which the researcher encourages the informant to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem” was achieved. However, Jones (1985) advises that the interviewer is not bound by a rigid questionnaire designed to ensure that the same questions are asked of all respondents in exactly the same way.
4.5.4 PILOT STUDY

Prior to the main data collection, I conducted a pilot case study. This process was important for various reasons. For instance, it helped to identify the most desirable site for data collection, refine a data collection plan and assist in clarifying research questions and research design (Yin, 1994). Yin warns that this procedure is not a “pre-test”. A pilot study was required in this instance to determine a suitable site and landscape that would contribute to an understanding of the process and outcomes of landscape alteration. The pilot provided an opportunity for me to visit the low-cost residential areas at Taman Bukit Indah and Taman Ampang Jaya, Ampang, Selangor, the proposed case study areas in the beginning of my study. Visits to these two case study areas were carried out in February 2008.

My pilot study involved observation of the altered landscapes in the semi-public spaces of these low-cost housing areas and interviews with professionals who were involved in planning and designing the residential landscapes of these housing schemes. Data collected during my field observations indicated that the landscape alteration phenomenon in these two case study areas revealed common and “non-comparable” landscape characteristics (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 50). Demographically, the majority of residents in both of these housing schemes were the Malay communities and their altered gardens mainly devoted to utilitarian functions. As a result, I decided that engaging with solely low-cost urban communities was not conducive to achieving a comprehensive study and a full understanding of the overall landscape needs of the urban residents. In fact, having non-comparable groups could potentially nullify the study prior to analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 51).

My experience with the pilot study enabled me to reconsider the appropriateness and relevancy of my research design. As a result I modified my research sample to encompass a comparative study of three housing schemes - namely low, medium and high-cost housings which provided “fundamental differences” and “diverse conditions” in the residents’ altered landscapes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 52). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 65) refer to multiple samplings as “slices of data” which provide “different kinds of data [that] give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties”.

I interviewed the landscape architect in Ampang Jaya Municipal council and the landscape architects who were responsible for preparing the landscape submission plans of the case
study areas. These interviews helped to refine the objectives of my study while providing a necessary context for understanding the current issues with residential landscapes in general, as well as enabling me to gain ‘interview experiences’ with the respondents with regard to the specific aims of this research. The pilot study helped to increase my confidence to proceed with field work and, at the same time, enhanced the credibility and reliability of my study. Following these changes to my research, as a result of the pilot study, I collected my data in the three residential schemes in Bandar Kinrara in August 2008.

4.5.5 AVAILABILITY AND COMPREHENSIVENESS OF LANDSCAPE SUBMISSION PLANS

I documented and compared landscape elements provided by the developers for the surrounding public landscapes with those altered by the community. With this information, I conducted my own inventory and analysis of the selected case study area while documenting the changes.

4.5.6 APPROPRIATENESS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I expected that visiting the sites would enable me to refine the research questions. The majority of the interviews were transcribed immediately after visiting the participants’ houses. This enabled me to review the questions and add other important matters progressively. For example, the interview guide that I prepared for interview sessions with the residents was initially focussed primarily on the meanings and values of altered landscapes and the interaction between residents’ and gardens but this focus was expanded to include the spiritual interactions between the residents and supernatural-beings. A summary of my qualitative research process is illustrated in Figure 4.6.
Figure 4.6 A summary of the qualitative research exploring landscape alteration in low, medium and high-cost residential areas.
4.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The qualitative methods applied in my study have been inspired by “grounded theory”, which Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 1) describe as a method of “discovery of theory from data”. My study, however, was not designed and conducted to generate a “sociological theory”. As Glaser and Strauss mention, “only sociologists are trained to want it, to look for it and to generate it” (1967, p. 7). Applying a grounded theory approach in my study has helped me to strategize my fieldwork investigations, “grounding them in the everyday realities and meanings of social worlds and social actors, rather than taking problems from policymakers, general theorists, or others” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 5).

The tape-recorded interviews with the participants were transcribed along with the data collection procedures. Interviews with the participants in high and medium-cost residential areas were sometimes conducted in English as this is our second language after Bahasa Malaysia, which is the official language of Malaysia. These English interviews were directly transcribed and I refer to these transcriptions as ‘Original transcription’. Other respondents preferred to speak in Bahasa Malaysia. I translated these conversations and refer to them as ‘Translated transcription’ in my data interpretation presented in Chapter 5 and onwards. All participants were given pseudonyms to ensure they remained anonymous in the reporting of the research findings. Linking pseudonyms at the same time promises their confidentiality. For example ‘LC’ prefixes the low-cost housing scheme, ‘MC’ refers to medium-cost and ‘HC’ pertains to high-cost. A similar process was applied to the plan drawing procedures. The existing landscape elements for each of the houses in the case study areas were recorded and digitalized during data collection and carefully presented in my data interpretations. Recording and organizing on-site information is referred to by Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 7) as “data display – the second sub-process, describes the ways in which reduced data are displayed in diagrammatic, pictorial, or visual forms in order to show what those data imply”.

The third analytical process involved a coding process to identify key themes and patterns in my study. The bulk of my data was organized by creating categories such as – reasons for removing the existing trees, attachment with garden, land ownership and social expression. The coding process helped me to create patterns and links between categories, supporting further analytical thinking towards establishing the conceptual themes of my study. Four prominent themes were identified, namely – Recreating a home garden, The functional garden, The symbolic home garden and Place and social integration. These
themes are interrelated and are presented in four different chapters, which, in turn, frame the discussion of my research findings. A summary of my data analysis processes is presented in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Summary of data analysis.
WE ALL RETAIN MEMORIES OF PLACES. They identify who we are as individuals. At the same time, they tie us to network[s] of people, culture and society. Even through time, they reach into the past to people whose lives and experiences were as real as ours, and into the future to those whose lives we can only imagine.

(Downing, 2000, p. 3)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 107)
5.0 INTRODUCTION

I wished to understand the values and meanings participants ascribe to domestic gardens. Talking to residents face-to-face has enabled me to obtain ‘deep’ and ‘rich’ data about landscape alteration in urban residential areas. The interviews have helped open my ‘eyes’ and my ‘heart’ to the participants’ feelings. This chapter addresses one of the themes derived from my analysis, the memories and experiences of rural landscapes that have inspired the urban residents to ‘re-create’ the landscape in semi-public spaces which they later appropriate as a personal garden. When talking about their present gardens, the majority of the interviewees frequently referred to their past living experiences in the rural village. This interconnection manifested itself in terms of gardening inspiration, elements in the rural setting, and personal and emotional attachment. These manifestations support my contention in this study that the rural-urban migrants imitate their experiences in the rural cultural landscape to enhance place attachment and place identity in urban residential areas. In the following section I discuss examples of landscape alteration that express home-owners’ identity and reflect their cultural and religious values. I then continue to discuss participants’ ‘repaired’ landscapes that are imbued with physical and emotional distinctions.

5.1 MEMORIES FROM THE VILLAGE

The significance of attachment to a place is described by Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992, p. 139) as a “geographic location that emotionally binds a person to that place as a function of its role as a setting for experience.” Osman (1997) describes an occurrence in a Malay Muslim community in Malaysia where the perceived attachment to place is more than a geographical location, but includes the aspect of religiosity. To the community, an environment is perceived as a manifestation of God’s greatest creation. Thus, effective bonding with the environment is a way of strengthening devotion to the Creator. The participant from House 3MC describes a religious ritual in her garden:

We have to greet the guardian of the plants before we pick the plant leaves, especially during the night time...even if we want to water them during this hour...We need to do the same especially during Maghrib time (the sunset daily prayer) because they've been guarded...that’s the reason why our parents in the village keep reminding us... (Translated transcription)
She further explains her understanding of the environment as an indication of the presence of God and his graciousness:

Normally...if we looked at the nature of plants’ growth...it’s just amazing....You can see the power of Allah when the plants still manage to grow very healthy, even without being fertilized or watered sufficiently...you know, sometimes we just forgot to do so...but they're still growing... healthier and healthier...And I consistently give them a good stroke...and talk to them...they need that... (Translated transcription)

She expressed great delight as she described how her gardening interest first began:

I developed this interest since my childhood time. I liked to grow plants when I was in the village. My mother and I enjoyed growing plants that included ornamental, vegetable, and herbs and spices. We rented a house with a huge compound that enabled us to express our interest in gardening...they were all edible and profitable...then we bred chickens and ducks...that's where all this began...I really enjoy doing it...This continues while we dwell here...I have planted ornamental plants in front of the house, and propagate edible plants in my backyard garden....such as banana and coconut trees...(Translated transcription)

The bonding of past memories and present practices which is expressed here correlates with the idea of “continuity with significant places of the past, so that a sense of control and identity experienced at an earlier age is supported by reproducing the essence of a significant past environment” (Marcus, 1992, p. 88). At the same time, this effective bonding that has developed through life experiences “may have an emotional quality” that in return, establishes meaningful interrelationships between garden and the house owner (Rubeinstein & Parmelee, 1992, p. 139).
Downing (2000, p. 7), an architect, explains the three types of memories that relate to the nature of remembrance. The first relates to the experiential aspect of memory, referred to as personal memory. An autobiographical fact is defined as “those memories of places, people, events from which all experiential quality is absent” and finally, recollective memory reflects “particular episodes in an individual life”. Downing (2000, p. 7) also believes that collective experiences in memorable places distinctively inspire and influence people in designing and creating their future places. My findings indicate that the memory of rural experiences drives the development of a sense of attachment. This attachment is expressed in the altered domestic gardens of the rural-urban migrants which become repositories of personal memory, autobiographical facts and recollective memory.

A few participants in this study provided responses that best relate to the notion of personal memories as discussed by Downing (2000). These participants demonstrated how the ‘power’ of memorable places and their desire to express their identity in their newly developed ‘meaningful’ garden, influenced them to alter their landscape. The resident of House 12MC explained the reasons for planting bamboo species in his altered garden.
He continued to explain the feelings that were evoked from having this element in his garden:

I’m enjoying the sounds that are created from these bamboo groves. It is so lovely especially when they are blown by the winds…each of the bamboo stems are stroked by each other, producing a smooth and soothing sound….it’s melodious… (Translated transcription)

The resident of House 12MC managed to illustrate his deep understanding about plant species, derived not only from books, but also from his childhood experiences in the rural village. He talked about why he chose to plant *Bambusa tuloides ‘Ventricosa’* (Buddha Bamboo) which is able to grow in his small garden, instead of the big *Bambusa vulgaris* (Giant Yellow Bamboo) that requires the huge spreading areas available in the village. He was happy to experience its therapeutic, melodious sound and at the same time, this Bamboo species is aesthetically pleasing, as shown in Figure 5.2.

*Figure 5.2 Bambusa tuloides ‘Vulgaris’ that produces therapeutic melodious sounds and is aesthetically pleasing.*
Deep understanding of nature in a Malay village is discussed in my previous research, (Ismail, 2003, p. 97), associating the village setting with its verdant greenery as the “responsive landscape”. I explained the ways in which children in the Malay village, who interacted with nature at a very young age, developed a closeness and meaningful intimacy with the natural environment. They followed their parents who worked as ‘rubber-tappers’ in the rubber estate, especially during the school holidays. While waiting for their parents, the children played in the water holes pretending to fish; clumps of bushes seem to be a great place to play hide and seek; and they pretended shallow rivers were their swimming pools in the rubber estates as shown in Figure 5.3. These human-nature experiences in a rural living environment were considered to be “most powerful memories” by Marcus (1992, p. 87). The residents of House 12MC recalled his childhood experiences in the woods as some of the best moments in his life.

![Figure 5.3 Children’s activity in the rubber farm.](source: Ismail (2003, p. 97)]

An interview with a friendly couple from House 19LC provided another striking example of how residents develop gardens that connect with memorable places. Referring to themselves as keen gardeners, they developed their garden to reflect a ‘natural forest garden’, depicting a rural ambience in their house compound. They utilized the semi-public space as an entrance to their ‘created forest’. Therefore, an existing tree was cut down during the making of their garden as it did not fit with this desired concept. Figure 5.4
demonstrates their efforts to utilize rural landscape elements such as their fence and gate materials. They used unpolished stems of *Pinanga odorata* (Pinang) to build the vertical fences. At the same time, their father who, lives in the village and has great talent in timber woodcarving, carved for them unique door gates made from *Neobalanocarpus hemii* (Chengal; a hardwood timber species) found in the forest near their village in Kedah\textsuperscript{14}.

Figure 5.4 The fence is made from *Pinanga odorata* and the star is on the carved hardwood gates of House 19LC.

The couple elaborated on their deep interest in inventing new design elements for their garden:

> These are the results of my natural talent. I used to observe other people’s houses…then compare them with mine…while deciding on the ideas of the garden…as an example, my fence was built based on my desire to create something new…Coincidentally, there was an abundance of unused Pinang stems, about 30 to 40 years old in the village. So, I decided to try to build these fences by using this material…I wanted to see its sturdiness. And they still look good after about seven years…I didn’t even polish them…(Translated transcription)

\textsuperscript{14} One of the states in the north of Malaysia.
They shared their experience of the meaning of the hardwood timber door gates (see Figure 5.5):

My family members, especially my father, are keen gardeners too. They have great passion for gardening and this has influenced me since I was a young child. We used to have a small old house…but the landscape was amazingly beautiful…We have the same interest. These hardwood timber door gates were carved with passion symbolizing my father’s continuous support and love for us. It means a lot…I remember him whenever I see these doors…as if he’s here with us, all the time...

(Translated transcription)

For this couple, the hardwood timber gate (Figure 5.5) was much more than a physical object. They expressed their excitement in having a ‘natural forest garden’ through this personal and interconnected characteristic in their altered garden. They said:

Oooo…our guests come to the house and compliment the garden. They envy us for having it. They admire the way we maintain it…but…only we know its satisfaction…we have very limited garden space. So, we can just manage to do this kind of garden. We have more attractive pots and plants in the village, but we don’t have enough space…so, we have to be selective…but the result is satisfying…amazing… (Translated transcription)
Another example of the importance of *recollective* (Downing, 2000) memorable places was expressed by the resident of **House 99MC**. She lived in one of the villages in Perak, one of the states in the north of Malaysia and she considered herself very lucky to have been able to live in Sydney, Australia for about five years with her family. Both experiences strengthened her interest in gardening as can be seen in Figure 5.6.

When I was in Australia, I saw everybody had a beautiful garden. Everybody loved gardening and they really cared for their gardens. It’s not just part of their hobby, but it’s a must-have thing in their lives. So, every time when it comes to spring, everybody seems to have their own beautiful garden. (Original transcription)

And,

So, when I came back, I said why can’t I? I used to have it when I was in the village…When I sit in my garden here. I don’t have a feeling of staying in the city. I feel like I’m out of the city, like a village. It’s calming…

(Original transcription)

She shared her feelings of attachment towards the garden as follows:

Oh…it’s so calming especially when you are upset… you just listen, and you just listen to the sound of the water. It’s very calming. And sometimes I read… I read outside here in the morning. I even have coffee out here. I have friends having coffee here too. They like it here. Even if I had invited them to come inside, they would prefer to sit here and they like it very much. They said it’s very calming, it’s so nice and cosy…, its better to sit outside rather than inside….ha..ha… Most of the time, when we entertain our guests, it’s going to be outside. We do a lot of entertaining outside the house. (Original transcription)

In addition, she explained that her garden is very special because it represents her husband’s interest in gardening that has evolved from his younger days of living in the village. She said:

Aaa…yes, the garden…It was done by my husband. My husband…he was born and grew-up in the village. He doesn’t like to see just bare earth, and in fact he was the one who planted a lot of plants in our garden. Although it’s not our land, we planted it nicely. My husband is the one who has green fingers. But not me, my part is only to trim and water the plants. Aaaa…that’s my part… (Original transcription)
The resident of **House 18HC** presented a perspective on the landscape that represents the identity of the house owner. Having her house and garden surrounded with the extensively developed gardens of other neighbours in the high-cost community did not influence her gardening decisions, as shown in Figure 5.7. Her garden, planted with native plants such as *Manihot esculenta* (Tapioca) and *Cymbopogon citratus* (Lemongrass) reflects her roots, but looks out of place within the high-cost living schemes.

Figure 5.6 Landscape alteration made in public space of House 99MC, inspired by family living experiences in a rural village and in a foreign country.

Figure 5.7 The ‘everyday garden’ that looks out of place in the high-cost housing schemes.
When asked about her ‘different’ landscape expression, she said:

I haven’t really planned my garden. This is even [at the] inside [area] you know. Because I don’t like it to be planned. I think it looks so artificial, so straightforward, like you see in some houses where they have waterfalls. I don’t go for that. As and when I feel like planting vegetables, I will do it. But in a way I try to tell my maid, we keep it right to the end, just around the house. That’s all about it. I don’t really have reasons why I do my garden in such a way. Reasons why I landscaped my garden to be in such away. No. I don’t spend money to buy carpet grass, then you have your pergola and what not…No… (Original transcription)

This respondent’s garden reflected her taste and preferences, rather than the influence of other high-cost residents:

No…I don’t want to follow other people you see… even though as you said, I’m living in a high-cost community…but I have my own preferences…at least, the landscape that I have represents my own identity, of which I’m a Malay…and those plants normally being planted by the Malays in the village…it has meaning and not just being planted like that… (Original transcription)

This example from the resident of House 18HC can be explained as stemming from “self theories” or “sense of self” (Proshansky et al., 1983), a hypothesis that argues that personal self-identity evolves by “distinguishing oneself from others by means of visual, auditory, and still other perpetual modes” in a physical setting. According to Marcus (1992), childhood time is the moment when humans begin to be conscious of self, when we begin to see ourselves as a unique entity.

In brief, the four experiences shared by the respondents of Houses 12MC, 19LC, 99MC and 18HC support the insight that memorable places significantly influence the landscape appearance of rural-urban migrants in low, medium and high-cost housing. Marcus (1992, p. 88) explains that this bonding is important in order to develop “a positive sense of self identity, decorating that space in order to create a setting of psychological comfort” which “interconnects with identity or personal well-being; and the issue of continuity with significant places of the past….”. Downing’s (2000, p.71) notion of the continuation of past and present life experiences helps us to understand the reasons behind this landscape alteration phenomenon in urban residential areas.
Data analysis however, showed that the majority of high-cost housing respondents rarely related their garden to memorable places, but were more concerned with the uniqueness and aesthetic aspects of their altered landscape. A further discussion of the characteristics of the high-cost residents’ gardens will be presented in the following sections.

### 5.2 THE AUTHENTIC LANDSCAPE

The current landscape changes that “are characterized by the loss of diversity, coherence and identity” are perceived negatively (Antrop, 2005, p. 22). Egoz and Bowring (2004, p. 57) highlighted the impacts of globalization on local landscape characteristics resulting in homogeneous, “simplistic and superficial designs” in the built environment. This global issue of the loss of native landscape identity was also emphasized by several Malaysian local landscape architects (Ismail, 2003; Kamsah, 1997; Said, 2001a). They have expressed their concerns about the impact of imported designs on the current landscape, especially in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia.

For example, Figure 5.8 illustrates a typical ‘imported’ landscape in a public garden in Kuala Lumpur, namely the Taman Tasik Perdana which resembles ‘Baroque style’ also associated with the ‘French garden’, and commonly known to Kuala Lumpur’s residents as *Bandaraya style* (Municipal Council’s style). This garden style does not address the needs of the users who live in an extremely humid climate. This formal, geometrical and horizontal landscape with trimmed ‘boxwood hedges’ together with ‘parterre flowerbed patterns’ is visually pleasing and may look attractive in the photograph, but it does not provide a cool, shady environment where people can escape the heat.

Figure 5.9 shows another typical example of elements prevalent in a domestic garden in Malaysia that represent an Indonesian ‘Balinese landscape identity’. The Balinese landscape is a sacred design that is based on the psycho-cosmic Hindu concept. The garden’s soft and hard-landscape elements symbolize spiritual beliefs and incorporate

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*Our imaginative remembrance of things past creates our histories and actively shapes our present and future experience. The act of remembrance is not simply a collection of past perceptual experience or a nostalgic indulgence. Our ability to remember and to organize and reorganize past experience creates values, continually evolves to insure survival, and produces individuality as well as human culture.*

(Downing, 2000, p.71)
aspects of animism - reflecting the characteristics of the Balinese god, goddesses and
demons within the physical world, referred to as bhuwahna alit (microcosm) and the
bhuwana agung (macrocosm). Thus, the Balinese landscape needs to reflect Hindu
concepts and failure to implement the right landscape composition may cause illness and
bad luck. Unfortunately, these ideas have tended to be misunderstood and misused by the
Malaysian communities. The majority of the non-Hindu people, especially, interpreted the
Balinese landscape aesthetically and used elements such as art and statues to embellish
their house compounds – without realising the sacred meanings and symbolism behind
these elements, as can be seen in Figure 5.9.

Figure 5.8 An imitation of a ‘Baroque style’ public landscape in Kuala Lumpur, reflecting the
globalization of landscape characteristics.

An honest representation of self or environment relates to identity theory as discussed by prominent scholars in the area of phenomenology and geography. Identity is associated with intrinsic and non-intrinsic values, identifying them with significant characteristics. ‘Identity’, according to Relph (1976) and Stewart et al. (2004) refers to a constant similarity and coherence which enables each item to be distinguished on its own. Twigger-Ross et al. (2003, p. 203) define “identity” as “personal and unique conceptions or characteristics of the person constituting what is traditionally called personal identity” or referred to as “self-identity” by Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983).

Thus, interaction between people and their environment is a relationship that represents residents’ personal identity and is embodied in the authentic garden of their altered urban landscapes. The resident of House 55MC explained that her gardening expressed not only her personal identity, but was also a representation of family skills and knowledge as illustrated in Figure 5.10. The landscape elements in her garden are specifically formulated for women, especially during their postnatal period. Her garden consists of various traditional plants such as Vitex negundo (Lemuning), Curcuma domestica (Turmeric) and Piper sarmentosa (Kadok), which are among the important elements needed by women to regain their energy and beauty after giving birth. She said:

Figure 5.9 A typical house garden in Malaysia that duplicates elements of the Balinese gardens of Indonesia.

Source: www.starproperty.my
Initially, I didn’t really know about it. But my grandmother used to work as a caretaker of the pregnant mothers in the village. We used to be very poor. So, she worked as a midwife. She was the expert in the village. This skill and ability was inherited by my mother. (Translated transcription)

Figure 5.10 ‘A traditional midwife’s garden’ of House 55MC and next to it is the *Vitex legundo* (Lemuning)

She continued to explain the origin of her garden’s identity as:

She [her mother] brought all these plants from the village to be planted in my garden [her altered garden]…we need to use these Lemuni leaves for the process of *bertungku*. The heated stone is placed on these leaves that later will provide a very nice smell…we use Pandanus and Turmeric leaves at the same time…That’s why I have them all in my garden. And I consider this garden as a traditional ‘midwife’s garden’…ha…ha… (Translated transcription)

Figure 5.11 illustrates the process of *bertungku* as mentioned by the resident of **House 55MC**. This is one of the traditional massages given to postnatal women, using selected small round river stones. In this process, the stones need to be heated on a stove. Then, they are covered with Pandanus and Turmeric leaves that are laid on a few layers of cloth, before being tied. In the end, this will create a healing massage tool to be used to massage the bodies of postnatal women.
Another landscape that reflects a sense of ‘authenticity’ is that of House 84L.C. This resident’s garden represents the extension of Indian culture in the domestic garden. Anyone who passes by this garden will connect it with the elements of Hinduism. This is because this garden includes an important element of the Hindu culture, which is Saccharum officinarum (Sugarcane). This quest for a cultural look is the result of a cumulative effort by her husband and father-in-law. The father-in-law brought the best sugarcane species from their village to be planted in her garden. She explained that, unlike the village where Sugarcane is plentiful, it is difficult to get good and suitable Sugarcane in urban areas to assist them in their celebrations. She said:

The first Sugarcane was planted by my father-in-law. This is a ‘must have’ element to celebrate Ponggal. Nowadays, it's quite difficult to find long Sugarcanes in the market. The Sugarcanes that are available in the market were normally cut into a few short pieces for consumption purposes. We need the one with its original size…that's why we have to plant it in our own compound…it's easy, we can use them at any time…

(Translated transcription)
Figure 5.12 shows Sugarcane plants in the garden of **House 84LC** and how it is used in the *Ponggal* celebration by the Indian communities in Malaysia. This is one of the important annual celebrations conducted in the middle of January to denote the sun’s movement towards the north.

![Figure 5.12 Sugarcane plants in the domestic garden of House 84LC and its uses in the Ponggal celebration of the Hindu communities in Malaysia.](http://www.malaxi.com)

**Source:** http://www.malaxi.com

Planting the *Murraya koeginii* (Curry Leaf) in their garden also strengthens its cultural authenticity. She explains the significance of this plant in their culture:

> The Curry Leaf are very important in our culture. We use them in our everyday cooking...especially in the chicken curry...it'll provide a very nice smell and add deliciousness to the delicacy. We also use them to strengthen our hair...then there'll be no hair loss anymore...We need to blend them with the coconut milk and spread it on our hair for about one or two hours... (Translated transcription)

The above conversations provide an understanding of the significance of memories and rural cultural landscape in influencing the alteration of gardens. Participants express their passion for the landscape settings of their childhood and explain how these remembered landscapes continue to inspire the way in which they garden. At the same time, the above discussion posits that the theory of ‘self identity’, ‘identity of place’ and attachment of ‘memorable places’ are relevant to my study.
Besides talking with the residents, interviews were also conducted with the landscape architects of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council. These interviews revealed the government policy to enforce a homogenous landscape design in the semi-public spaces of the urban residential areas. To the local council, this approach is likely to produce tidy and organized outdoor living settings. Thus, they forbid anything that resembles unplanned, yet responsive kampong characteristics as discussed in Chapter 2, in order to achieve a sense of uniformity in the settings. This explains why the landscape alterations performed by the residents are unacceptable and displeasing to the local authority. Jackson (1994) commented that some of the landscape professionals who treated landscapes as a “mask” (Egoz & Bowring, 2004, p. 57) to cover a physical setting with prestige design appearances, lack of social interactions and values. Jackson (1994) says:

One reason is that many involved in landscape architecture – either as professionals or as teachers and writers – are convinced that for reasons of prestige the design of gardens should be treated exclusively as an art. The social and economic roles of designed outdoor spaces, parks, freeways, gardens, nature preserves are not always taken into account, and the only gardens worth examining are those whose designers belong somewhere in the apostolic succession starting with Capability Brown.

(Jackson, 1994, p. 128)

The following sections discuss landscape alteration performed by the participants in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. These gardens were embedded with elements that not only enriched the physical residential settings, but also imbued the semi-public spaces with emotion and meaning – in contrast to the type of landscapes Jackson (1994) referred to.

5.3 COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL SENTIMENTS INVESTED IN THE LANDSCAPE

5.3.1 THE LOW-COST HOUSING RESIDENTS

Fifteen (15) houses were selected to be part of my research case study in Bandar Kinrara low-cost housing. The soft landscape elements in the residents’ modified gardens dominated by combinations of native and exotic plant species – the two categories of plants species found in the urban gardens (Said, 2001b). The analysis suggests that landscape alteration in this housing scheme was developed not only to provide aesthetic pleasure but also to support the residents in their daily activities. Figure 5.13 shows a bar-
chart indicating the percentage of native (69%) and exotic (47%) plant species available in
the altered gardens of the low-cost housing scheme. Detailed plan drawings of the
composition and placement of these plants in the altered garden are shown in Appendix III.

Interview sessions enabled me to understand the meanings these gardens have for the
residents and their attachment to them. As an example, the resident of House 18LC clearly
expressed her pleasure in her garden. Her garden shows a combination of plants for
cooking, decoration and traditional medicinal values planted around and underneath a big
Mangifera indica (Mango) in a semi-public space as shown in Figure 5.14. She explained
that her good branching Mango tree seems to be part of their children’s exciting play
equipment. After school, especially in the afternoon, children will gather to climb this tree,
sometimes eating the fruit while chatting and playing. It is common for the children’s
mothers to join this gathering in the late afternoon. They converse while waiting for their
kids who sometimes refuse to climb down from the tree branches. This respondent was
happy to have her altered garden become an unofficial gathering spot for her neighbours.
And she felt proud to be able to share her garden’s produce with the neighbours.

Figure 5.13 Percentage of native and exotic species in an altered garden of low-cost housing scheme.
She said:

At first, me and my neighbours were all worried because kids tend to have extra passion when playing in this Mango tree…it's not that this is the only Mango tree available around here, but I think it is the good branching that makes it look so tempting to the kiddies…in fact, this tree bears lots of fruit as well as being climbed by the kids…it's good though…and I'm happy to have my friends around in the afternoon, after a very busy day… (Translated transcription)

And she continued about sharing the Mango fruits with the neighbours:

Yes…I usually share the fruit with all my neighbours. This Mango tree bears a lot of fruit…but still, it's not enough to give to all of them. So, what I did was, I invited my neighbours for a kenduri (thanksgiving feast) and made special Mango salad as one of the meals…thus, a lot more people can eat the fruit…It was really exciting… (Translated translation)

This phenomenon can best be explained by my own observations through previous work, (Ismail 2003, p. 101) on the characteristics of the Malay culturally responsive garden in rural villages in Malaysia, which was found to possess similarities with the above ‘sharing’ experiences.
The planting compositions in the gardens indicate not only cultural intrinsic values, such as food, medicine, cosmetic, belief but also decoration and provision of shade. As a result, the gardens become individual as well as communal spaces that are systematically arranged to accommodate people and their social activities. It is a source of pride to the family and a place to be shared with the neighbours and residents within the community.

(Ismail, 2003, p. 101)

Thus, this example reveals that the low-cost residents in Bandar Kinrara utilized their altered gardens in accordance with their needs and social and cultural values. The cultural landscapes developed in these semi-public spaces are both an expression of bonding with the places where they originated and, at the same time, a way of continuing to strengthen attachment and create meaning in their new living places.

The attitude towards altered gardens was differently expressed by the resident of House 20LC. He informed me that he used to have the most flourishing garden in the neighbourhood. His garden’s quality however, diminished after he encountered problems with broken submersible water piping. His plants slowly died due to continuous overflowing water in the garden. He said:

I used to propagate this Hibiscus...I was the pioneer gardener in this area...I brought lots of plants from my previous military camp, where I stayed before I moved here. I propagated these plants for my neighbours because they didn't know how to do it. My Chinese neighbours rely on me when it comes to plant propagation...This Hibiscus used to be very beautiful in my garden...but its growth was stunted due to the broken pipe. Some of them died off. But, I'm happy to see my propagated Hibiscus is blooming beautifully in front of my neighbour's house...they trimmed the Hibiscus to look like an umbrella...it's very nice...and it comes from here, in my garden...I'm very proud....I'm happy to see some of my plants continuing to live healthily, even when not in my garden...

(Translated transcription)

These words suggest that the meaning of the garden is probably deeper than just the physical garden as illustrated in Figure 5.15. The meaning involves enjoyment of a beautiful garden, but also feelings of satisfaction and sentimental values. This was referred to as a process of personalizing space which is defined by Abu-Ghazzeh (2000, p. 98) as “the way the individual alters a space to make it distinctly his/her own”.

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Another example representative of the profound relationship between people and their gardens in urban residential areas is illustrated in the case of the resident of **House 8LC**. She described how her involvement in Muslim funeral rites drove her to include plant material in her garden that would facilitate this ritual, which was one of her social responsibilities. As an example, she planted *Musa paradisica* (Banana) in her garden, as shown in Figure 5.16. During the death bathing ritual, the deceased body is laid on a platform carpeted with abundant Banana leaves. Soft layered Banana leaves are believed to provide a comfortable platform, especially for those deceased who previously had any cuts and bruises on their body. In the same way, miscarried foetuses will also be covered with banana leaves during the funeral rites. She said:

> I love to have a utilitarian garden. It has to provide benefits to me. Banana palms as an example, are very important to me. Actually, I am among the people who are responsible in Muslim funeral rites in this neighbourhood. Therefore, I need to have these plants in order to do my work…and I’m happy to help people…it’s something that you feel deep in your heart…satisfaction… (Translated transcription)

And:
5.3.2 THE MEDIUM-COST HOUSING RESIDENTS

I also collected data from fifteen (15) houses in the Bandar Kinrara medium-cost housing scheme. Data analysis reveals some differences in the findings compared with the low-cost housing. In the medium-cost housing area, the residents ranked plants for decoration as the priority over and above those with a utilitarian function. One hundred and thirty one (131) varieties of plant species were documented in the semi-public landscape of the medium-cost housing scheme. Indeed, this housing scheme has the highest plant diversity when compared to other housing schemes. In overall numbers, eighty-two (82) species were identified with ornamental purposes, and the others are used as utilitarian elements as illustrated in Figure 5.17. Detailed plan drawings on composition and placement of these plants in the altered gardens are shown in Appendix III.

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15 *Sadaqa* is what is given voluntarily for the sake of Allah to obtain the recompense from Allah when the person who does so aims at conformity with the truth in his deed (http://quranicteachings.co.uk/sadaqa.htm)

16 *Pahala* - recompense from Allah
Figure 5.17 Percentage of native and exotic species in altered gardens of the medium-cost housing scheme.

Figure 5.17 shows a notable contrast between the percentage of native (49%) and exotic (82%) plant species in the medium-cost housing scheme compared to the low-cost housing - 69% of native and 47% of exotic species. Notwithstanding these differences, the residents’ interpretation and attachment towards memorable rural landscapes remains similar. As an example, a Chinese resident from House 6MC told me that his experience of growing up in the village moulded his interest in gardening. In fact, this experience inspired him to share his garden produce with neighbours. He said that:

Yeah I’m actually doing this because basically I grew up in Seremban, for 25 years. When we were young, my mother used to bring us to the farm, and there we cultivated vegetables and Sweet Potatoes, you know, and then we bred pigs, even chickens, and other animals and we had to feed them, bring them to the pond full of Water Hyacinth and we used to have a lot of rabbits, cows, guinea pigs. (Translated transcription)

And:

Our father passed away when we were still very young and mom was the one who worked and raised the children. So, in order to survive, we bred pigs, we bred chickens, guinea pigs and other animals on the farm. And then we grew Kangkung…you know, aaa…all sorts of edible plants and vegetables. With this, traditionally and culturally, my senses are quite attracted to all this…and I’m sharing the fruits of my passion in gardening with my neighbours…it makes me feel young…ha…ha… (Translated transcription)

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17 Ipomea aquatica (Kangkung or Water Spinach)
The response above provides affirmation that personal experiences in rural villages and memories embedded during childhood play an important role in determining the migrants’ identities and social expressions. Proshansky *et al.* (1983) and Krupat (1983, p. 343) refer to personal and place identity as a reflection of the relationship between humans and environment in “forms of behaviour” that later become “part of the person”. Therefore, the resident of **House 6MC**’s effort in re-creating a rural image in his garden affirm what Marcus (1992, p. 88), argues to be the “importance of ‘continuity’” where people’s past experiences and environments mould personal identity.

A further example presents the emotional attachment to rural and memorable experiences expressed by the resident of **House 3MC**. She elaborated that:

Yes…it’s definitely a lifetime memory…you see, some of the plants growing in this garden are derived from my village…I will make sure the whole family will go back to our village to celebrate Eid or other occasions…In fact, my mom’s house is still there and next to it is my auntie’s house…sometimes, when I look at these plants…I am suddenly caught up with my childhood memories and I’m smiling alone…my grandchild will approach and asked me…granny…why are you smiling while holding a plant… (Translated transcription)

One would have never known that her garden, which physically looks as impressive as other everyday gardens in the neighbourhood, was indeed, embedded with poignant experiences as illustrated in Figure 5.19. I was told that a few ornamental plants in her
garden were given to her by a close friend who recently passed away. The plants, namely *Dracaena surculosa var. punctulata* (Japanese Bamboo), *Dieffenbachia sp. ‘Exotic Camilla’* (Dumb Cane), *Heliconia psittacorum X H. spathocircinata* (Golden Torch Adrian) and *Rhapis excelsa* (Lady Palm) will continue to be nurtured just as she used to nurture their relationship before. She said:

Aaa…yes…you see, these plants mean a lot to me…When I look at them, I know that these plants were brought from the village, this one, used to be at my aunt’s house and when she discovered that I like it so much…she handed it over to me…but these three plants really touched my soul. They were given to me by my close friend that has just passed away…we were so close, and we both liked gardening…I didn’t know that this is going to be the last thing she would give to me…she died of breast cancer…(Translated transcription)

![Figure 5.19 Memorable and meaningful elements in the garden of House 3MC.](image)

The resident of **House 3MC**, who is in her mid-fifties, made her garden meaningful by adding personal touches that evoke memories of village experiences. The garden is one of the major focuses of her life. Each of the plants in her garden reflects her love and care, as well as embellishing the appearance of her house. Marcus (1992, pp. 88-89) explains that some people like to include elements from memorable places as part of their garden design. Hiss (1990, p. 94) also argues that one of the ways to increase place experiences is to provide a place with “lovable objects”. These emotional experiences embedded in the garden belonging to the resident of **House 3MC** reflect what Marcus (1992) regards as the interconnection between garden and personal well-being.
A feeling of sadness, expressed in his relationship with the garden, was shared by the resident of House 12MC:

Inspiration…my late mother was the one who had a great passion for plants…I was still a young kid when she was sick…she picked me from amongst the other siblings to help her care for the plants because she was unable to continue doing it…So, like it or not…I’m the one who will water the plants…when she passed away…the memories are still alive…I continue to tend to her plants…as if I’m tending to her…with full of love…
(Translated transcription)

He explained how this memory of his late mother developed his passion in gardening from a very young age. Agnew (2005, p. 142) refers to this on-going relationship embedded in an emotional response to garden as, “memories were cultivated” and “love can make you remember”:

At that time, I lived in Kajang…So, I kept the plants with me, and I brought all of them to this house…I continued watering all the plants that she planted…and that’s the moment when I fell in love with gardening…it means a lot to me…more than you can see here in my garden…
(Translated transcription)

The resident of House 12MC continued to explain that his day to day experiences experimenting with plants helped develop him into a keen gardener. In fact, he was very happy to see the results of his creativity being discussed among the neighbours. His garden is designed with native and exotic species. Uniquely carved timber fascia boards with plant motifs are hung around the house reflecting his deep interest in embellishing his garden’s character as well as his creativity. He has planted a climber, *Quisqualis indica* (Rangoon creeper) which creates a crown over the house gates and a collection of pots have been creatively arranged around the garden area with a combination of various plant species, all of which reflect his identity and soul. Figures 5.20 and 5.21 illustrate this garden’s character.

These perspectives, from the residents of Houses 6MC, 3MC and 12MC, are an expression of the characteristics of altered gardens as a symbolic platform for personal sentiments. Symbolic landscapes are normally associated with sacred areas, such as memorial and historical places, and less with dwelling landscapes. For example, Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi (2008) describe the symbolic landscapes in Australian memorial gardens. My study suggests that the everyday landscapes created by the residents in their
altered gardens synthesize physical and emotional expressions and enrich the qualities of meaningful living ambience. According to Cosgrove (1998, p. 19) landscape composition embodies “life events – with births, death, festival, tragedy – all the occurrences that lock together human time and place”. For the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object. Cosgrove’s notion supports my understanding that plants and their compositions symbolize the residents’ feelings for loved ones and are imbued with symbolic meaning.

Figure 5.20 Climbers, *Quisqualis indica* (Rangoon Creeper) that create a crown over the gates creating a sense of welcome and bestowing identity to house 12MC.

Figure 5.21 A combination of various plant species reflecting identity and soul in the garden.
5.3.3 THE HIGH-COST HOUSING RESIDENTS

Finally, fifteen (15) houses in Kinrara high-cost residential area were investigated. Data analysis for this particular housing scheme reveals a different phenomenon when compared to low and medium-cost housing areas. Very few residents in the high cost area removed the existing trees. The residents are delighted with the *Mesua ferrea* (Ceylon Ironwood) species in their semi-public landscape areas in front of their house compound. Analysis of data shows that this housing scheme has the fewest plant varieties with fifty-nine (59) plant species found within their altered semi-public spaces. Overall, 41 species were identified as having primarily decorative purposes while 18 species have utilitarian elements, as illustrated in Figure 5.22. Detailed plan-drawings on composition and placement of these plants in the altered garden are shown in Appendix III.

![Figure 5.22 Percentage of native and exotic species in an altered garden of high-cost housing scheme.](image)

Interviews conducted with the residents in the high-cost housing scheme revealed that landscape alteration performed in their semi-public spaces was more related to personal expression or as a status symbol. Only a few narratives of village landscapes were told. Their sentimental landscape values were derived from the satisfaction of making deliberate landscape alterations in semi-public spaces. As an example, resident of House 25HC explained:

Yeah…we would have agreed that a beautiful landscape in our outdoor space helps to reflect the inner condition of the house…That’s the reason why we’re willing to spend on the landscape. It is not worthwhile to only decorate and spend your money on indoor decoration, and leave the outside area unsightly and unattractive….it has to show the status of the house owner… (Original transcription)
And:

Oh…we’re so happy…happy to stay in the house…even the kids like to stay at home too…they seldom go out. We feel really happy to be together as a family. In fact, I feel happy to come back every day from the office…I’m proud to invite friends and relatives to come [to the house]…it’s so comfortable. I think this condition is crucial for my kids to feel happy and comfortable in their own house. In fact, I think they are more like their father than me. I like to see their attachment when they do gardening and clean the fish pond together. I’m more into cooking and decorating…none of them follows me…ha..ha… (Original transcription)

Figure 5.23 illustrates her garden in high-cost residential area.

Figure 5.23 A garden that represents home owner’s ‘status symbol’ in a high-cost residential area.

The resident of House 23HC explained that gardening is one of his ways of getting physical exercise. He shares his excitement after having created his ‘garden of inspiration’, the name he gave to his garden. I started our conversation by complimenting his personal effort in garden. He continued to explain that he could only manage to concentrate on this activity after retiring from work. He now has more time and passion to devote to the garden. He said:
He was very happy to receive a compliment from me. He said:

No, so far...you're the only one who has complimented my garden...never...This garden has been completed for more than seven years...but you seem to be the first to compliment...I think it's not in Malay culture to give compliments...But they will tell you if things aren't beautiful...that is the way they like it...this is from my [own] experience... (Original transcription)

I could sense from this particular conversation that the house owner was pleased to be praised for his hard work in the garden. He told me that gardening was one of the desirable ways for him to spend his time since his retirement, as he used to have extensive involvement with outdoor activities when he worked as a government officer. Rubeinstein and Parmelee (1992, p. 140) comment on such activities as “one of the ways of keeping the past alive and thus relates to the later-life tasks of maintaining a sense of continuity, fostering identity, and protecting the self against deleterious change”. Designing and maintaining a nice garden enabled him to foster an attachment with the garden which became a “symbol of good life” as discussed by Cooper (2006, p. 16). Figure 5.24 shows another garden that becomes a reflection of the respondent’s well-being in the high-cost community.
The resident of **House 17HC** had a different perspective on her embellished landscape. An opportunity to talk to the daughter, after her mother regretfully had to cancel the interview because of a meeting, was enlightening. Figure 5.25 illustrates the ambience of the garden at **House 17HC**. Figure 5.26 presents the personal landscape that was intentionally designed to connect the ‘altered’ and the ‘personal’ landscape. These relationships derived from the use of plants and its similar compositions in both of the personal and altered gardens.

Figure 5.24 Another garden that also represents a ‘status symbol’ in the high-cost housing scheme.

Figure 5.25 Landscape alterations made in front of House 17HC.
She said that she assisted her mother and the hired gardener with the landscaping. All the plants and their placement were decided by them, the gardener helped to plant them and continues to care for the garden. Sometimes they like to relocate a plant, in order to create a different ambience and to cater for each plant’s requirements. To them, these exercises are important as they have invited numbers of important business people to the house and entertained them in their personal garden.

She explained that:

Witnessing the trees growing up made us feel curious and excited. Like one of the plants that I bought. It looks like Oil Palm. It grows very slowly. We bought it last year, and the nursery people told us that we have to be patient as it grows very slowly. And my mom said, never mind, we’ll give it a try. And we care for the plant; we changed its locations a few times to ensure it won’t die...and we need to do this to give a different look to the garden. My father likes to invite his important business friends and entertain them in this garden... (Translated transcription)

And:
These examples from the respondents of Houses 25HC, 23HC and 17HC show that gardens were sources of personal enjoyment and satisfaction, while at the same time being used as platforms for social displays.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has dealt with the issues of memorable landscape that inspires the rural-urban migrants to ‘re-create’ their gardens in the semi-public spaces of urban residential areas. The gardens of the low and medium-cost residents reveal intimate weavings with the rural cultural landscapes that represent their identity and a sense of ‘rootednesses’. Indeed, the garden elements portray compelling cultural and religious characteristics and unveil a physical but also an emotional attachment to the place. On the other hand, the high-cost altered gardens focus on embellishment and decoration. The garden meanings and values embedded in the urban residential semi-public spaces will continue to be discussed in Chapter 6, entitled: The Functional Garden.
Walking through a landscape, we have the sense that the plants and animals around us have purposes of their own. At the same time, our sense of ourselves now has more to do with noticing how we are connected to the people and things around us – as part of a family, a crowd, a community, a species, the biosphere.

(Hiss, 1990, p. 22)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 103)
6.0 INTRODUCTION

My discussions in this Chapter begin with the landscape architect for the Subang Jaya Municipal Council’s view on the residents’ altered landscape:

So, the developers planted those trees [existing landscape], and the residents started to replace them with other plants such as Curry Leaf, Banana, Capsicum – then it becomes an orchard, and you are [the residents] not appreciating the [existing] landscape. It is better for the residents to not to grow anything and leave it with green turf, rather than planted the Pandanus…. Which was clearly, not the residents’ right. Therefore, we are [the local authority] responsible for those areas [the semi-public spaces]. (Translated transcription)

The above transcription revealed a strong disagreement on the part of local council towards landscape that has been changed by the residents. Altered landscapes were perceived as an ‘interruption’ rather than ‘effort’ that helped to beautify the residential settings. The utilitarian or food plants were considered as ‘messy’ instead of the ‘neat and nice’ of the ‘designed’ landscapes. Hiss (1990) in the opening quotation of this Chapter suggests that the everyday landscapes in urban residential areas embody ‘distinct senses’ which are ‘appreciated by the growers’, regardless of their ‘commonness’.

The discussion that follows in this chapter will explain how the respondents in low, medium and high-cost dwellings deal with the boundary issues in urban residential areas. The arguments unveil ‘distinct senses’ of the altered landscapes by focussing on their utilitarian functions and elaborate on the tangible and intangible values that the respondents ascribe to the semi-public spaces.

6.1 THE LOW-COST HOUSING

Rubeinstein and Parmelee (1992, p. 147) note that “personal identity transforms space into place, place shapes personal experiences”. This idea underpins my understanding of what drives landscape alteration by the participants – an attempt to transform dull spaces into meaningful places. The participants’ efforts in appropriating the existing landscapes in the semi-public spaces and modifying them can also be understood in terms of a perception of ‘boundary’. Maliki (2008, p. 47) describes the physical setting of a Malaysian village as an undefined compound of rural dwellings “interconnected into one another”. This interconnection creates a “transitional space that is changeable and negotiable” signifying
the informal land-use planning of the rural villages, in contrast with the formal and defined spaces in an urban environment. My previous research (Ismail, 2003) also discussed the unique phenomenon of “elusive-boundary” in rural villages - expressing residents’ collective understanding and strong relationships in the village. Fruit trees such as *Cocos nucifera* (Coconut), *Nephelium lappaceum* (Rambutan) and *Musa spp.* (Banana) cultivated by the residents in the semi-public and public spaces, are meant to be shared among them. Plants found in individual properties such as shrubs, ground covers and herbs that are utilized as sources of food, medicine and cosmetics, were also subject to sharing. In both situations, the plant materials played a significant role in linking the public and individual spaces while providing opportunities for the residents to spend leisure time with family and neighbours.

My study in low-cost housing areas reveals that the residents were greatly influenced by the characteristics of ‘elusive boundary’, as practised in the rural villages. The following discussions elaborate on this phenomenon.

### 6.1.1 A pragmatic transitional space

Technically, the location of semi-public spaces, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, demonstrates their appropriateness for use as a transitional area - from the public space, namely the road, to the personal space which is the house. This condition is best related to an analogy of a “house door” that acts as an element “uniting and separating” indoor (personal) and outdoor (public) spaces as discussed by Lang (1992, p. 206).

![Figure 6.1 An example of spatial provision in a low-cost housing area. In this case, semi-public spaces act as a transitional space between the public and personal spaces.](image-url)

PRIVATE

Personal house garden

SEMI-PUBLIC

Altered garden

PUBLIC SPACE

Road

Altered garden function as TRANSITIONAL SPACE
The above illustration demonstrates typical semi-public spaces in an urban housing area, which spatially unite the public and personal outdoor spaces. In much the same way, this space functions as a path from home to the outside world. Therefore, it was not surprising to learn that the residents sometimes planted a mixture of plant varieties with bushy foliage to create a vertical barrier between the public and personal spaces. In return, this offers a sense of privacy for the home owner.

The idea of semi-public spaces as transitional areas providing residents with a sense of privacy, is echoed by the resident of House 8LC, and is illustrated in Figure 6.2.

The resident of House 8LC mentioned that through her great passion for gardening, she discovered that plants can provide comfortable shade and physical barriers. This helped prevent direct sunlight entering the house in the morning and evening. She explained that for quite some time she used to have ‘plastic canvases’ hung out in her carport for protection from direct sunlight. As time went by her plants grew large and she found that this produced a natural soothing and calming effect. She took advantage of the foliage of these plants and decided to prune and shape her Bougainvilleas to form vertical climbers, replacing her existing ‘plastic canvases’ - and the result was described as follows:

Figure 6.2 A use of plants to create a sense of privacy.
Another example of semi-public spaces used as a transitional area was when the resident of House 18LC decided to put an a-la carte menu stall in front of her house. This was one of her ways of obtaining additional household income. Her stall operated on a daily basis, from 4:00 pm until late at night. I was intrigued by the way she utilized the space to serve this purpose. The personal garden was paved and used to locate her small stall whilst the semi-public space was created as a seating place for customers waiting for their orders. She was very fortunate to have her house located adjacent to the community playground and therefore it became a popular congregating spot for her neighbours, as shown in Figure 6.3.

![Figure 6.3 Utilizing semi-public spaces as one of the ways for obtaining household income in the low-cost housing scheme.](image)

While the majority of residents in the neighbourhood utilized their semi-public spaces as an extension of their gardening areas, an interview with the resident of House 8LC provided information about another function. When I first introduced myself, I was greeted and entertained at his ‘outdoor seating area’. He proudly told me that this contained semi-public space had been transformed into an extension of his indoor living area, as shown in Figure 6.4. He said that:

> With all these plants, I feel very comfortable as they allow air ventilation through the plant groves and even provide me with a good smell following the wind breeze, especially at night….It's so comforting… (Translated transcription)
I tend to like this space very much. You know...sometimes, it gets too hot to be inside the house, especially in the mid afternoon. So, this space is an option for us to go out to breathe some fresh air...I'm a heavy smoker and I use this space as my smoking area...It's also a good place to get together with neighbours... (Translated transcription)

Figure 6.4 This self-contained space created by the respondent from House 8LC is an extension of his indoor living area.

My second visit to House 8LC was much friendlier than the first visit. During my first visit, I was only entertained at his ‘outdoor living area’. During my second appointment, I was invited to come into the house and was entertained like one of his relatives. I started to understand the reason why I was entertained in the outdoor space in our first meeting. When asked about this matter, he admitted that his ‘outdoor living space’ was also meant to entertain his ‘new’ friends. Only after he felt comfortable, would this friend be invited into the house. And he continued:

I use this space to entertain my ‘uninvited guests’...You see, numbers of ‘mobile salesman’ can be seen around the neighbourhood every single day...You don’t really know them and for all you know, they might have negative intentions. So, I use this space to talk to them. I don’t invite them into the house...it’s too dangerous these days...My wife doesn't really like it...I sometimes invite my friends to chat and smoke cigarettes in this place after having my Maghrib prayer at the nearby mosque. (Translated transcription)

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18 Mobile salesmen refer to company representatives who approach customers door to door to sell various domestic products. Some residents were weary of them as they tried to sell cheap products at a high price. The salesmen also tricked their customers with “lucky draws”, which resulted in customers losing their money buying cheap products.
This practice was not very different from the social and cultural values practices of rural areas. The function of this contained outdoor space can be compared to the idea of the “guest area” and “personal guest area” in the traditional Malay house (Hashim et al., 2006), replicating the indoor spatial functions in the traditional Malay house (see Figure 6.5). Hashim et al. note that as a manifestation of privacy in Islam. The guest area was considered as a public domain to entertain particularly the male guests, and the personal guest zone was intended to entertain the female guests. Sometimes, the guest area was also used to entertain non-family members in a special gathering like kenduri (festive gathering) and the personal zone was meant to be shared with family members. Therefore, a self-contained space in front of House 81LC clearly showed the respondent’s adaptation in creating an outdoor social space as practised in the traditional Malay houses.

![Figure 6.5 Typical indoor spatial layout in the traditional Malay house in rural villages. Source: Hashim et al., (2006, p. 305).](image)

6.1.2 AN APPROPRIATED SPACE IN LOW-COST HOUSING

When discussing the altered garden in a low-cost housing area, I discovered that a number of respondents from low-cost housing schemes encountered difficulties in distinguishing between their ‘personal’ and ‘appropriated’ garden. I found that they actually integrated these two spaces as one, and utilized the appropriated space as an extension of their front yard garden. An example is shown by a keen gardener from House 51LC, who shared her needs to unite these two spaces:
Figure 6.6 illustrates plants in her garden that became the elements that unite the personal and appropriated garden. It was intriguing to note the organization of her plants in her effort to create a relationship between these two gardens. This garden was composed of smaller shrubs in the front part and these gradually increased in size approaching her chain link fences. She had very cleverly covered her fence surfaces with medium sized shrubs that included *Codiaeum variegatum* (Croton), *Saintpaulia ionantha* (African Violet) and placed a pot of her *Asplenium nidus* (Bird Nest Fern) on top of the gate column. A few hanging plants were also added to complete the overall effect. As a result the garden looked bigger than the original dimensions of the semi-public space would have suggested.

I was told during the interview that it was unsafe to leave a car outside the house’s gated boundary, especially at night. In this neighbourhood crime and vandalism, including burglaries, break-ins and stealing car electronic devices, scratching of cars as well as theft of car tyres, was prevalent. All these made the respondent feel insecure. For these reasons, residents preferred to pave their personal car porch areas so they can lock them, thus leaving no space for gardens.
The residents’ desire for bigger outdoor living spaces and gardening areas was clearly expressed during the interviews. The majority of the respondents who had migrated from the rural areas were familiar with the gardening culture through their childhood experiences. The participants therefore acted proactively by appropriating the semi-public spaces as one of the ways to resolve their gardening space constraints. The respondents adapted their surrounding spaces and used these ‘underutilized’ semi-public green spaces by changing their single aesthetic function, into multipurpose green areas as shown in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7 Typical changes made by residents in the ‘underutilized’ semi-public space in low-cost housing.

The effort of appropriating semi-public space and integrating it with a personal garden was also demonstrated by the resident of House 25LC. He admitted that his desire to have a bigger gardening space drove him to fully utilize this domain. He said that:

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19 To the respondents, planting the semi-public spaces with impractical species was perceived as ‘underutilizing’ the space potentials.
Modification of spatial organization represents the resident of **House 25LC**’s adaptation to the challenges of living in an urban low-cost housing scheme. The semi-public space continues to perform as a ‘functional’ transitional space between the public and personal domain. I was told that this extension of space would partly satisfy his dreams of having a bigger and greener garden.

These garden modification efforts by the participants express the notion of ‘repairing’ the existing ‘house’ condition, in the desire to create ‘a home’. Creating personal identity and shaping experiences in a home and garden facilitate physical and emotional bonds with place, in contrast to insensible, homogenous living spaces which are a common phenomenon in the globalization era (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008). Appropriation of the semi-public spaces is one of the respondents’ alternatives in creating “an appropriateness, suitability and congruence” with migrants’ “spatial, cultural and religious experiences” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008, p. 1) in low-cost housing schemes.

### 6.2 THE MEDIUM-COST HOUSING

#### 6.2.1 AN ACCOMMODATING TRANSITIONAL SPACE

Data analysis shows that respondents from the medium-cost housing scheme had similar approaches and attitudes towards semi-public spaces in their neighbourhood areas to those of low-cost residents. The majority of them modified their houses to achieve a bigger interior space, leaving only a small portion for outdoor green space, or sometimes ending up with no green spaces at all (entirely paved carport area). Those who lived in the corner lot or end lot units of the terrace housing were blessed with bigger green spaces as shown in Figure 6.8.
A quest for privacy appears to be one of the essential reasons for undertaking landscape alterations in medium-cost housing. I was told during the interviews that participants encountered less privacy in their existing house conditions. Responding to the high humidity level in this tropical country, they wished to have more freedom to leave their doors and windows open, especially during the daytime, without being seen. A semi-public space that included a tree, turf as a ground cover and chain-link fences did not cater for enclosed spaces. Local researchers, Hashim et al. (2006, p. 301) discuss this quest for privacy that is prevalent in Islamic perspectives. Maliki too (2008) highlights the significance of privacy in her study of migrants kampong landscape in Kuala Lumpur.

The resident of House 3MC shared one of her ways of achieving a sense of privacy by rearranging and positioning her potted plants to create a barrier and a ‘green wall’ that enabled her to have secluded spaces. This enclosed space enhanced her feeling of comfort and provided a relaxing ambience to enjoy gardening activities in outdoor areas without being seen, as shown in Figure 6.9. Her aspiration to have a ‘green wall’ was also synonymous with the concept of appropriate dress code required under Islamic rules and regulations.
My previous discussions have highlighted the respondents’ efforts in utilizing semi-public spaces as transitional areas. Besides this function, semi-public spaces that are adjacent to the residents’ properties enable the creation of social space with a neighbour. The gardening activities in the semi-public spaces were found to act as a ‘magnet’ pulling the respondents to come out from their enclosed property and enjoy the garden in the semi-public spaces. The resident of House 12MC found that gardening in this area offers great opportunities to make friends in the neighbourhood. He said:

I shared my plants especially with friends next door and other neighbours. Even sometimes with strangers..ha..ha..It's always like that, especially when I do my gardening and they pass by...we talk about plants and I ask them: Would you like to have some of these plants?..I made a few plant cuttings and gave them away...They promised to exchange these plants with theirs and placed them near my mail box, if I was not around. I think my gracious attitude paid off with healthy and blooming flowers in my garden. It’s rewarding... (Translated transcription)

On the other hand, there are a number of functions of this semi-public green relating to ‘separation’. It is common among the medium-cost residents to build concrete fences with decorative gates for security and at the same time, to embellish the house’s appearance. This gated and enclosed property area enhanced a feeling of privacy and would normally be used by family members. At the same time, some of the residents with a higher economic status would use this gated property to portray a sense of individualism, discouraging the residents from meeting each other and thus loosening their
neighbourhood qualities (Rasdi, 1999). Similar to Lang’s concept of a “door” (1992, p. 205), “doors close to tell me of my rejection or another’s isolation”. While most of the respondents in medium-cost housing enjoy upgrading these semi-public spaces to enhance their sense of privacy, the resident from House 15MC shared her different reasons for gardening in this area and Figure 6.10 shows a different approach to utilizing semi-public space as a separation element between two neighbours’ houses.

Actually, I didn’t really like my neighbour next door…this one… [pointing towards her neighbour’s house which was located on the right side of her house]…So, what I did was create a bushy planting effect that really divided our two spaces. In this case, we didn’t really see each other…

(Translated transcription)

![Figure 6.10 Bushy plants were intended to act as a vertical ‘green wall’ separating these neighbouring houses.](image)

The resident of House 14MC shared her own experience in relation to the transitional function of this semi-public space. She believed it was very important to have a green barrier in front of the house in the form of green bushes, rather than a single tree species. In her opinion, the more plants you have in this space, the more efficiently it can perform as a ‘green cushion’, in terms of safety and protection from vehicle accidents. She pointed to her neighbour’s house located on slightly higher ground and told me that one day this neighbour forgot to put on her car hand brake and, leaving her house gate open, she rushed into the house. Suddenly, the car went backwards down the slope and crashed into the participant’s altered garden area. She heard a very loud clattering noise. When she came out of the house, she noticed her neighbour’s car had bumped against her bushy plants. She
was relieved to see there was no one in the car and that the car had crashed against her
garden, leaving her timber fence and gate untouched. Figure 6.11 illustrates her bushy
garden that became a ‘green cushion’.

![A lushly planted semi-public space belonging to the resident of House 14MC.](image)

**Figure 6.11** A lushly planted semi-public space belonging to the resident of House 14MC.

### 6.2.2 AN APPROPRIATED SPACE IN MEDIUM-COST HOUSING

Technically, the medium-cost housing was surrounded with an ample green infrastructure
network, including better designed pedestrian walkways. Thus, it created a greater
interconnected green lung within the neighbourhood areas when compared to low-cost
housing schemes. Detailed observation in this housing scheme provided an understanding
that residents utilized these shared semi-public spaces as their ‘urban orchard’.

The shared semi-public spaces are comparatively bigger and wider than the personal semi-
public spaces that are located in front of the respondents’ houses. Some of the respondents
who live near these contiguous spaces, also known as ‘no one’s domain’ in the
neighbourhood, planted varieties of fruit trees, herbs and vegetables in this area. An
interview with the landscape architect of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council revealed that
the councils were acquainted with this phenomenon. Indeed, they had to simply ‘shut their
eyes’ to the alteration work done in these areas. They would take charge only if one of the
residents made a complaint, or in the case of any unsatisfactory events. They admitted that
this was one of the *kampong* or rural practices that exist within an urban setting. According
to Maliki (2008, p. 169) *kampong* elicited contradictory perspectives – both the
“picturesque” and “pejorative”. She explained that to some people, the greenery and the
serene and tranquil setting in the village was iconic and inspiring, yet, to some other people, it was a place of “underdevelopment” (Bunnell, 2002). I interpreted the local landscape architect’s view of *kampong landscape* as unsuitable to represent urban development growth. The informal characteristic of the ‘urban orchard’ was perceived as messy and disorderly by the local authority as discussed in Chapter 1. In contrast, the Chinese resident from House 6MC shared his garden passion and the satisfaction he derived from his cultivation of this particular green space as illustrated in Figure 6.12.

Emm…not only me, but my wife is also taking care of these plants…we intend to spend our time more productively, then to give some sort of exercise, and then plant vegetables and fruits for our own consumption. We plant Banana, Rambutan, and Coconut…we enjoy doing this…

(Original transcription)

When asked about the possibilities of sharing produce from his ‘urban orchard’, he said that:

I’m cleaning up the whole place… Without considering who are the owner of the site… Yeah….I really don’t mind. We help each other very well… Yeah…in fact, they come here, and pick up some of the plants and fruits. They came and took the Lime, if they needed a Ginger, then they’ll come here and pick them up. They would come and say, “Can you please give me some Ginger…I need it for my cooking…so, they just pick and they don’t have to buy. (Original transcription)

The National Economic policies (NEP) that were introduced by the Malaysian government merit attention with the rapid growth of the new middle-class communities, in the commercial and professional development (Nagata, 1980). My discussion in Chapter 2 elaborated on NEP in Malaysia. One of the aims of this policy was to encourage the migration of Malays to the urban areas. The rapid growth of the educational and professional qualifications of the middle-class enabled them to find rewarding positions in government and private practice. This economic growth has been reflected in their lifestyles - for example, most of the middle-class communities can afford more than one car for a household. The rising number of registered vehicles (an increase from 4,067,567 in 1990 to 10,843,890 in 2002) was discussed by the Malaysian Economic Planning Unit (2004, p. 33) in their document on Malaysian standards of living.

Unfortunately, the existing design of the medium-cost house units allows space only for one car to be parked in the personal carport area and the residents have to find ways to
safely locate other cars outside their property – and one of the best places is in the open shared semi-public spaces. Figure 6.13 illustrates the semi-public spaces which have been altered to provide for additional residents’ parking spaces. It can be seen in this picture that the residents have built personal carports adjacent to their house units. The residents then took charge of maintaining the spaces and planting plants that are required in their daily lives’ activities.

Figure 6.12 Single row of trees planted in the green buffer zone that now has been transformed into an ‘urban orchard’ by the resident from House 6MC.

Figure 6.13 A green buffer zone transformed into an ‘additional resident’s parking space’.

When I was on my way to visit the resident of House 2MC, I realized the spatial advantage afforded to her by living in one of the corner units of the neighbourhood. She
clearly had maximized this opportunity of having a bigger green space compared to her neighbours. Figure 6.14 illustrates the garden ambience that she refers to as a ‘dream come true’.

![Figure 6.14 Having a bigger garden in urban residential areas seems to be a ‘dream come true’.](image)

When asked about her garden extension she said:

Eemm….you know, I live in the corner lot and I actually have less privacy compared to my neighbours. Luckily, I’m a keen gardener and I am always keen to improve this garden area…I’m blessed with ample space even though it's outside my house compound. I think my effort can help to beautify our neighbourhood area. I want my neighbours to feel like entering into a residential garden as they pass by…because my house is right at the end of the street…And I really hope that everyone is happy. (Translated transcription)

6.3 THE HIGH-COST HOUSING

6.3.1 THE EMBELLISHED TRANSITIONAL SPACE

The residents in high-cost residential areas enjoy gardening in the semi-public spaces. My data shows that the majority of residents utilized this space as a transitional area along with ample gardening space in their personal territory. The landscape alteration output in these transitional areas was, however, more focussed on ornamental and exotic plants for appearance rather than for utility. Indeed, these transitional spaces used fewer quantities of
plant material with simpler landscape compositions when compared to other housing schemes.

The majority of respondents in this housing scheme considered themselves garden lovers. They expressed their passion for gardens and gardening through the immaculate appearance of their gardens. These gardens were typified by distinct soft and hard landscape compositions. An example of this landscape category is illustrated in Figures 6.15 and 6.16. This garden belongs to the resident of **House 25HC**.

![Figure 6.15 Landscape alteration in high-cost residential areas.](image1)

![Figure 6.16 Typical hard landscape elements in the garden of a high-cost housing community.](image2)
The resident of **House 25HC** and a few other residents informed me that they engaged professional landscape architects to help them during the initial design stages, and employed gardeners to continue with the maintenance regime of their house gardens, including the semi-public spaces. They admitted that they need to be advised, especially in terms of plant selection and garden design development. Furthermore, they also wished to include hard landscape elements in the design, including gates and fences, water features and garden furniture.

The resident of **House 20HC** was really excited to share her gardening experience in a semi-public space (see Figure 6.17). She was very enthusiastic when talking about this particular portion of her carefully tended garden, which she also used as a platform for social status. She felt obligated to continue to nurture this semi-public space as much as she cared for her personal garden. She said:

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Actually, this garden is very important to us and it serves like a ‘sheer curtain’. You know why? Because this part of garden is the first thing that people see before entering my house area. So, I want to have a beautiful ‘sheer’\(^{20}\) that gives impression about my house…In my case, I want to have a ‘simple sheer curtain’, but indulge with expensive materials…
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*(Original transcription)*

![Figure 6.17](image)

**Figure 6. 17 The resident of House 20HC described her garden as a ‘simple but expensive curtain’.*

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\(^{20}\) Sheer - an analogy used by the respondent to symbolize the two layers of window curtains. The first layer was referred to sheer curtains, which are characterized by lacy fabric, allowing outsiders some views of the house interior.
Semi-public spaces that have been transformed into residents’ transitional areas acted as platforms to express residents’ “idiosyncrasies and personal preferences” (Thwaites & Simkins, 2007, p. 37). Indeed, the majority of them expressed their desire to have a continuous and integrated garden concept in both the personal and privatized garden.

### 6.4 A UTILITARIAN GARDEN

Residential gardens that are both utilitarian and decorative are regarded as desirable by residents in urban housing schemes (Said, 2001a). Utilitarian gardening in this discussion means using plants that are utilized as resources for food, medicine, cosmetics and the provision of shade. Data analysis in my study revealed that (61%) of the plant species found in the low-cost housing scheme were utilitarian species. At the same time, (38%) of plant species available in the medium-cost housing were ranked in a similar category, with (25%) of the plant species in high-cost housing having the same usage, as shown in Figure 6.18. A detailed list of plants used in these housing schemes is available in Appendix III.

![Figure 6.18 Utilitarian and edible plants values in low, medium and high-cost urban housing schemes.](image)

This section focuses on the utilitarian aspects of the altered garden in urban housing schemes. The material from interviews and plan drawings enabled me to gain insight into the tangible and intangible plant values in urban domestic gardens. Thwaites and Simkins (2007, p. 37) argue that a domestic garden is “pivotally important”, but is rather “ugly when assessed against conventional aesthetic criteria”. The values of the everyday landscapes might be seen as insignificant to the environmentalist, designer and planning professionals, however these values are of great importance to those who live in that environment.
Previous examples described the value of these small and visually insignificant domestic gardens. Technically, the residents removed a single existing tree that was proposed by the landscape architect (the designer), approved by the local authority (the government) and planted by the developer, and replaced it by varieties that the residents (the users) preferred. Literally, this process of ‘transforming’ or landscape alteration in urban residential housing started with the removal of the existing trees or, in some cases, the trees were dying due to technical problems such as broken underwater piping or attacks by termites. The residents then continued to add to this space a variety of green and flowery shrubbery from time to time. The resident of House 20LC, for example laughed when asked about the existing tree planted in front of her house and she said:

I cut off [the existing tree] ha...ha... and I used its location to plant my Mango tree. That tree was not usable. So, instead of just looking at it, I cut it off...Furthermore, that tree was quite small and could be removed quite easily. So, I cut it off and replaced it with the Mango tree. Now, the tree has matured enough and I can eat its fruit...I didn't prefer something that was only 'nice' to be looked at...I needed a utilitarian species...
(Translated transcription)

A typical response from a participant to this issue was given by the resident of House 22MC:

Yes...there's one here. But when the developer planted them, some of them died off because of termites. Some of them died because of the electric wire. Some people cut them back because they didn't like them. They have too many leaves. Or they'd rather plant some fruit trees in front. Some people like trees and plants, some people don't like them [paved the area]. (Original transcription)

A participant who lived in House 1HC indicated that:
Ok, this is regarding to the existing trees in front of the house. Ok, this is a nice tree but I didn’t really know its function. This is because; the tree doesn’t spread out and unable to give shades to the area. And then, the leaves are big and difficult for me to sweep. And another thing is that, this tree is too dense, encouraging bees, insects and termites to be around. That’s why I cut off the tree and replaced it with a Mango species. Once I did that, the neighbours followed to do the same thing... (Original transcription)

My cross-cultural analysis indicated that the majority of respondents grew *Mangifera indica* (Mango) to replace existing trees. My previous research (Ismail, 2003) revealed that a Mango tree was among the handsome landscape specimens favoured by rural villagers for their house compound. At the same time, this species was able to provide good shade for their front and side gardens. It was perceived as one of the most desirable plant species to be planted in their garden besides the Coconut and other fruit trees. In the garden, adults always look forward to gathering and chatting in the shade of this tree, which usually has a *pelenggar* or outdoor seating bench under it (Maliki, 2008). They sit there in the afternoon especially, enjoying their tea time with the breeze blowing from nearby paddy fields. Children like to climb this tree, enjoying chatting among themselves while looking at the view from the top of the tree. See Figure 6.19.

Historically, the Mango tree originated from India and is referred to as *Mangaai* by the Hindus, who believe this tree bears resemblance to the *Prajapati*, the progenitor and of all creatures. The *Buddha* found Mango groves one of the most attractive places for meditation. The Malays fancy this fruit to satisfy their sweet and sour taste buds. Indeed, the fruit of the Mango is very popular and hailed as ‘king of fruits’, containing valuable vitamins, minerals, enzymes and antioxidants. For centuries, both Mango trees and their fruit have provided cultural and artistic inspiration. At the same time, it is also perceived as a symbol of love and life. Thus, the Mango tree historically was, and still is, one of the most valuable species as it can be used not only to provide shade and fruit, but is also rich in cultural and religious values. This explains why urban residents choose to replace the existing plant species with Mango trees in their housing areas.
Most of the participants in this study originated from a village and their passion for gardening reflects a sense of rootedness to the place where they belong, clearly characterized by their utilitarian urban domestic gardens. The resident of House 80LC reinforced this concept as illustrated in Figure 6.20:

Actually, my interest in gardening started from when I lived in the village. We planted Lemongrass, Ground Nuts and other utilitarian and edible plants; the ones that we need to use in our everyday lives. Then, when I got married and moved here with my husband, I continued to practise my gardening habits, trying to grow similar plants, but in pots and containers…it's not actually a garden…it's nothing actually… (Translated transcription)

This perspective implies that residents in low-cost housing were reluctant to claim their less decorated small plots that grew varieties of utilitarian and edible plants, as an actual ‘garden’. Low-cost housing residents presumed that a garden should be on a large scale with beautiful green areas embellished with ornamental plants. Therefore, the random selection and composition of their kampong (rural) species in a small urban domain was not considered as ‘the art of gardening’. To the residents, they were just continuing their kampong gardening habits that ought to provide for the family, while placing some ornamental plants in between. This is very similar to rural gardens. This understanding is underpinned by my own study, Ismail (2003) and Said (2001a) investigating the
characteristics of the Perak Malay rural cultural landscape. In both cases the rural gardens were “composed using organic planning, derived from an intuitive design and developed continually from time to time” (Ismail, 2003, p. 117). At the same time, the findings revealed the responsive characteristics of rural domestic gardens as resources for food, medicines, cosmetics, decoration and provision of shade as discussed in Chapter 2.

Conversely, residents in the medium-cost housing had gardens characterised by the use of ornamental rather than utilitarian plants. While the low-cost residents were placing ornamental plants in between their utilitarian and edible plants, the medium-cost participants actually did this the other way around, with a few ‘useful’ plants among the decorative ones. It was my impression that they were trying to ‘hide’ these kampong species behind the lushness of ornamental varieties. They enjoyed displaying their decorative plants as much as possible, under the shade of a Mango tree. Residents who lived adjacent to other semi-public spaces such as a green buffer zone were likely to grow their kampong species in this area, allowing their personal garden to be embellished only with the flowery species, as shown in Figure 6.21.

Figure 6.20 Typical utilitarian and edible garden in a low-cost housing scheme.
Appropriated gardens belonging to the high-cost residents demonstrated a total contrast. This garden was merely utilized as a space to express a beautiful and prosperous landscape, reflecting the social status of the house owner. Utilitarian and edible plants were less preferred in these types of gardens. The majority of the gardens in the high-cost residential areas were adorned with expensive ornamental plants, arranged in much a simpler design compared with other housing schemes. Indeed, the residents were willing to continuously change their planted species and redesign their garden according to the current landscape trends and designs as illustrated in Figure 6.22.

Figure 6. 21 Typical flower garden in medium-cost housing.

Figure 6. 22 A typical ‘beautiful and prosperous landscape’ in a high-cost residential area.
6.5 A THERAPEUTIC AND RESTORATIVE GARDEN

Landscapes and gardens are considered beneficial in terms of well-being. Regardless of where, and to whom the garden belongs, plants continue to assist in healing human physical and emotional conditions (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1987; Ulrich, 1986). Previous discussions revealed the fact that the garden was one of the residents’ important recreational spaces in urban residential areas. By definition, re-creation refers to “a temporary contact with nature” (Jackson, 1994, p. 89). According to Francis and Hestor (1990, p. 77), gardening can be regarded as a “refuge of leisure” or an escape from the “rat-race of life”.

The majority of respondents from low-cost housing repeatedly addressed the importance of being connected to a green environment. They related memories of living in a verdant village and wished to replicate these natural resources in their small urban domain.

I presented the perspective of the resident of House 19LC, who recreated a ‘natural forest garden’ in her domesticated territory in Chapter 5. When I visited her house, I was welcomed by the therapeutic and melodious sound of rippling water from their personal garden. Her husband worked hard to create a small cascading water feature resembling a natural waterfall in the village. This element was perceived as their major garden feature and was fast becoming a ‘conversation piece’ among their guests and visitors. She said:

We are really proud of our green garden setting, and we are happy to share it with others….It’s the symbol of my hard work. Everyday, when I return home from my office, my wife will serve our tea-break in this garden. At this time, my sight is pampered with greens, my sound is indulged with the rippling water, and I am touched by the blessedness of nature and tasting the fruit of nature…oh…I couldn’t ask for more….

(Translated transcription)

Similarly, the role of a garden as therapeutic and restorative was also shared with other respondents who did not have water features. The resident of House 5LC was very proud of her green and fragrant Murraya paniculata (Jasmine). She placed this plant species at the corner of her garden, following the natural wind direction which diffused the fragrant smell throughout her house compound, especially at night and early in the morning. The resident from House 20LC revealed his secret of a good life through working heart and soul in his garden, tending green shrubs and colourful flowers every day. He believed that gazing at a landscape like this was one of the best natural remedies for promoting better
health. In much the same way, the resident of **House 18LC** shared that her relaxing and therapeutic moments were when she was sitting under her established Mango tree, enjoying plants and flowers in her garden while looking after her children playing in the outdoor area.

Numbers of respondents in medium-cost housing schemes highly valued their gardens in a similar way. Indeed, the garden was perceived as their favourite pleasurable outdoor environment. Thus, they were willing to spend money to establish a good personal garden that included the connected semi-public spaces. This idea was expressed by the resident of **House 99MC** who engaged a landscape contractor to design their water feature. The soft landscape that surrounds her house areas however, was a result of her husband’s ‘green fingers’. She said that:

> Oooo…I like green because it makes you calm. And I have the water features over there. The water feature is calming...The whole idea is that you have something nice in green so that your house is very calming. In the morning when you open your door, that's what you want to see – the first thing to see. I like lots of green and then birds coming in the morning. Even squirrels and butterflies.... (Original transcription)

And:

> The sound is like..., it's like therapy. And this pond is actually designed by Terra garden\(^{21}\). So, before they design they actually measure everything and whether the location is suitable, they even look at the sun, where sun comes in for the plants. Only this part was done by the Terra Garden. The rest of the garden, and the outside 'entrance garden' were done by us....me and my husband... Actually, the pond is not meant to have a fish. But my husband just put some fish and he said it's nice and tranquil... (Original transcription)

The term ‘entrance garden’ used by the resident from **House 99MC** when she was referring, in particular, to her semi-public garden, is very appropriate. She felt that the distinctiveness of this space gave a first impression of her house, and at the same time acted as a continuation of her indoor, green setting. Thus, this space was planted with their favourite plants and she kept the garden well maintained.

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\(^{21}\) Terra Garden is one of the well-known local landscape contractors.
The resident of **House 22MC** believed that a tranquil environment was very therapeutic for humans. She said:

> I think my taste is similar to my father. We like the natural look. The natural look. It doesn't have to be nicely in rows and lying immaculate. It's difficult to cluster plant like that. You let them grow natural. It looks nicer and serene…. It's not too organized. It looks like in the jungle. Plants grow best in condition like that. You put plants underneath. It has shades. Let them grow wild and it's nicer (Original transcription)

She explained how she was amazed by the reflection of nature in her garden:

> Especially at night…when it rains… it's so calming. Especially when I put the water feature there, I can see a flash of water in the background and over the hedge of plants, it's very calming, soothing and then I just sat there with my computer. It's calming and relaxing… The plants next to it are nice. I've just planted it… (Original transcription)

In much the same way, the resident of **House 12MC**, deliberately chose gardening as his escapist activity, something to do and somewhere to go:

> I like to do gardening in the afternoon. I will go out to nurture the plants, and fertilize them accordingly. I will re-pot plants and weed and not realize how much time has passed by. I just couldn't stop doing it…it started with simple things like pulling out the weeds from the pots and things continued until it gets dark. This must have happened due to my passion for the plants…and time flew… you feel good to see plants grow healthily and you feel healthier too… (Translated transcription)

Engagements with gardens resulting in psychological and physical satisfaction were also experienced by some of the residents in high-cost housing. A number of residents who developed gardens by themselves, enjoyed working with the soil. They expressed satisfaction at seeing plants grow and this was a therapeutic element in their life. Those who employed gardeners or were assisted by their housemaid to help them care for their garden, enjoyed being outdoors and passionately loved their garden with its aesthetic and therapeutic benefits. Examples of these pleasures were shared by the residents of **House 1HC, House 9HC** and **House 17HC**.
The resident from **House 1HC** revealed that:

Yeah…I did the gardening myself…Some people may like verdant green plants and some others may prefer to have lushly flowery plants…But me myself, I like a combination of both…My friends came to the house and advised me to only use flower fertilizer on my Bouganvilleas, but I think…that's not me…I must have both…green leaves and colourful flowers…It looks much more attractive, appealing and relaxing…I'm satisfied to see plants grow in their natural form…It's healing and satisfying…I feel great to have this kind of garden… (Original transcription)

In her garden, which she had dug herself, she had introduced a new soil mixture to replace the existing ‘inorganic - after construction soil’ and planted her favourite plant varieties as shown in Figure 6.23.

![Figure 6.23](image)

**Figure 6.23** The garden of the resident of House 1HC.

The resident from **House 9HC** believed that an appealing garden managed to be the ‘anchoring’ space for everyone in the family. She said:
A couple from House 8HC who worked as a paediatrician and a physician in the medical specialist centre also perceived their garden as therapeutically appealing.

Every day, when people passed by the altered garden of the resident of House 10LC, they talked about the species exhibited in his garden. When I conducted this particular interview it's terrifying (Translated transcription)

6.6 A MEDICINAL AND COSMETIC DOMAIN

Alongside the physical and emotional advantages of the human and garden interaction, data analysis uncovered other intangible values existing in these urban gardens, namely the traditional medicinal and cosmetic values. Historically, our forefathers relied on traditional methods of curing sickness. This was due to the lack of medical facilities and services in the rural villages. These practices were basically discovered through a process of trial and error and developed and passed on to the communities by the previous generations. These methods however, revolved largely around various herbal plants and natural minerals. This section elaborates on the medicinal and cosmetic values in the semi-public gardens obtained through an analysis of detailed plan drawings and enriched with the understanding of the participants, through interviews.

Every day, when I conducted this particular interview
a few friendly neighbours stopped and joined us in our discussion. After being informed about the task I was doing, they admitted that this garden had a valuable traditional plant collection that helped to heal certain ailments. Indeed, this garden was referred to as a source of ‘alternative medicine’ by the neighbours. While his neighbours were talking, the resident of House 10LC nodded and smiled, showing his mutual agreement.

The resident of House 10LC revealed that his medicinal garden began when his wife was diagnosed with a number of health problems. They visited medical centres for a few years and at the same time, tried to establish the advantages of this ‘alternative medicine’ through plant properties. They even went to see the traditional Malay bomoh or shaman for advice. From there, they were introduced to traditional plants like Goniothalamus scortechinii (Gading Gajah), Orthosiphon aristatus (Cat’s Whiskers), Androganis paniculata (Hempedu Bumi) and Kaempferia galangal (Cekur). They started to plant them in their garden, together with other exotic plant species in an attempt to use these plant materials for medicinal purposes. My previous study on the Malay rural gardens revealed similar characteristics (Ismail, 2003). Witnessing its replication in urban residential areas however, provides an affirmation of this research finding. Figure 6.24 shows Orthosiphon aristatus (Cat’s Whiskers) in the garden, believed to be able to treat kidney failure, bladder stones and urinary tract infections.

A similar response was shared by the resident of House 20LC. When asked about the method of preparing traditional medicine using Orthosiphon aristatus (Cat’s Whiskers) plant, he said:

Yes, we’re using it for medicinal purposes and its preparation is actually very easy. All you need to do is prepare a cup of hot boiling water and soak about three to four leaves of this plant in it. Actually, once the leaves are soaked in the hot boiled water, you can see that the plain water turns to be yellowish, as if you’re soaking a tea bag. It’s like that… Wait for about five minutes, and this medicated herbal drink is now ready to be taken. I normally take this drink about three to four times a week. You can’t drink it everyday…it’s too hot for your inner body…. (Translated transcription)

22 ‘Alternative medicinal garden’ is referred to as the sources of plants used in the traditional ways to heal certain illness. This does not include conventional medicine offered by the medical practitioner.
While the husband enthusiastically explained his medical herbs drink, the wife shared her ‘anti-ageing’ and cooking secrets. She particularly referred to her *Kaempferia galangal* (Cekur) and *Cosmos caudatus* (King’s of Salad) in the garden, explaining:

> The Cekur plant…the leaves are used for cooking, and medicines. Also, I use it as one of my traditional ‘anti-ageing’ formulas. This is very good for post-natal women. If I cook ‘kerabu or urap’\(^{23}\), I will make sure to include these leaves as part of the ingredients. What I'll do is that…slice the leaves into very tiny pieces and mix with the other ingredients. It has quite a peculiar taste…not too bitter…It gives additional flavour and a tempting smell to the food. We also have the King of Salad plants…we eat it raw, as ‘ulam’\(^{24}\). This is also good for anti-ageing. I used the rhizomes of Cekur plant to heal twisted veins in my leg. I blend it until it turns creamy, and paste it on the twisted veins… (Translated transcription).

The Indian resident of the **House 57LC** was very proud of her *Azadirachta indica* (Neem Tree) for very good reasons. Firstly, this was one of the most important plants for Hindu communities. She told me that this plant was ordered to be planted in the garden by their Emperor Ashoka. Secondly, this plant was believed to be able to cure various symptoms of

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\(^{23}\) ‘Kerabu or urap’ is a traditional salad made of varieties of fresh and crispy raw vegetables. It is most popular in the northern part of Malaysia. The flavours include sweet, sour, salty and spicy dishes accompanying a bowl of rice.

\(^{24}\) ‘Ulam’ is a raw vegetable salad.
diabetes and give ulcer relief and was also used as a cosmetic ingredient. Besides that, the most popular reason for her neighbours to come and request its leaves were to heal ‘chicken pox’ fever and for gastric problems.

The resident of **House 55MC** revealed a few other traditional plants in her ‘traditional midwife garden’ as discussed on page 91 of Chapter 5. Besides *Vitex negundo* (Lemuning), *Curcuma domestica* (Turmeric) and *Piper sarmentosa* (Kadok), she had also planted *Lawsinia inermis* (Henna), *Morinda citrifolia* (Mengkudu), and *Cymbopogon nardus* (Fragrance Lemongrass) in her garden. She said:

> We used it [Henna] during the Malay wedding. It’s difficult to find it here nowadays...Besides that, It is also part of the ingredients for a post-natal treatment ...We need to take a handful of its leaves and boil them in plain water, it's good to include Fragrant Lemongrass, Pandanus, Mengkudu and Kadok's leaves...A post-natal women can use these herbs in water for bathing. It leaves a refreshing feeling, smells nice and is invigorating... (Translated transcription)

Well known as one of the tropical rain forest species, *Ficus deltoidea* (Mas Cotek) was very popular among the locals and was currently receiving international recognition for its medicinal values and health benefits (Abdullah, Karsani & Aminuddin, 2008). Besides this plant, *Phyllanthus niruri* (Dukong Anak) *Allomorphia exigua* (Sendudok) *Lesser galangale* (Kencur) *Ipomea batatas* (Sweet Potato) were among other traditional plants planted in the altered garden belonging to the resident of **House 14MC** and illustrated in Figure 6.25. Despite being one of the famous film actors in Malaysia, the resident of House 14MC admitted that he was quite ‘orthodox’ when it came to plants and gardens. He explained the importance of traditional medicinal plants in his garden to be used as sources of alternative medicine, without rejecting any conventional scientific treatment. He was very familiar with, and greatly exposed to, this kind of treatment through his father and great grandfather. He joked about his interest in collecting traditional plants and practicing alternative medicinal treatments, which was disapproved of by his wife who is also a popular film actress in Malaysia. He said:

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25 *Lawsinia inermis* (Henna) is a popular plant used for its colouring properties. A Malay bride never appears without her crimson coloured palm and fingers on her wedding day.
The resident of House 1HC believed that all plants had their own functional characteristics and these included their medicinal values. She wanted to learn as much as possible about plant values from the expert, especially from the local authorities. She said:

> That was the reason why my garden has to be outside [in the semi-public area] and her garden is inside...and she didn't even care for my garden...she thinks it's ugly and unattractive...ha...ha... (Translated transcription)

![Figure 6.25 A ‘medicinal garden’ belonging to the resident of House 14MC.](image)

The resident of **House 1HC** believed that all plants had their own functional characteristics and these included their medicinal values. She wanted to learn as much as possible about plant values from the expert, especially from the local authorities. She said:

> Another thing that I may suggest is that, developers and local authority to work together. They should provide the house owner with the information on the functional values of whatever plants were planted by them. Give us a simple manual on how to take care of the plants. ‘Mas cotek’ as an example. I realized that most of the plants have their own significant values. So, they need to share this with us. With the information, if lets say we have ten houses here, it is good enough if at least five of them take care of the plants (Original transcription)
And she explained how she used *Origanum vulgare* (Oregano) for its cooking and medicinal benefits:

> So, like Oregano underneath the tree. It's very easy to grow. I planted them here, around the tree bark and I can use it for cooking. I can use it to cook my spaghetti, and another thing is to heal constipation. I had a guest come to my house and he told me that he was having a constipation problem so I told him about the value of this plant and he was cured after taking seven pieces of Oregano leaves, for two consecutive days…it works…you see… (Translated transcription)

In short, the above conversations provided me with an understanding of the values of the traditional or native plant species available in urban domestic gardens. The residents of **House 10LC, House 20LC, House 55MC, House 14MC** and **House 1HC** have shown their passion for growing medicinal and cosmetic plants as part of the historical values that they inherited from previous generations. It was interesting to find out the residents’ ‘pharmaceutical’ products that are available right in front of their houses.

**SUMMARY**

The altered landscapes in semi-public spaces in urban residential areas were documented for their utilitarian, therapeutic and restorative values, together with their medicinal and cosmetic values, as shown in Table 6.1. This phenomenon enriched the understanding of the importance of altered gardens - not only to the house owner, but also for the landscape architect who is responsible in creating a sustainable living environment for communities. Data analysis in this chapter revealed landscape factors in altered gardens, which could possibly provide useful guidance for colleagues involved in the designing of, and decision making about property developments. My analysis revealed residents’ preferences for landscapes which are able to create a sense of belonging and attachment to their built environment, replacing the existing homogenous character of living estates. A practical implication of these findings is that developers re-think and re-evaluate landscape design in urban areas to cater for a more sustainable living environment and for the well-being of the end-users.
Table 6.1 Summary of the functional values in the gardens belonging to low, medium and high-cost residents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GARDEN FUNCTIONS</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
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<td><strong>Pragmatic</strong></td>
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<td>• Transitional space</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Safety and protection from vehicle accidents</td>
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The topic is a complex one, fraught with nuances and different expressions at various levels of social consciousness, but the existence of the phenomenon seems clear. One need not argue for some mystical bond of Blut and Boden, one need only point to the kinds of landscape images widely employed because they are assumed to convey certain meanings.

(Meinig, 1979b, p. 164)

(Ismail, 2003, p. 115)
7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the symbolic values reflected in the choice and arrangement of plant materials in the residents’ appropriated gardens in the urban residential housing area. Symbolic landscapes that represent cosmological paradigms could have never been figured out through plants’ physical characteristics. The analytical theme on symbolic landscapes came through in the interviews alongside other tangible and intangible plant characteristics discussed in the previous chapters.

The altered landscapes in urban residential areas are part of a symbolic interpretation of life – in the form of folk beliefs and myths represented in the cultural and traditional values belonging to the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia. In Chapter 2, I discussed the poetic writing of the Malay pantun, which represents the intimate relationship between humans and their environment. Pantun is one of the oral forms of expression in people’s daily lives and symbolizes the politeness of traditional Malay communities (Sew, 1997). Here is an example from Hamilton (1982):

Pucuk pauh, delima batu A ruby and a mango shoot
anak sembilang di tapak tangan a tiny catfish on my palm!
Sungguh jauh, negeri satu The world is one, though far to boot
hilang dimata dihati jangan when out of sight, keep memory warm

Another example of pantun or the “sound of Malay proverbs”, symbolically describes the love of a couple (Sew, 1997, p. 118):

Hilang dadu di dalam dadih Within the curds the dice are lost
dadih bercampur minyak lada sweet curds with oil of pepper fixed
Hilang malu kerana kasih Fond love my sense of shame has lost
rindu hati bercampur gila for love was e’er with madness mix

Al Mudra (2007) in his web site described pantun as “the most beautiful flower in the garden of Malay language and literature”. The first two lines of above two pantuns relate to the natural landscape elements, offering insights into the intimate relationships between humans and environment.
In this Chapter, I discuss the symbolic aspect of plants in the gardens of urban residential communities of Selangor, Malaysia.

7.1 THE GARDEN AS AN EXPRESSION OF PERSONALITY

Limited research has been conducted to date on the relationships between human personality and landscape preference (Abello & Bernalez, 1986; Maulan, Mohd Shariff & Miller, 2006). Data analysis in my study however, revealed some insights on this issue. The resident of House 12MC for instance, expressed his belief in this concept:

Yes...Lots of plants here and I have more plants inside [personal garden]...I always believed that gardens reflected the owner's personality. Like my garden for instance, maybe if a person passed by my garden, he would say, ‘see, there's a lot of plants in this garden, it looks calming and relaxing...maybe, the owner's personality is just like that too, calm and friendly’... (Translated transcription)

He thought that his time spent in the garden was one of the best ways to meet and communicate with his neighbours; having a short chat before the Maghrib prayer (Muslim’s sunset daily prayer) or maybe something as simple as greeting, smiling and nodding to each other. The resident saw this as a means of social interaction in the neighbourhood, thereby creating a bond between people. In his opinion, lack of interest in gardening in the semi-public spaces in particular might reflect an unfriendly and unneighbourly attitude. A similar phenomenon was referred to as “distancing” by Mannarini et al. (2006, p. 211). Mannarini explained the connection between image of neighbourhood and a sense of community. She associated the idea of “distancing” with a “poor sense of community”, reflected in the residents who possessed a “weaker emotional bond with their neighbourhood”.

The resident of House 12MC believed that a house without plants (totally paved areas) reflected a stiffness and an unfriendly ambience. He was comparing his garden to some of his neighbours’ who showed less interest in gardening; he referred to them as ‘reluctant gardeners’. A reluctant gardener would normally spend most of their time indoors and he perceived this introvert attitude to be unfriendly. This respondent told me that living in urban areas demanded that more time was spent in the workplace as compared to living in the village. Thus, they had limited opportunities to visit each other in the neighbourhood. To him, tending the altered garden meant one had to be outside the house which also allowed greater opportunity for social interaction. He continued to share his perspective
regarding human personalities and creativity, which could be fairly represented by his garden composition:

Yes…deep in my heart, I always believed that, ‘a garden is a reflection of the house owner’….My neighbours sometimes dropped by and said ‘hey…you're so creative’… I laughed and replied…’come on…I'm only doing gardening’…ha…ha…They even invited me to do some ‘make-over’ works for their garden (Translated transcription)

A personal connection between the garden and the resident of House 12MC’s artistic career was apparent when he informed me that some of the plants available in his garden were used as part of the hantaran elements. A hantaran is basically a set of gifts that, according to custom, must be prepared by the bride and groom for their wedding day. A sirih junjung (decorative Piper Betel) is the most important hantaran to be presented to the bride, along with wang hantaran (dowry) and other valuable items during the akad nikah (solemnization) as shown in Figure 7.1. A typical example of sireh junjung is illustrated in Figure 7.2 and perceived as the ‘head’ of a set of hantaran, symbolizing an artistic expression of the Malay traditional art and culture. He gave examples of the names of the plants such as Jasminium sambac (Jasmine), Rosea cultivars (Rose), Bougainvillea Elizabeth angus (Bougainvillea) and Piper bitel (Betel Leaf), that were among the most important leaves and flowers that he used to decorate his sireh junjung. At the same time, the folded Piper Betel leaves carry a meaning of ‘unity and love’ and symbolize humble gifts from the groom and vice-versa.

This respondent mentioned to me that he used to work in one of the government offices. After some time he decided to take an early retirement plan. This decision helped him to focus on his passion and creativity in creating and decorating hantaran for wedding ceremonies. It was important to reflect this particular creativity in his garden, as his customers sometimes approach him at home. He gave the example of one of his customers who came to discuss their hantaran and praised his garden:

I can still remember…one of my customers passed by this garden to come into the house and I. Said oh...’you're a very creative person, this is a very nice garden, I like it so much’…I’m sure my hantaran is going to look good…ha…ha… (Translated transcription)
The resident of House 3MC was another home owner whose personality was reflected in her garden. That she was a ‘garden lover’ was my first impression during the interview. She explained that she took meticulous care of her plants, and invested effort in the tidiness and cleanliness of her garden. We discussed the idea of a garden possibly reflecting one’s personality. She believed that her garden reflected a personal characteristic inherited from

Figure 7.1 A typical example of a set of hantaran as a special gift to the groom in a Malay wedding.
Source: http://www.ayield1809.fotopages.com

The white roses symbolize true love and purity

The dried piper betel, together with other cooking spices placed together on the folded Piper Betel’s leaves as a symbol of ‘love and life’.

Figure 7.2 The sireh junjuny arrangement made of traditional leaves and flowers. This is the most important groom’s gift in a Malay wedding as a symbol of unity and love.
Source: http://www.cikjahonlineflowers.blogspot.com

The resident of House 3MC was another home owner whose personality was reflected in her garden. That she was a ‘garden lover’ was my first impression during the interview. She explained that she took meticulous care of her plants, and invested effort in the tidiness and cleanliness of her garden. We discussed the idea of a garden possibly reflecting one’s personality. She believed that her garden reflected a personal characteristic inherited from
her late mother but she realized that some of her neighbours disagreed with this. The respondent’s mother advised her that:

> Tending a garden is part of our way of life. So, if you’re a lazy person, it’ll be reflected by it. If you’re a diligent person and very determined in what you’re doing, then your garden will definitely be its literal reflection…

(Translated transcription)

As time passed by, she noticed that her plant collections and the garden’s composition was so much ‘her’:

> I think it's personal identity in it, I think my loving and caring personality inspires me to choose to plant more green and leafy plants…I’ve always preferred to grow lots of leafy plants…Yeah…but still, I do have a few flowery plants though …but not that many…When I see green, I can feel its calmness...its serenity and green to me means 'growth'...reflecting lots of love in my heart… (Translated transcription).

![Figure 7.3 The resident of House 13MC believes her tidy and well-cared for garden is an expression of her diligent personality.](image)

The resident from **House 13MC** believed that some people refused to accept a correlation between the nature and characteristics of a garden and personality. When asked about this, she gave three reasons as to why she thought people were quite reluctant and unwilling to perceive a garden in this way. The first notion related to the nature of the residents’ upbringing in the village. Some of her neighbours replicated the utilitarian concept of a traditional Malay garden in urban areas; the aesthetic parts of these gardens were given less
focus. Thus, these gardens may not look ‘pretty’ yet are functional as in the literal meaning that to “landscape” is to “prettify” (Lewis, 1979, p. 11). However, this interpretation is contradicted by Helfand et al. (2006, p. 230) who argue that “yards incorporating native plants can be as attractive, or even more attractive, to homeowners as conventional yards [which] do not include native plants”.

The second reason is related to the lack of time available for residents to focus on their garden. The profile of the Malaysian family has changed in the last two decades as more women engage in professional careers and both men and women spend more time working extra hours in the office. Thus, the urban residents have less time to garden. Most of the professionals rely on their housemaid’s assistance to grow plants and herbs in the garden. Their gardens therefore, cannot be considered as an expression of their personalities, as they were created by someone else.

The third reason related to the scarcity of green spaces and the small size of the semi-public spaces which provide fewer opportunities for residents to explore the aesthetic aspects of house gardens. For most of the residents, this was considered a disadvantage in comparison with the spacious house compound they used to have in their village. The respondent’s argument suggested that residents who consider their garden unattractive and unflattering may be reluctant to accept the interpretation that a garden is an expression of the house owner’s personality.

A garden that reflects an individual’s characteristics has been referred to as “biography of landscape - focussing on the role of individuals in the making of landscape…requires greater particularity…as to persona in the landscape” (Samuels, 1979, p. 81, emphasis in original). A landscape as persona might supports ideas discussed with the resident of House 18HC. She helped me understand the concept of a garden as an expression of the homeowners’ personalities:
These influences were reflected in her preferences for a formal and flowering garden arrangement as illustrated in Figure 7.4. Both the husband and wife worked in a hospital – a well organized environment. Their garden was also organized systematically in a formal arrangement. I wondered whether their preference for this type of garden was related to the environment in which they worked.

![Figure 7.4 Collections of colourful Bougainvilleas helped to create a cheerful ambience, expressing the personal identity of the caretakers.](image)

7.2 THE GARDEN AS A PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL STATUS

A domestic garden is a reflection of various meanings and values imbued with precious memories and appreciated by the homeowners with love and passion. Cooper (2006) perceived a garden as a symbol of good life. Mohd Rejab (1994) explains that the Malay gardens were the outcomes of human expression and a symbol of human relationship with the living environment. The Chinese community belief is that a garden created in
accordance with *Feng Shui* principles brings prosperity and auspiciousness (Said, 2001b). To the Indian, the garden is sacred and needs to be worshipped to bestow well-being (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008). Besides these symbolic interrelationships portrayed by the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, the garden may also reflect the way residents utilize semi-public spaces as platforms for social expression.

The resident of **House 2HC**, for instance, believed that her manicured personal and altered gardens were one of the ways in which her social status was reflected:

> Yeah... a beautiful landscape in our garden helps to reflect the inner condition of my house...and we don't mind spending on the landscape. I think it's not appropriate to only decorate the house [indoors], the outside garden shouldn't be looked at as an unattractive space....it reflects the 'position' of the house owner… (Translated transcription)

In addition to her garden acting as places to manifest social status, the respondent described the other garden functions of her garden, namely as a place to entertain friends, families and also as a place to conduct social celebrations.

> Everyday, when I come back, I will see the landscape… I feel so good to have this kind of setting around the house… I love lingering in my garden, having tea with friends and families...I even had my daughter's birthday party a few months ago in this garden, it's so exciting and the event was memorable... (Translated transcription)

In Malaysia, a house garden party such as a birthday celebration, a garden wedding ceremony, or a garden entertainment party were among the British Colonial influences which reflected wealthy lifestyles, as these events are more expensive compared to those held in indoor areas. The high-cost community members who are blessed with large house compounds can easily realize such garden events, while the low and medium-cost residents have limited green spaces in the terrace housing schemes. Most importantly, garden events reflect a western cultural influence and are described by the local communities as a symbol of prestige (Pinches, 1999).

Figure 7.5 illustrates the characteristics of a personal garden belonging to the resident of **House 2HC** in which she celebrated her daughter’s garden party. During this particular event, she utilized her appropriated garden spaces as an extension of her personal gardens. She hung up bunches of colourful balloons and ribbons in this area. At the same time, she placed an attractive flower trellis archway as a welcoming symbol to her invited guests.
The flower girls, who also acted as ushers, carried a basket full of gifts, and patiently waited for the guests in this altered garden.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 7.5 A part of the personal garden belonging to the resident of House 2HC where she celebrated her daughter’s birthday party a few months before the interview.**

The garden as a status symbol was also reinforced by the resident of **House 17HC**. Having a beautiful and spacious house garden was her pride and joy. I was informed during the interviews that this family, at one time, used to live in an exclusive multistorey condominium and had a small balcony garden which was attached to their home. They enjoyed common gardens that included swimming pools, playgrounds and other recreational facilities that were meant to be shared with other condominium residents. Thus, moving into a new bungalow house provided an opportunity to enjoy her own garden. Figure 7.6 illustrates the garden that belongs to this participant:

> Before this, we stayed in the condominium, so, not much landscape works could be done and we had to share gardens and other recreational facilities with other residents. So now, we’re moving into our new house, with our own [house] compound. I feel so peaceful. I’m very proud of my garden. The sound of rippling water from the fountain is so peaceful…My friends came and said that this garden was so big and beautiful…I’m so happy…. (Translated transcription)
In brief, the conversation above provided an understanding that ‘a big and beautiful house garden’ is a symbol of social status. At the same time, this garden also reflected the tastes and preferences of the house owners and represented their personal self-expression.

The resident of House 17HC continued:

We removed that plant [the existing tree] because it didn’t suit the overall landscape design ideas of this house. My mom didn’t really like it as it was not her taste. So, during the making of this garden, we removed the tree and planted another species. This garden is very important for my father as he likes to invite lots of friends to discuss their business and to entertain them in this garden (Translated transcription)
Timber woodcarving is another traditional craft practised by the Malay communities. Woodcarving is “the art of partially removing wood from a board or plank following specific motifs and orders” (Said, 2005, p. 17). This woodcarving symbolizes the intimate relationship between carver and environment and at the same time acts as a symbol of social status. The human-environment relationship is reflected in the carving motifs, which depict the aesthetic values of a plant’s flowers and leaves as shown in Figure 7.7. Some of the craftsmen prefer to utilize Quranic calligraphy as their carving motifs. Traditionally, these artistic pieces were part and parcel of the palaces’ architectural decoration or embellished elements in aristocratic houses and mosques. Besides these aesthetic values, decorative timber woodcarvings served as artistic ventilation panels, increasing the architectural beauty of buildings while reflecting the social status of the building owner (Ismail, 2003).

Two houses in the medium-cost housing area had carvings with traditional motifs. The resident of House 22MC was proud to have modern concrete decorative panels, a modernized symbol of traditional arts and crafts, that were attached to the exterior house walls, gate and fences, as illustrated in Figure 7.8. Having these panels attached to the exterior walls displayed a house owner’s higher social status, as these elements were costly in the market. The panels reflected traditional attitudes or a sense of pride in the Malaysian art and cultural values.
The resident of **House 12MC** displayed his inherited traditional woodcarvings, that he used as a decorative fascia board\(^{26}\) around the house as illustrated in Figure 7.9. I was told that the fascia board was a special gift from one of the respondent’s relatives and originally attached to a traditional timber house in the village. This historic carving was passed on to him from the older generation as an appreciation of his interest in culturally-related areas such as plants and architectural elements.

\(^{26}\) Timber fascia board is usually hung horizontally along the gutter to give nice finishing for the rafter and is used in traditional aristocratic buildings.
These two examples suggest that modern Malays continue to perceive ‘carving’ as part of their symbolic status, which is reflected in their house and garden’s hard landscape decorations.

7.3 THE GARDEN AS A REFLECTION OF ETHNIC TRANS-CULTURAL VALUES

FOREVER AS ONE

“Moments of truth, We’ve learned to be,
Just like a bird, Flying so free,
Learning to love, Learning to give,
With all our hearts in peace we believe.
And from the river of dreams, To this garden of truth,
Shines flame that will burn, with the spirit of love,
Let all the people remember our name, they’ll be singing in praise,
Let’s join our hands, the time has come,
The world should see, we’re together as one.”

(Silk, 2002)

The above excerpt is the theme song for the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games (Kuala Lumpur 98) entitled ‘Forever as one’ (Bersatu Selamanya). This song was composed to demonstrate our national pride in living in a healthy multi-ethnic integrated society. The Malaysian Government’s determination to ensure a peaceful, multi-ethnic country is relevant to my study. My study findings indicated; first, landscape alteration in semi-public spaces in urban residential areas supported good relationships in multi-ethnic communities; and second, altered landscapes produced by the residents’ reflected a sense of patriotism and both of these characteristics support Malaysia’s ongoing determination to be a united nation.

A garden belonging to the Indian resident of House 57LC, for example, expressed a sense of ‘patriotism’. Her abundant collections of Hibiscus species - the Malaysian National flower - dominated the plants grown in her semi-public space. She was content with her five Hibiscus hybrids that bloomed in five different colours. When asked about the special qualities of these plants, she said:
I would like to further discuss the idea of patriotism reflected in this garden. This Indian participant asserted her belief that plants in her altered garden - one of the most important parts of her house compound - could help in manifesting feelings of pride and national loyalty. A similar sense of patriotism was also displayed in a garden of the Malay resident of House 5LC (see Figure 7.10) and both of these respondents would never forget to hang the national flag in this location during the annual National Day celebration held on the 31st of August.

Figure 7.10 The Malaysian flag was hung in a garden belonging to the resident of House 5LC, to reflect her sense of patriotism.

My interview session with the Chinese resident from House 6MC also helped me to further understand the ethnic integration issue. He said that it was crucial for all ethnicities, namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians, to get together in cleaning the semi-public spaces adjacent to their houses to promote a more integrated living environment. He expressed his disappointment with the local authority which he said was unable to provide good services in cleaning and maintaining this semi-public zone. He said:

ha...ha...not really...I just want to express my pride in being a Malaysian citizen. You see, Hibiscus is our national flower...Planting it means you’re very proud of your country. At the same time, these plants are very beautiful, blossoming with five colourful flowers in my garden. Every one who passes by will always look at it...it's stunning and attractive. It makes my garden look cheerful at all times...I’m very proud of it... (Translated transcription)
This positive effort apparently helps to promote a stronger relationship between all communities in the neighbourhood. The resident of House 6MC told me that he was born and raised in a village environment. Thus, the idea of local community effort is a practice he brought from the Malay village to the urban environment. My previous research, Ismail (2003) discussed one of the events practised by the Malay communities - namely a gotong royong (community spirit) - where the villagers get together to clean and maintain the village environment. This is one of the most awaited celebrations, especially for the children, when they are allowed to play freely in the village from morning until afternoon. No one would be at home on this festive day. It was a joyful outdoor day for the villagers.

Another situation that highlights a unique relationship, and at the same time reflects the influences of integration amongst ethnicities in Malaysia, was recorded in the inventory plan of the garden belonging to the Chinese resident House 69LC. Among all the plants in her garden, I was intrigued by a few plant species that were closely associated with the Malay and Indian communities. Examples of these plants include Murraya koeginh (Curry Leaf), normally used by the Indians to cook their curry dishes, and as part of their religious ceremony. At the same time, she planted Piper bitel (Betel Leaf) and Manihot esculenta (Tapioca) which are prevalent in Malay culture. Her Chinese culture was represented by the most popular ornamental plant, Adenium obesum (Desert Rose). The Chinese community believe this plant symbolizes prosperity. Besides that, she grew Citrus aurantifolia (Citrus Lime), perceived as one of the most important elements in the Chinese New Year Celebration. The branches are normally used to hang small red envelopes called ang-pow containing a certain amount of money, as shown in Figure 7.11. This plant is associated with good health, longevity, business growth and career success (Said, 2001b).
When discussing plants that were closely associated with other ethnicities such as the *Piper betel* (Betel Leaf), she said:

No…I didn’t use these Betel Leaf…My husband brought it home, he said a Malay man gave it to him…and he planted it in this garden. But we didn’t use it…my neighbours…the Malays like to eat Betel Leaf leaves…so do my Indian neighbours…So, I gave it to them…they really like it… (Translated transcription)

With regard to the *Murraya koeginii* (Curry Leaf), she explained that:

“Yes… I cook curry…well not only the Indians and the Malays cook curry though…My grandchildren like to eat curry with rice, especially the chicken curry. So, I planted these Curry Leaf plants. I don’t have to buy it from the market…Indeed, this tree doesn’t grow very well as I keep picking its leaves…ha…ha…” (Translated transcription)

Examples of trans-cultural values were also manifested in the garden belonging to the Indian resident of *House 84LC*. In Chapter 4, I described her garden as representing an Indian cultural tradition, especially through her planting of *Saccarum officinarum* (Sugarcane). Besides this structural plant however, I discovered this participant had also managed to plant a few other species closely associated with the Malays. As an example, when asked about the Pandanus species in her garden (see Figure 7.12), she told me that *nasi lemak* (rice cooked with coconut milk) was one of her family’s favourites, and that was the reason she needed to have this species in front of her house. Indeed, she said that
*nasi lemak* could never be cooked without the Pandanus leaves being added. The smell was irresistible. Besides this plant, she also planted *Centelia asiatica* (Pegaga), *Manihot esculenta* (Tapioca) and *Sauropus androgynus* (Sweet Leaf), a collection that reflected Malay utilitarian plants (Ismail, 2003).

Another interesting idea was shared by the Malay resident of House 80LC. Her house was located in the same row, but four units away, from the house belonging to the Indian resident of House 84LC. The Malay participant explained that the Pandanus species planted in her garden were obtained from her Indian neighbour’s garden. Her neighbour had a large Pandanus grove and gave her some to be planted in her garden area. Besides that, she also had *Lawsonia inermis* (Henna), which was acquired from her other neighbour’s garden. She admitted that most of the plant species in her garden were the result of ‘exchanging’ with a few neighbours, regardless their ethnicities. This reflected a sense of integration amongst the neighbourhood communities. She explained:

Yes…This Pandanus was given by my Indian neighbour [the resident of House 84LC]…It used to be very small…I planted it here and *Alhamdulillah*…it grows really well…I also have Henna in between. The Henna was also obtained from one of my neighbours. We share most of the plant species. I asked for some of my neighbours’ plants during my visits to their houses. And they came and asked for plants that they didn’t have in their garden…emm…that’s how it is… (Translated transcription)
She continued to explain that these plant exchanges were only conducted within their circle of close friends in this neighbourhood, sometimes with family members who lived in other parts of Selangor. Occasionally, plants were a gift from families in the village to be grown in her urban garden. Thus, having similar plant materials reflected their strong relationships and at the same time, was one of their ways to propagate plants. As an example, if one of her plant species was dying, she could request similar species from her close friends or family and re-establish the species in her garden. Small, semi-public gardens also acted as their shared nursery, providing a symbol of ethnic unity and integration.

In much the same way, the idea of replicating plant materials was discussed by Julien and Zmyslony (2001, p. 338) in their study of anthropogenic environments. They referred to this replicated phenomenon as ‘mimicry’, a reflection of positive relationships within the neighbourhood communities. This exchanging plant exercise may also be connected to kampong or rural practices. Maliki (2008) and Mahmud (2004) explain that community organization in the village is based on kinship and reflects strong interaction values; a place known as one where “everybody knows everybody”, rather than simply a geographical location (Maliki, 2008, p. 38).

This common practice of exchanging plants among the urban residents is related to ethnicity as well as religious and cultural values. The Malays, as an example, abide by Islamic principles and practise the relationship between Man and his Creator known as Hablun Minallah and a relationship between humans referred to as Hablun Minannas. At the same time, a budi concept underpins the Malay culture. Budi embodies virtuous qualities that include generosity, respect, sincerity, righteousness and discretion (Storz, 1999). Thus, the idea of exchanging plants is considered as Ber-budi.

The Indian belief was that plants resembled their gods and goddesses. Their micro sacred gardens “are reminiscent of the landscapes from their past in their native India” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, p. 7). The idea of sharing and exchanging was derived from their ritual offerings when they used strings of flowers and fruits, preferably from their garden, that would be distributed to those present (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, p. 7). The Chinese practised Feng Shui, a belief in Taoism and a principle that emphasizes humans and nature living in harmony. The idea of giving and exchanging was symbolized in one of their prominent cultural celebrations, namely the Chinese New Year, when the giving of ang-pow the ‘red envelope’ tradition of blessing and good wishes (discussed in...
(Said, 2001a).

7.4 MYSTICAL AND TRADITIONAL VALUES EMBEDDED IN THE GARDEN

The history of Indian heritage in Peninsular Malaysia was discussed in Chapter 2 and has been documented for more than two millenia. The traditional Malays were strongly influenced by animistic and polytheistic beliefs, prior to the arrival of Islam in the thirteenth century (Larsen, 1996). The history of Malacca, on the west coast of Malaysia, reveals that its first ruler, Parameswara, converted from Hinduism to Islam in the fifteenth century. By the seventeenth century, Islam was the dominant religion of the Malay Peninsula. From then until now, the Malays have abided by the rules of the Islamic revival – that is, to believe in only one God, Allah. Islam prohibits the belief that plants, forests, seas and other physical elements of nature also had their gods.

The impact of Indian history has, however, endured in various cultural traditions of the Malaysians, particularly in the Malay and Indian communities. These intercultural influences are clearly reflected in the Malay and Indian wedding ceremonies, as illustrated in Figure 7.13. These two pictures illustrate typical Malay and Indian brides in two different wedding ceremonies. The Henna art painting on both of the brides’ hands and palms, symbolizes their intercultural assimilation into the Malaysian communities. Thus, the Lawsonia inermis (Henna) planted in the Malay and Indian respondents’ gardens indirectly symbolizes this cultural assimilation.

Another symbol of cultural diffusion can be seen in these ritual practises. The traditional Malays’ animistic beliefs are that elements of nature contain their own immanent force known as semangat (vital force) (Larsen, 1996). Larsen pointed out that the traditional rural Malays used to believe in two major spirits that related to the land and the sea. For example, fishermen believed that boats, nets and other fishing tools contained a vital force that helped them in their economic activities. At the same time, a ritual called puja pantai, or a special offering to the sea spirits, was one of their annual celebrations to appease the spirits. This tradition however, was found to be similar to the idea of Puja rituals of the Indian community. By definition, this ritual is referred to as the “act of showing reverence to god, a spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs and rituals” (Tortora, 2009). These rituals created an intimate connection with the divine and
facilitated an enduring respect for the elements of nature, sculpture, vessels, or painting (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2008; Tortora, 2009). In brief, the Malay animistic beliefs were greatly influenced by the Hindu religion and practices.

There were examples in my study that could be perceived as being rooted in these traditional beliefs and practices. Larsen (1996, p. 7) suggests that “people continue to believe, at least periodically and to a certain degree, in the existence of forces and spirits with intrinsic power”. When the resident of House 3MC discussed her Citrus aurantifolia (Citrus Tree), Azadirachta indica otherwise known as Pokok Semambu by the Malays, and called a Neem plant by the Indians, she said that:

Figure 7.13 Typical Malay and Indian brides never go out without decorative henna on their hands and palms.


There were examples in my study that could be perceived as being rooted in these traditional beliefs and practices. Larsen (1996, p. 7) suggests that “people continue to believe, at least periodically and to a certain degree, in the existence of forces and spirits with intrinsic power”. When the resident of House 3MC discussed her Citrus aurantifolia (Citrus Tree), Azadirachta indica otherwise known as Pokok Semambu by the Malays, and called a Neem plant by the Indians, she said that:
The idea of respecting the trees in the above transcription coincides with the traditional animistic beliefs that were once practised by their ancestors. The Malay traditional ancestors believed that their lives were closely intertwined with nature for sustenance as well as for spiritual and emotional comfort. They respected the natural world of the seen as well as the unseen (the supernatural realm). My discussion of one of the traditional Malay folk tales, *Batu Belah Batu bertangkup*, in Chapter 2, described this situation. According to the story, these beliefs helped the Malay traditional community to survive in the hostile environment. The Islamic resurgence however, diminished these practices and understandings. A Muslim believes in the almighty Allah and accepts the idea that “certain other non-human forces are present in the environment, which is not contrary to the scriptures” or the *Holy Quran* (Larsen, 1996, p. 7).

Generally, modern educated Islamic Malays have discontinued these traditional animistic beliefs. A life not shaped by belief in cosmological power was shared by the resident of House 12MC, when he talked about Bamboo in his altered garden. He shared his childhood experiences in his village that had exposed him to both the tangible and intangible aspects of this living environment.

While pointing to the Bamboo species, he admitted that an older generation in the village would not approve of this Bamboo being planted in the front part of his house’s garden area. He was informed by his parents that the Bamboo species was closely associated with a supernatural spirit. Thus, the older people forbade this plant, or its related species, to be planted in front areas and believed they should be far away from one’s house compound. Besides this, he could still remember one of the famous Malay films produced by the Show Brothers in 1966, during his childhood times, entitled *Misteri Anak Buluh Betung* or

Yes...I used to have a Citrus tree. It was really big and healthy. One day, a lady came to ask for its leaves that she uses for traditional medicinal purposes. Actually, I really don't mind sharing it with people, but I had one condition; she had to pay for them. On another occasion, someone came to request the Semambu leaves, and at that time, I just gave them away... and that tree died soon after. You know, I believe that one needs to pay for them. They cannot be given away for free...they need to pay, even if only ten cents...Yesterday, I had one of my neighbours come and ask for this Pokok Semambu to cure his grandson's fever....I told her to place some coins under the tree. That's the condition. Put some coins under the tree, I'm not concerned about the amount...we just need to respect the trees... (Translated transcription)
literally meaning ‘the mysterious big Bamboo’s son’, as shown in Figure 7.14. In brief, this film portrayed the story of a childless royal family who found a crying baby in the middle of a Bamboo grove in the forest. The king took this baby and raised him in the palace with lots of love. This ‘mystical son’ grew up and turned out to be evil, at once daring to kill the king and the queen. In the end, this son could never be killed with any weapons - only a sharp Bamboo pole was able to take his life. This story, produced in 1966 a few years before the initial ethnic tensions - the ‘bloody tragedy of May 13, 1969’ (which I discussed on page 22) could possibly have embodied political issues to do with ethnic conflicts between the Malays - symbolized by the royal family - and the Chinese represented by the mystical son in the Bamboo grove (bamboo species is prevalent in the Chinese community).

![Figure 7.14 A poster of the film Misteri Anak Buluh Betong or ‘A Mysterious Big Bamboo’s Son’, which symbolized supernatural and political values in the Malay community.](http://www.filemkita.com)

On the other hand, the resident of House 12MC expressed a rational understanding when he said:
He explained that the modern community no longer believed the traditional tales regarding the Bamboo species and, in fact, a Bamboo species named *Pleioblastus argenteostriatus* (Japanese Bamboo), as shown in Figure 7.15, is planted by the wealthy as a symbol of prosperity and longevity. On the other hand, this landscape trend could be one of the influences of the Chinese community who believe that a Bamboo tree signifies a harmonious relationship between man and nature. Bamboo, that symbolized the Chinese and was categorized ‘evil’, has now been accepted by the Malay, reflecting the success of ethnic integration.

![Bamboo plants as an important element of garden decoration in a high class community.](http://www.feedmelah.com)

The resident of House 12MC shared another traditional humoral belief related to his *Oxalis iron cross* (Good Luck Plant) as shown in Figure 7.16. Traditional Malay humoral
beliefs described two principles, namely the hot poles (Malay panas) and the cold poles (Malay sejuk) that are essential for a healthy and satisfactory life. These qualities are also associated with individual and social values (Tuschinsky, 1995). This participant explained the mystical incidence of his *Oxalis iron cross* plants, that died after being touched by people with ‘hot poles’:

This plant...the Good Luck Plant or the Iron Cross Plant people call it...I used to have 12 pots of it in this garden...It was really beautiful...it catches everyone’s eyes...But I simply didn’t know why, they’re dying just like that...I can still remember an old person saying...if people with ‘hot poles’ touch these plant leaves, then the plants will slowly die one after another...Well, I didn’t really know...and I didn’t really want to believe in this...but when people came and saw these plants and touched them, of course I didn’t know whether this person has ‘hot or cold poles’...I couldn’t stop them and these plants started to decay...one by one...dying... (Translated transcription)

![Figure 7.16 The Oxalis iron cross (Good Luck Plant or Iron Cross Plant).](image)

In much the same way, the resident of **House 18MC** expressed his disbelief in traditional animistic values. His house, which was located on the corner adjacent to the neighbourhood mosque, had always been busy with people, especially during the Muslim prayer times. During my visits to this house, I was attracted to the big and healthy

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27 According to traditional humoral beliefs, the “respiratory ailments or digestive upset are believed to result from a humoral imbalance, either to the hot or the cold polarity” (Tuschinsky, 1995, p. 1590)
Platycerium suberbum (Staghorn Fern) in his altered garden as shown in Figure 7.17. This plant was nicely placed on his Mango tree, becoming an art piece of his garden. The big bunches of Staghorn Ferns, with their droopy leaves that nearly reached the ground, invited extra attention from people passing by. He explained that this plant was obtained from one of the Oil Palm plantations, near his village in Pahang, on the east coast of Malaysia.

Figure 7.17 A big bunch of Platycerium sporohytes (Staghorn Fern) that always invited extra attention from the passers by.

He told me that people in the village might perceive Platycerium suberbum (Staghorn Fern) to be one of the favourite nesting places of ‘evil’. He explained:

People in the village thought that this plant was among the best as a nesting place for evil...they would normally hang around the droopy leaves...relaxing under it or sometimes even using it as a swing [to play]...But I don’t believe in such ideas. I was thinking only about its aesthetical beauty and a kind of reflection of village settings. In fact, this plant is very easy to care for and it needs a certain level of shade to make it healthy and bloom beautifully ...that could be the reason why it looks quite mysterious. (Translated transcription)

The resident of House 18MC also believed that the Staghorn Fern is a symbol of hard work. He explained that this plant could only be found on top of the Oil Palm trees. One needed to climb up the tree in order to get it. Also, it was not an easy task to bring it down. To him, only a person with a strong desire to keep this plant would risk taking it out of the plantation. Thus, to him, this plant is unique and exclusive.
The resident of House 16LC was introduced to me by one of his neighbours (an example of the snow-balling method). The neighbour was referred to among the residents as one who performed distinct landscape alterations in semi-public spaces. During the interviews, the resident of House 16LC talked about the cosmological generic values of plants in his garden, which I would never have been able to understand without his explanation. He started by talking about his extraordinary Jungle Orchid obtained from Gunung Ledang, one of the mysterious virgin forest mountains located in the north of Malaysia. This mountain is closely associated with the Misteri Putri Gunung Ledang or literally ‘the mysterious Gunung Ledang princess’. He explained to me that this plant was one of ‘theirs’. ‘Theirs’ referred to a spirit of the non-material world, and he explained that not everyone was entitled to be honoured with this kind of species. Indeed, he was proud to have had this orchid blooming in his garden, which, I was told, was a rather unusual occurrence.

He continued explaining that the other mystical plant in his garden, namely the *Curcuma caesia* (Black Turmeric), was among the rare traditional plant species similar to the ordinary Yellow Turmeric that people normally used in their cooking, cosmetics ingredients and for medicinal purposes. This uncommon plant species was believed to have belonged to the non-material world. I was told that the Black Turmeric was, indeed, a totally black rhizome - from the outer to the innermost parts of it, as illustrated in Figure 7.18. It was believed to have ‘extra properties’ that were able to cure certain illnesses in traditional medicinal practices. It was also an important element for the shaman, in order to communicate with the supernatural beings.

![Figure 7.18 A *curcuma caesia* or Black Turmeric.](http://karimon.wordpress.com/2008/12/16/kunyit_hitam)
The resident of **House 19LC** explained that:

The Black Turmeric…I used to have a few, but they’re missing now. Well, you really need to take good care of this plant; I usually guarded this species with the ‘Quranic verses’, to protect them from the Devil. Well, if not then, it will be gone, taken by the Devil…these species were among their favourites to be used as their eye liner…My father used to tell me that human beings may be able to see a ‘ghost’ if they used Black Turmeric as their eye brows, ha…ha…But I’d never tried that…it’s just my personal recollection from my ‘unseen friends’… (Translated transcription)

The mysterious *Epiphyllum anguliger* (Bakawali or Queen of the Night) was his favourite species in the garden. He told me that this plant can be planted by anyone, but an opportunity to see its flower could not be guaranteed. He explained that this plant was believed to be ‘sacred’ in the Malay traditional communities. This plant (which hardly ever blooms) only blooms if it has a ‘mystical connection’ with the plant grower. It was the belief that this plant will die when its planter passes away. Besides that, I was told that the Bakawali’s flowers bloom for only about three hours. The flower starts to blossom at 10:00 pm and subtly effloresce until 12:00 am. This flower withers immediately once the sun rises. The Malays believe that these flowers are guarded by the ‘unseen’ during their blooming time.

Besides these Malay beliefs, the Chinese adored this plant as a symbol of prosperity and good luck. They would normally grow this plant in their personal territory and tie red ribbons on each of its broad leaves. Indeed, this plant required good maintenance. The well-kept and blooming Bakawali signified prosperity and a bright business future. On the other hand, the uncared and dying plants represented bad luck and poverty. The Indian community was not excluded from showing a great respect for this plant species. The resident of **House 57**, for example, perceived the Bakawali plant as having a resemblance to a snake and associated this plant with Lord of Shiva, one of the main deities in the Hindu religion who holds a coil of snakes in his upper arms and neck to symbolize power he has over the most deadly of creatures. She informed me that she had witnessed her Bakawali plant blooming a few times in her garden and this symbolized prosperity and good luck. A typical example of the Bakawali plant is illustrated in Figure 7.19.
SUMMARY

The altered landscape in urban residential housing embodies distinct physical and emotional concepts; it also has multiple traditional and mystical meanings – meanings which can not be unveiled by just looking without discussion with the owners. Analysis of the symbolic aspects of the altered garden suggested that a personal domestic landscape could mirror the house owner’s identity. In one example, the nice and well-kept garden symbolized a diligent and caring personality. Another example revealed a person involved in a creative industry expressing his artistic interest and passion through his garden. This chapter also elaborated on the residents, especially in the high-cost housing scheme, who displayed their status through the immaculate appearance of their garden. They organized outdoor events utilizing both the personal and semi-public spaces to conduct prestigious celebrations. Indeed, having a landed property with a big garden is a symbol of prosperity and wealth. The altered neighbourhood landscape created by the communities who had no design background also acted as a shared community nursery, reflecting close-knit relationships between the three ethnicities, namely the Malays, Chinese and the Indians. They exchanged plants while sharing their gardening experiences. Gardens were also one of the platforms utilized by the residents to express their sense of patriotism, an exhibition of national pride. Besides these values, some of the participants indicated that their altered landscapes were shared not only with human beings, but also with the non-material world.
A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance.

(Ingold, 2000)
Ingold (2000), in the above quotation asserted that ‘place’ is an outcome of humans’ direct participation, attention and effort, a product of physical and emotional insight which, in turn, connects residents with their distinct living environment. Martin Heidegger (1971) asked, “Do the houses themselves hold any guarantee that dwelling occurs in them?” and George Herbert, the English poet from the early seventeenth century, wrote “You maybe on land, yet not on garden” (Helphand, 2006, p. 2). Both these quotations suggest people’s activities and creativities are involved in changing feelings of home into dwelling and land into garden. My fieldwork observations revealed that semi-public areas in urban neighbourhoods would only be ordinary green spaces without the residents’ involvement in modifying these spaces into meaningful gardens. My analysis indicates that the landscape alteration performed by residents in low, medium and high-cost residential areas was one of the ways of creating a distinct personal living niche – creating a dwelling instead of a house as discussed by Heidegger - developing a garden rather than land as noted by George Herbert.

My discussion in this chapter is divided into two sections; the first focuses on residents’ ideas about developing a physical and emotional bonding with their newly developed housing areas - known as “place attachment” (Altman & Low, 1992). The second section elaborates on the social interaction derived from the gardening activities carried out in these semi-public spaces. This interaction has facilitated the development of strong social relationships and meaningful bonding between the three ethnicities in the neighbourhood, namely the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities.

8.1 PERSONAL ATTACHMENT TO PLACE

Landscape alteration in urban residential areas can be considered as a process, expressing “a feeling of possessiveness an occupant has towards a particular territory because of its association with self-image or social identity” (Brower, 1980, pg. 192). The majority of semi-public spaces located next to residents’ personal territories were appropriated as part of their house compounds. This could be the result of a rural migrant’s shift, and necessary adaptation, from a spacious house compound in a rural village setting to living in an urban environment. My previous research (Ismail, 2003) in rural environments revealed that residents maximized the function of semi-public spaces surrounding individual territories.
as part of domestic cultivated areas by planting *Manihot esculenta* (Tapioca), *Musa paradisica* (Banana) and *Cocos nucifera* (Coconut). Similar findings were presented by Maliki (2003) in her research in a Malay village. Maliki identified the concept of an “ambiguous” individual territorial boundary, seen as unclearly structured to outsiders, but well defined by the insiders. Overall, the village setting represents the concept “free of boundaries” (Maliki, 2008, p. 45).

The idea of “ambiguous territorial boundary”, discussed in Chapter 6 and further elaborated in this section, could be one reason for urban residents engaging in landscape alteration in semi-public spaces in urban housing areas. Many respondents expressed feelings of belonging to the semi-public spaces and appeared to have difficulty in distinguishing between gardens as individual features and semi-public areas – which they perceived as one, as illustrated in Figure 8.1. This may represent their close relationships to the appropriated spaces which they had converted to gardens. Brown (1987, pg. 153) describes a similar phenomenon relating to the concept of “human territoriality”:

> The primary function of human territoriality, in addition to the regulation of the social system, is assumed here to be the expression of individual and group identity. The identifying function is expressed not so much in the form of occupancy and control behaviours but in the personalization of space, which results in the formation or intensification of affective bonds between the occupant and the territory.

(Brown 1987, pg. 153)

Brown’s concept of “human territoriality” in urban residential housing is illustrated in Figure 8.1.
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The majority of respondents interviewed for this study expressed particular individual feelings towards their altered garden including satisfaction, pride and a sense of achievement. I refer to the garden that evokes these special feelings as ‘the apple of my eye’, meaning “figuratively it is something, or more usually someone, cherished above others” (phrasefinder.co.uk) or also known in the Malay proverb (simpulan bahasa) as permata hatiku. A Malay proverb is a unique expression used in the community everyday conversation, enriching meanings and values. The resident of House 5LC for example, shared her feeling of contentment following several compliments about her garden. She saw this as personal encouragement for her to continue to nurture plants in the garden. This small appropriated garden personalized her passion for gardening:

Yes…I love gardening…it is just unbelievable…I’m happy, it looks green and healthy. I always receive compliments from people who pass by my house, they say…’oh, your garden is so beautiful’…In fact it makes it easier for others to recognize my house, especially my friends. I normally describe my house as the one that has lots of plants… (Translated transcription)

She further explained that her interest in gardening developed from her childhood days in the village. The demands of being a single mother did not prevent her from gardening even...
though sometimes it required hard work. She said that tending a garden with love and care was very important, not only for her, but also for her two daughters who she hoped would inherit this passion – just like her mother, who spiritually inspired her to be a keen gardener (see Figure 8.2). She holds on to the Malay traditional belief that having a nice, well kept garden symbolizes personal diligence. She was laughing while explaining her own experience in the village with regards to gardens and Malay weddings. She told me that an unmarried woman who likes to tend a nice house garden was much more admired by the gentlemen in the village, as this young lady was associated with an attentive personality. She continued:

Well…in past times in the village…we were restrained by our parents and we were not allowed to have partners during our teenage times. So, what happened was that…whenever we heard an eligible bachelor had come back to the village, ladies would never miss doing gardening in the front garden, especially in the afternoon as this gentleman would slowly ride on a bike, around the village in order to find his ‘life partner’ and then inform his mother to proceed with solemnization. This was the reason why the front garden must be kept well at any time…ha...ha... (Translated transcription)

Figure 8.2 Landscape alteration that reflects a personal connection between the resident and garden.

The resident of House 8LC explained that her passion for gardening enabled her to ‘personalize’ her garden space, creating an attachment to the newly developed housing area.
I brought these plants from our previous house. It’s good to have them with you, instead of starting new ones that will take a long time…So, I brought my plants because I love them so much, I planted them since they were very small… and now my established Bougainvilleas are blooming with various colours and people start to refer to my house as ‘the one that has lots of Bougainvilleas’…ha…ha… That was fun… (Translated transcription)

Figure 8.3 The resident of House 8LC proudly standing in front of her ‘Bougainvillea Garden’.

My conversation with the resident of House 16LC indicated that the satisfaction, pride and contentment experienced in tending a personal garden help to instill a sense of attachment through the associated emotional and physical connections. This feeling was shared with friends and family members and described as follows:

People like to praise my Hibiscus…its flowers bloom all year round and have never stopped since the first day it was planted…birds drink nectar from these flowers…And we shaped these plants to look like an umbrella. My kids were happy when their father put up some sparkling lighting on it…they suggested the idea to decorate our garden during last Eid\textsuperscript{28} celebration…they said its just like a Christmas tree and everyone was happy. My neighbours and friends who visited us during last Eid season enjoyed taking photos in front of our sparkling trees…I’m very proud of it… (Translated transcription)

\textsuperscript{28} Eid celebration marks the end of Ramadhan and the first day of Shawwal. Ramadhan is the Islamic holy month of fasting while Syawwal is the first day of breaking the fasting period.
The idea of a psychological connection to space was discussed within Place and Identity theory. For example Twigger-Ross et al. (2003, p. 206) argued that “to produce uniqueness or distinctiveness for a person, continuity across time and situation and the feeling of personal worth or social value” was important. The resident of House 20LC shared this perception and explained that landscape alteration was an important activity that developed a distinct bond with his living space. He said:

I feel good and happy...I am satisfied...when I reach home, all the tiredness is gone. It is an endless satisfaction. It give me happiness, surprises...especially when you tend the garden, and you just feel like...oh...this plant is flowering...and you suddenly have the feeling of being greeted by all the plants and flowers...isn't it exciting?...
(Translated transcription)

The above description supports the notion of restorative feelings discussed by Thwaites, Helleur, and Simkins (2005). Landscape elements in the appropriated garden owned healing qualities and were multiply-sensed through, smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. The resident of House 20LC believed his altered landscape was able to uplift and stimulate his physical and psychological wellbeing. Every day, flowers that bloomed in his garden were among the first things he saw when he got home from work.

An Indian participant from House 57LC revealed a sense of attachment to her garden in accordance with her religious perspectives. Figure 8.4 illustrates her house garden that is perceived as a ‘Hindu’s sacred garden’ and she passionately nurtured ritually significant plants in this area such as, Ocimum sanctum (Thulsi), Mangifera indica (Mango), Curcuma domestica (Turmeric), and Azadirachta indica (Semambu) and Hibiscus rosa-sinensis (Hibiscus) as they were among the significant plants used in Hindu religious ceremonies. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2008) describe the importance of a garden as part of Indian cultural and religious values. The participant said this about the significance of her garden:

We have all the plants that are required for religious purposes. We have Thulsi plant that we need to use in our prayers. Mango leaves are very important to us. The Turmeric is also used in certain prayers. We also use Semambu plants for prayers. Besides that, its leaves can be used to cure chickenpox disease. Mix the Semambu leaves with Turmeric and use it for the bath. It's a good remedy. I like my garden to be this way. It supplies my everyday needs. I don't have to buy it. I don't have to ask for it from other people either... (Translated transcription)
8.1.2 AN ALTERED GARDEN IN MEDIUM-COST HOUSING: ‘A THING OF BEAUTY IS A JOY FOREVER’

According to Giuliani (2003, p. 154):

Territories are classified as primary, secondary and public in terms of occupancy and defense, as well as psychological centrality: primary territories are better able to express individual identity and are characterized by stronger feelings of attachment, while secondary territories tend to express a social or group identity.

(Giuliani, 2003, p. 154)

Some of my findings reinforce these ideas. I refer to the participants’ feelings of satisfaction and pride in medium housing areas with the phrase, ‘a thing of beauty is a joy forever’. This feeling is referred to by the locals as *keindahan itu adalah untuk selamanya*. For example, the resident of **House 22MC**, when asked about the fact that her house that looked different from others, said:

I think it is my own feelings in it. When you look at it, you can see what kind of person I am. I'm a neat person. I have my own creativity. These are all my own creations. And then my friends, neighbours have followed. These are incentives to me. So, she has done her house the same as mine. So, other people also appreciate what I am doing. It's my creativity and they are enjoying it. (Original transcription)
Figure 8.5 illustrates a comprehensive landscape alteration made by the resident of House 22MC in her appropriated garden area. The plant selections include *Cryrostachys renda* (Sealing Wax Palm), *Ficus benjamina* (Waringin), *Phyllanthus myrtifolius* (Mousetail Plant), *Dracaena fragrans* ‘Lemon Lime’ (Dracaena) and *Asplenium nidus* (Bird Nest Fern) – and were among the forest species planted in her garden. This reflected her passion for a natural landscape:

I think my taste is similar to my father. We like the natural look. The natural look… It doesn’t have to be nicely in rows and lying immaculate. It's difficult to cluster plant like that. You'll have to let them grow naturally. It looks nicer. It's not too organized. It looks like in the jungle. Plants grow best in condition like that. You put plants underneath. It has shades. Let them grow wild and it's nicer (Original transcription)

At the same time, the resident of House 22MC expressed her sense of pride when her neighbours and friends praised her house and garden decoration. In fact, she was content to have a few of her friends and neighbours duplicate her creative endeavour. She said that:

I hope it will help. Other people come to our garden and say that ‘I want to do a garden like this’. So hopefully they will do that, and appreciate the garden. I hope I give some ideas so that they can copy and make them look nice. It gives me encouragement. (Original transcription)
Landscape alteration performed in the semi-public spaces of the medium-cost housing area complemented the personal garden in expressing the resident’s identity. Residents decorated their semi-public gardens with combinations of ornamental and utilitarian species. The ephemeral gardening process evolved from the moment of planting the seedling to the maintenance of each of the plants – a process which required both patience and passion. This process created an attachment between residents and their gardens, as explained by the resident of House 99.

Yeah…in a way… I like something that is green and…emm…because if you do something, you must have passion and patience. I’m a very patient person, and you must be consistent, with full patience, and I’m the one who does not give up easily…if one plant dies off, then it’s fine with me…I’ll do it again… You know, I’m a person who doesn’t give up. Because apart from gardening, I do painting… (Translated transcription)

Figure 8.6 Landscape alteration developed in the semi-public spaces contributes to the greenery in the neighbourhood.

In brief, the idea of planting utilitarian species reflected residents’ adaptation to living in an urban environment. Having ornamental plants accentuated the garden’s appearance, symbolizing the prosperity of the medium-cost residents. At the same time, the altered landscapes reflected residents’ feelings of rootedness in the rural settings they came from and provided a way to instil a sense of belonging to their current living spaces.
The feeling of attachment was described by the two Muslim participants, namely the residents of **Houses 3MC** and **15MC**. They explained that an intimate relationship with plants in the garden was perceived as part of their religious practice. To them, gardening activities carried out in the morning and afternoon were not only important for their physical exercise, but emotionally connected them with their Creator. The resident of **House 3MC** explained:

> Definitely...we need to say prayers even while digging the plant holes. We did the same thing while putting soil into the pots. We pray to *Allah* so that our plants will grow healthily, producing an abundance of quality fruits, to be eaten by anyone in the future. Nurturing the plants from time to time makes you feel closer to *Allah*... make you realize of *Allah’s* graciousness... (Translated transcription)

The resident of **House 15MC** shared her experience of a ‘sacred garden’. She experienced pleasure sitting on the house balcony located on the first floor, viewing her altered garden while performing her *zikir* – a type of meditation bringing her closer to *Allah* and the Prophet (see Figure 8.8).

> This is my favourite spot in the garden. I will always take an opportunity to sit here while *zikir* to the gracious *Allah* and our Prophet. I am in union with *Allah* when I look at the plants and greenery. I enjoy looking at the birds and butterflies near the plants...it's just so calming... (Translated transcription)
8.1.3 AN ALTERED GARDEN IN HIGH-COST HOUSING: ‘AS BOLD AS BRASS’

Data obtained from the interviews with high-cost area residents indicated that the majority of these residents preferred to grow plants directly in the ground, as shown in Figure 8.9. Altered gardens that were established naturally in the ground and embellished with expensive plant materials reflected a stylish design creation and were appealing in their own way. I refer to this approach with the phrase, ‘as bold as brass’ meaning something ‘bold and attractive’ or seteguh besi waja. The captivating garden appearance could help to invoke stronger feelings of belonging to, and possession of, the semi-public spaces located next to the residents’ personal territories. At the same time, this planting approach reflects a sense of confidence in appropriating this space even though residents were fully aware that this area was the property of sovereign authority. Belk (1992, p. 38), who raises the issue of “possession”, identified “three ways in which possessions can become a part of the self”:

……Objects must be perceived as part of us when we master or control them, as in mastering a musical instrument…..[how] an object may become a part of self is through creating it…. [how] an object may become a part of us is by knowing it…

(Belk 1992, p.38)
The following interviews with the high-cost participants reflect Belk’s idea of “possession”. The idea of “mastering” was expressed by the residents House 17HC when she decided on a suitable landscape character and continuously enhanced her semi-public area. Both the mother and daughter possessed a sense of control in this space:

Yes, my mom and I decided on the landscape for that area too [showing their altered landscape area]…we have changed the plant arrangements many times, just to give a different impression at certain times.. not too mundane though. Even though the front area [appropriated space] is very small, my mom is very particular about this area, the one outside the fence area [altered garden]…that’s why she always wants it to be beautiful, neat and tidy at all times. (Translated transcription)

Belk’s second idea of “creating it” was reflected in the conversation of the resident of House 2HC when she decided to include her own plant creations, together with the existing tree, to embellish her semi-public area.

Ok…I have a feeling that the area underneath the shade of the existing tree planted by the developer is quite bare. To me personally it’s not nice. That’s the reason why I started to add other ornamental plants to make it much more beautiful. Furthermore, the existing tree is quite young, and not yet mature enough to embellish the space. That’s why I planted some Heliconias and some other plants to add some colours and varieties to the space (Translated transcription)
And Beck’s third idea of “knowing it” is embodied in the words of the resident of House 1HC with her extensive knowledge of plants and their values:

So, like Oregano plants underneath the tree, it's very easy to grow. I grew them here, around the tree bark and I can use it for cooking. I can use it when I cook spaghetti and it can also be used as a cure for constipation. I believe that each plant has its own functional value. I also planted white Hibiscus in a pot. At one time, my neighbour’s son had a high fever and he used the Hibiscus leaves to reduce his son’s body temperature. (Translated transcription)

In brief, landscape alteration in high-cost residential areas reflected a sense of “possession” (Beck, 1970), expressing residents’ confidence in constructing, articulating and maintaining their own created gardens in the semi-public spaces. The alterations were definitely an improvement to the existing landscaping provided by the developer.

The majority of participants in the high-cost housing scheme utilized the semi-public spaces as an extension of their personal garden. The data illustrated that these personal gardens were enclosed with decorative fences and could be only partially viewed by outsiders, for reasons of safety and privacy. Therefore, the open semi-public spaces that were fully visually accessible to neighbours and friends were the areas most suited for residents’ social expression and gathering activities. The resident of House 9HC explained the importance of the garden for reflecting social and economical status:

Yeah...I agree that a beautiful landscape in our outdoor space [altered garden] helps to reflect the inner conditions of my house...That's the reason why I'm willing to spend on the landscape. It is not worth it to only decorate and spend your money on beautifying the indoor decoration, and leave the outside area unsightly and unattractive....it has to show the status of the house owner... (Translated transcription)

Figure 8.10 shows the semi-public spaces, as an extension of the personal garden belonging to the resident of House 9HC. The picture on the left side shows a semi-public space that was raised about six inches from ground level and visually connected to the personal garden, strengthening the understanding that residents perceived this garden as part of their personal area and untouchable by anyone else (the Municipal Council). The second picture shows an extension of these interconnected spaces that are well developed and a strongly defined continuation of the living environment. I noticed the use of topiary plants in both of these gardens, expressing continuity and unity in garden design. I was told
by the participant during the interviews that both these gardens should always be kept clean and tidy as this would also reflect on the cleanliness and tidiness of the house owner.

The altered landscape in high-cost residential areas reflected the residents’ attachment to their garden. The majority of residents chose to grow varieties of mature and expensive palms and trees and also embellished the semi-public spaces with hard-landscape elements. A few participants told me that they employed professional landscape architects to design their personal garden, including the semi-public spaces. Figures 8.11, 8.12 and 8.13 continue to illustrate the idea of “possessions” (Belk, 1992) in the high-cost residential area - ‘permanent personal gardens in semi-public spaces’.
Figure 8.11 illustrates the idea of “possession” using mature and expensive palm and turf species in the altered landscape. Figure 8.12 illustrates the use of costly hard landscape materials while Figure 8.13 shows landscape alteration using a stylish landscape design. According to Belk (1992, p.38), “a possession is something that we call ours, regardless of whether we mean by this legal ownership, temporary control, or simply identification with thing”.

Figures 8.11, 8.12 and 8.13 Illustrating ‘permanent landscapes’ in ‘semi-public spaces’.
8.2 COMMUNITY AND ETHNIC INTEGRATION THROUGH A UTILITARIAN LANDSCAPE

I discussed the idea of ‘landscape authenticity’ in residents’ appropriated gardens through genuine interpretations of their cultural and religious values reflected in their garden designs in Chapter 5. These transformations involved residents’ replication of their experiences in the rural cultural landscape from which they had come in order to enhance attachment to place and to strengthen identity in their new living spaces in urban areas. The resident of House 80LC on these issues of attachment and identity:

Actually, having these species in my garden at the same time is an expression of my life experiences in the village…you can just pick any plants that you need for cooking especially, right in front of your house. This is in contrast with life in urban areas where you need to go to the wet-market, or wait for the scheduled night market, in order to buy traditional stuff like vegetables and fruits…and the worst thing is that…you’ll have to wait for it…. (Translated transcription)

And:

We planted these plants so that they can help in cooling the house temperature. Our house looks cooler with all these plants around. Or else, it could be too hot. I have Lime, and I share with the neighbours. They have Lemongrass and they are not reluctant to share with us whenever we require it. It's a sharing satisfaction. And it's like in the village…You don't live alone in this neighbourhood…we have strong relationships with each other… (Translated transcription)

The rural utilitarian garden inspired her to grow food plants in the appropriated urban garden which, in turn, reinforced her bonding with her garden. She planted *Manihot esculenta* (Tapioca), *Cymbopogun citratus* (Lemongrass), *Mangifera indica* (Mango), *Capsicum spp.* (Chilli), and *Ipomea batatas* (Sweet Potato) as examples, in her edible landscape as illustrated in Figure 8.14.
The resident of House 80LC expressed dissatisfaction at her inability to grow some other plants required in her daily activities. She resolved this issue however, by consistently adjusting plant locations in order to add on new types of edible species in this limited space. Besides the changing of plants in the garden, the edible species in the resident of House 80LC’s garden were also shared with neighbours. She said:

Well, these utilitarian plants can be used in cooking various traditional delicacies. So, my neighbours sometimes request these plants from me...It's great to share with them... Some of them also request raw plant leaves such as the Tapioca young leaves and cook them with preserved Durian paste, added to some anchovies in coconut milk. My neighbours never forget to allocate a small portion of the meals for me, just to express their gratitude. So, it's kind of an exciting experience...just like when you lived in the village and it's happening here... (Translated transcription)

Edible plants in the altered garden help to create an attachment to the garden. Sharing the garden produce helps to create enduring meaningful relationships among the neighbours. Sharing garden produce at the same time was described by the residents as the reflection of village experiences in an urban living environment. The resident of House 80LC, a full time housewife, asserted that:
Place attachment and sharing of plants with others was also discussed by the resident of House 10LC, who told me that he lived in squatter settlements for quite some time. His interest in gardening, which could be traced back to childhood, started to flourish when he lived in this area, in the early 1970’s. Today, he continues to enhance the semi-public space his low-cost terrace housing area by creating a utilitarian garden as shown in Figure 8.15 - which also helps him to make a living. The continuous process of developing and improving a personal garden may best be described as “self-concept change” as “the old place becomes a symbol of the old self and the new place represents an opportunity to develop new identities” (Hormuth, 1990, p. 207). This participant describes how his garden produce is used:

Aaa…yes…this garden looks small, but it has a ‘big’ function’…It would be difficult for us to do our business without having these plants… We need these plants everyday…they’re expensive to buy from the shop. Furthermore, it’s much more convenient to have them around and you can pick the leaves anytime you want them…because we normally start cooking and preparing our food while other people are still in their deep sleep. (Translated transcription)

And he continued to describe elements in the garden that contributed to making a living. As an example, Citrus xanrautifolia (Lime), Pandanus annaryllifolius (Pandanus), Curcuma domestica (Turmeric) and Persicaria odorata (Vietnamese Mint) were among the important ingredients used in cooking the traditional foods he sold at his food stall. Besides these edible species, the resident of House 10LC grew a few medicinal plants, namely Orthosipon aristatus (Cat Whisker’s Plant) and Crinum asiaticum (Tembaga Suasa) that he shared with neighbours. He expressed his personal satisfaction whenever he was able to help people who were in need of these traditional medicinal plants. Indeed, he told me that the majority of residents were very familiar with everyone’s gardens in the

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29 Alhamdulillah – An Arabic phrase meaning “All praise belongs to Allah”.
neighborhood – “I know what you had planted and you know what I have in my garden and we shared garden elements and it’s produced from time to time”. This inter-relationship was described by him as follows:

Even though we’re staying in urban residential units, I think we are all blessed with all good neighbours. I have no problem with asking for some of the plants in my friends’ gardens and they do the same thing. Indeed, it is possible for you to be approached by someone that you don’t even know, who comes to request some species from your garden… and when I asked this person who he was, he told me that he’s the relative of my neighbour…this new relationship has expanded and he always visits me whenever he comes around here to visit his relative… (Translated transcription)

Similar findings were discussed in my previous research on the Perak Malay rural cultural landscape (Ismail, 2003). Indeed, it is often the case among the rural communities, that one’s house is referred to on the basis of the plants abundantly available in the garden, rather than the house numbers. As an example, the house owner who had his house garden predominantly planted with coconut trees was called by his friendly name – Pak Ismail Pokok Kelapa. Pak in this phrase literally means ‘uncle’, Ismail was the name of the person and Pokok Kelapa means Coconut trees. This illustrates the prominence of garden identity and close-knit relationships among the villagers.

Figure 8.15 The utilitarian garden that creates attachment and facilitates a resident’s daily activities.
The Chinese resident from **House 69LC** disclosed details about her utilitarian garden created in the semi-public space. She proudly told me that she came from a village and she planned to have collections of utilitarian species in her new garden even before she moved into this urban terrace house. Her utilitarian plant collections includes vegetables and herbs that were brought from the village or obtained from friends and neighbours in accordance with the notion of “mimicry” (Julien & Zmyslony, 2001, p. 338) or replication of her old rural landscape. Thus, the utilitarian plants helped to strengthen her bonding with the urban environment. Giuliani (2003, p. 153) and Riger and Lavrakas (1981) referred to this effort of bringing elements from village to urban environment as one of the ways of connecting people to their new living place, namely the “involvement and rootedness”.

The same resident of **House 69LC** also explained that some of these plants were not for her own use, but were mainly planted to be distributed among her neighbours. She offered, as an example, her passion for *Piper bitile* (Betel Leaf). This plant had been given to her by her husband’s Malay friend and she found it quite difficult to cultivate. She tried many times and now she feels proud of her achievement as this species is well developed in her garden. She acknowledged the cultural significance of this species among her Malay and Indian neighbours and decided to share it with them. This reflects an understanding that despite the ethnic conflicts in Malaysian politics, some of the residents in the neighbourhood lived in harmony with each other, regardless of their ethnicity. This relationship has endured with a sense of respect for the cultural and religious needs among them.

![An illustration of outdoor seating area inspired by living experiences from the village setting.](image)
Similarly, the resident of House 15LC creatively transformed her appropriated garden into an outdoor seating area. She arranged a few portable benches on the paved platform underneath the Mango tree, replication of a pelenggar or outdoor seating area she used to have in her village. Her village setting was in Kampong Parit, Perak, one of the states in the north of Peninsula Malaysia, located adjacent to the Perak River, surrounded by the Durio zibathinus (Durian) orchard. Her father built this pelenggar to be used as a place to collect the orchard produce and, at the same time, they utilized it as their outdoor gathering space, especially in the evenings. She had memories of sitting there, experiencing the fresh wind blowing from the river and enjoying tea with the family. This situation inspired her to re-create this setting in an urban area as illustrated in Figure 8.16. She continued to explain that:

Yes…its interesting…even though I don’t have Durian trees, I at least have this Mango tree that produces lots of fruit…We can’t finish them all…So, normally, what we do is invite my friends to gather here and eat these Mango slices with my specialty garam belacan (see Figure 8.17). During this time, anybody who passes by this area and is able to join, comes along…it’s so exciting…sometimes it’s just like an informal neighbours’ gathering…ha…ha… (Translated transcription)

Figure 8.17 Mango slices eaten with the traditional dipping sauce known as garam belacan.

The resident of House 15LC invited her Chinese and Indian neighbours, who were, at first, reluctant to try this particular food as they were not familiar with it and it was said to be quite hot, but at the end they became her number one fans! This situation illustrates the idea that edible plants, in an appropriated garden and shared with neighbours, are able to strengthen a sense of community among the residents.
An appropriated garden is perceived as an educational garden by the house owner, intensifying their personal connection with their garden. This understanding was revealed by the residents of Houses 10LC and 20LC. The resident of House 10LC shared that:

...actually, my father believes in *berbudi pada tanah* \(^{30}\). So, he decided to use this space to grow some plants, rather than keeping the existing unhealthy single tree. We grew plants that we need to use. At the same time, my father loves to grow uncommon species, especially used for the traditional medicinal values. For examples, he planted Hempedu Bumi, Cat's Whiskers, Gading Gajah, Setawar and Cekur. Besides that, he wanted us to learn about these plants and their values as they start to lose their significance among the younger generations. (Translated transcription)

And the resident of House 20LC explained that:

It started with my son's request to play with a few unused pots while helping me in the garden. He said that he wanted to do an experiment with the Green Beans as his brothers did at school...he hadn't attended school as yet...Without me realizing it, this plant grew up very well from day to day and he was really excited...He asked me to cook it...but I said...well you have only a small amount of that... So, we just left it there... (Translated transcription)

She shared her personal satisfaction at witnessing her son play with the soil and gain knowledge of the natural and biological processes related to plants through gardening activities (as illustrated in Figure 8.18) from a very young age. Otherwise he may never have known what this plant looked like and would have assumed they were all grown in the supermarket. She told me her son was really excited and shared his new plant with neighbours and friends. These two examples illustrate that these learning processes, developed through personal experiences, are able to create a stronger affection for, and connection with, nature. My previous research (Ismail, 2003) revealed that this process was relatively common among rural villagers when their children were allowed to explore nature in the forest and in the orchards - that, in turn, provided greater understanding of plant values and their significance.

\(^{30}\) *Berbudi pada tanah* literally means “sowing good deeds to the soil” (Maliki, 2008, p. 153).
8.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE URBAN RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

The resident of House 18MC expressed his concerns regarding the existing ornamental landscape elements in the semi-public spaces. He stressed the importance of having edible species with aesthetic appearance, as an alternative to replacing the existing ornamental plants provided by the local authority. In addition to the Mango trees that he planted in semi-public spaces next to his personal territory, he proposed other fruit trees like *Garcinia mangostana* (Mangosteen), *Parkia speciosa* (Petai) or *Lansium domesticum Corr* (Dokong) for bigger areas such as the roadside buffer zones. He said:

Yes, and these plants provide distinct character...They are hardy during the heavy windy seasons. They are not easy to break off and don't crack if compared to the Angsana. This species will usually be very fragile after being pruned; the new shoot is actually fragile. It will easily break off during heavy rain and windy weather. Sometimes, the branches fall on the cars, or the house roof. Unlike the Dokong, Petai and Mangosteen trees...they are considered hardy plants. They will provide good shade in the road medians and buffer zones. That's why I always suggest to my friends that they plant this species (Translated transcription)
His proposal was based on his life experiences in the village and his wish to be able to replicate this tranquil and serene setting in the very limited green spaces in urban residential areas. To him, planting edible species in semi-public spaces could enhance the function of the space and create an informal gathering space for the community. In fact, anybody would be allowed to enjoy the fruit and other produce. He stressed the importance of community participation in creating meaningful landscapes surrounding the neighbourhood areas:

...actually, before this, the representative from MPSJ [local authority] had never invited us to work together as a community project. We don't mind sharing our ideas with them in terms of management and maintenance of these spaces. They should have been doing this a long time ago. What happens now is that we do it ourselves. We removed the trees. That's our effort. We changed to plants that we need to use in our daily activities. Because we think that plants should not only be used for landscape decoration but should also be part of living experiences. (Translated transcription)

A similar notion was shared by the resident of House 1HC. She proposed that native species such as the *Michelia champaka* (Champaka) and *Piper bitel* (Betel Leaf) be planted in the semi-public spaces located next to the residences. These species were easily maintained and aesthetically pleasing. Besides these species, she also acknowledged the importance of fully utilizing green buffer zones surrounding the neighbourhood areas, such as small orchards that would become a social gathering place. She said:

Well...I would like to suggest that the open spaces be planted with fruit trees such as Rambutan, Guava and Mangosteen as examples...You know why? These species produce good shade and at the same time bear nice fruit. So, if I planted these species, then my other neighbours could plant other species... including herbs and spices...but we have to maintain them together. We share the garden produce and together we keep them clean at any time...Because this is public property...If we have this kind of community, then it's going to be very good. These are my suggestions...rather than planting ornamental trees. In fact, we can create a meeting place, kids can come here to enjoy the fruit and we can come here in the afternoon. This will help to encourage better communication among us... (Translated transcription)

These two perspectives, from the resident of House 18MC from the medium-cost housing and the resident of House 1HC, who came from the high-cost areas, help me to understand
the ideas of “involvement and rootedness”, as discussed by Giuliani (2003) and Riger and Lavrakas (1981). A desire to create a meaningful living environment empowered the residents to change the original space functions from a place that was only to be looked at, into a place that promised social participation and engagement. These community participation projects promoted a greater sense of place attachment and feelings of belonging to the residential areas. Figure 8.19 shows the resident of House 6MC, who also expressed his wish to see the use of green open spaces for community gathering places. He maintained the green buffer zones adjacent to his house.

Similarly, the resident of House 8LC responded to the issue of community participation in residential landscapes by referring to her appropriated garden as a symbol of ‘communication’. She informed me that the garden united her with the neighbours:

Well...we didn’t know each other in the beginning...but I could still remember how we started the conversation, we talked about my plants...At that time, I decorated this area with my flourished annual plants and once I changed it, my neighbours offered their remarks and said that it was beautiful... (Original transcription)

And:
The resident of House 18HC, described her habit of exchanging plants among neighbours. She strongly believed this idea could encourage better communication and that it was a way to connect with neighbours while extending a great neighbourhood environment. She told me about sharing her herb plants with neighbours who were keen to plant hydroponic and organic vegetables, while looking at her neighbour’s house, which could be viewed from our interview space.

These perspectives provided me with an understanding that in this urban community, regardless of whether low, medium or high-cost, the residents valued and fostered close-knit relationships. My findings are in contrast to Rasdi (1999) who argued that there was no sense of community among residents in the urban neighbourhoods:

..or to be more blunt, is there any kind of ‘community’ in these massively populated environment?...communities in Malaysia exist only in numbers and close proximity but in truth we are nothing but a community [of] strangers just living next door to one another.

(Rasdi, 1999, p. 2)

Research conducted by Rasdi (1992) focused on the architectural issues that expressed a lack of communication and integration amongst residents in the urban neighbourhood areas. In contrast to Rasdi (1992), my research revealed that outdoor landscape settings provided different opportunities and settings for residents to express their ethnic and social integration – resembling a close-knit community in the rural living environments. The resident of House 18LC, for example, proposed the semi-public areas of each house unit be planted with different species of fruit trees. She said:
These views helped me to understand that landscape alteration in urban residential areas helped to strengthen neighbourhood integration. The members of close-knit communities who share and care for one another have potential to curb undesirable social behaviour such as burglary, drugs and truancy problems among school children - known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPETD) that I discussed in Chapter 1. It is common to find the school children, who were not present during school hours, using these secluded, shared semi-public spaces to get together while carrying out socially unacceptable behaviour such as smoking cigarettes and drug use. Strong associations and good communication among the neighbourhood residents helped to prevent these activities by referring the children to their parents or informing the respective authorities.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the ways respondents developed a sense of connection with their living places by transforming a neutral ‘house’ into a meaningful ‘dwelling’ through their involvement in landscape alteration and the development of distinct ‘gardens’ on ‘semi-public land’.

The idiom ‘the apple of my eye’ was used to refer to the feelings of attachment in the altered landscapes in low-cost housing areas. The sense of belonging was enhanced by the satisfaction and pride they felt in their mainly utilitarian gardens. These gardens often reflected their owners’ personalities. The gardens were sometimes imbued with healing qualities. A few respondents cherished these areas as their religious, sacred gardens. The phrase, ‘a thing of beauty is a joy forever’ was used to reflect the sense of belonging in the medium-cost housing areas. These gardens encouraged connections between residents while at the same time enabling expressions of personal creativity. Thus, landscape alteration in medium-cost housing areas focused on developing ‘aesthetic and utilitarian gardens’. Finally, the idiom ‘as bold as brass’ underscores the attractive high-cost altered landscapes where residents prefer to create a seemingly established landscape – using

You see...it’s good to have varieties of fruit trees in front of our house. If I have Mango trees, then I can share the fruit with my neighbours. Then, if my neighbour has a Guava, Papaya or other trees, then she can share them with me and others. In this case, we get to know each other closely and this can help to prevent a number of social illnesses amongst us. Sometimes, it is really difficult if you don’t really know people around you… (Translated transcription)
mature sized and expensive plant species such as palms and trees in the semi-public spaces (see Table 8.1). Social integration, working together in planting and maintaining the altered landscapes in the semi-public spaces was described by the respondents as one of the ways to strengthen urban community relationships in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. The sense of sharing plant materials and their produce created a community bond which was experienced by all ethnicities. The resulting care for one another reflected, and contributed to, an experience of living in harmony.
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<td>Decoration, Food, Cosmetic, Healing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Memories of home landscape strongly inspired the plant selections and compositions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
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Most of our design [works] in school had one common goal: making places habitable. Aesthetics, style, and materials were important. But most critiques eventually came around to one question: was this space in which people (we call them “users”) would want to spend time? When habitability was considered, the picture changed. No longer was a design judged solely on its appearance or its contents. What finally mattered was whether or not users wanted to spend time in them in the first place. Could this critique apply to a [home] garden?

(Grampp, 2008, p. xii)
Landscape architecture is considered an emerging profession in Malaysia. These days, landscape work is concerned with more than plants and gardens. The profession in Malaysia now contributes substantially to the planning and designing of social places such as parks, urban spaces, waterfront designs and to the conservation and preservation of natural distinctive sites. Through my personal work experience in this field in Malaysia, I have observed that most landscape architects feel uneasy about being strongly affiliated with residential design, leaving the majority of this gardening work to be performed by the contractors. The local landscape industries in Malaysia are currently focusing on substantial landscape projects, developed and funded by the Malaysian National Landscape Department, aimed at producing gentrified landscape designs for public recreational parks. Landscape consultants are also involved with many local and international landscape projects for urban and industrial development, offered by private developers, leaving the residential landscape design as a less important area of practice.

An example of the Malaysian government’s effort in creating extensive public recreational spaces is typified by Figure 9.1, which illustrates the verdant landscape of a public recreational park, namely the Lumut Waterfront, located in Lumut, Perak, one of the states in North Peninsular Malaysia. The Lumut Waterfront project was among the public parks developed by the Malaysian National Landscape Department that includes playground spaces, picnic areas, open plazas and a swimming centre - thus promising interactive and attractive platforms for social and recreational activities for the local communities.

In contrast, the Malaysian government has a ‘laid-back’ attitude towards the importance of the residential environment as exemplified by Figure 9.2, which shows an existing ‘immature’ urban residential landscape in the newly developed housing scheme. Single palm species planted in the semi-public spaces by the developer are unable to provide ample shade for the residents and lack of shade discourages residents from engaging in outdoor activities.
The existing environmentally, socially and culturally ‘unfriendly’ environment illustrated in Figure 9.2 was found to be the major force driving residents to alter the existing landscapes. This phenomenon inspired me to understand the landscape alteration process undertaken by rural-urban migrants in the semi-public spaces located adjacent to residents’ properties in low, medium and high-cost urban terrace housing in Selangor, Malaysia. I use the metaphor of an ‘onion bulb’ (see Figure 9.3) to describe my argument in this chapter.
The spherical shape of an onion represents the bringing together of all the parts of this study; its concentric rings reflect the multiple layers of analysis and discussion; the transparent external layer of onion skin that wraps around the whole spherical form reflects the conclusion of this chapter, which focuses on the contributions and implications of this study.

The majority of the participants in this study came from a rural setting. They spent their childhood in the village and migrated to the urban areas for economic and educational reasons, especially during the Malaysia National Economic Plan in 1970. The memory of the rural landscape is important to the rural-urban migrants. Maliki (2008) and Thompson (2003) described a strong attachment between migrants and their rural environment, something (Relph, 1976, p. 37) described as a sense of “rootedness”. Bunnell (2002), on the other hand, described negative aspects of kampong lifestyle and behaviour that were imported by migrants to the urban living environment. The findings of my study illustrate the ways in which residents manifest their rural memories by creating gardens.

One of the aims of this study was to investigate the reasons for the modification of the pre-constructed landscapes and to determine whether landscape alteration acts as a symbol of contestation towards an existing homogenous landscape. Data analysis confirmed that these newly developed landscapes could be one platform used to express residents’ “passive resistance” (Helphand, 2006, p. 98) towards the idea of “placelessness” (Relph, 1976). The study has shown that residents gardened without any professional landscape or horticultural qualifications - but the inspiration to keep nurturing these natural elements in

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Figure 9.3 An onion bulb used as metaphor to describe my argument in this chapter.

Altered landscapes in urban residential areas
The extended boundary
The functional values
The attentive landscape
The multi-ethnic community garden
Design and policy implications, theoretical implications and conclusion

Conclusion

Altered landscapes in urban residential areas
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Conclusion
their altered gardens was driven by their childhood experiences and memories of the village they brought with them into the urban settings. These life experiences, referred to as *kampong conduct* by Bunnell (2002) provided physical and spiritual comfort for the residents as they adapted to the urban lifestyle and its challenges. The process of creating altered gardens was one of their ways in which the residents could develop habitable spaces where design was not judged solely on exclusive appearance or content (Grampp, 2008, p. xiii). Thus, this study aimed to explore the meanings and values ascribed by the residents to their everyday landscapes and to argue for the need to move beyond the superficial approaches often employed by professional landscape architects who consider aesthetics but ignore meaning (Gillette, 2005).

During the interviews, the residents described their process of appropriating these spaces. The majority of them were inspired to create altered gardens in conjunction with their personal gardens after observing the unhealthy condition of the existing shade trees. They criticized the respective authority for their poor maintenance of these spaces. As a result, the residents voluntarily took charge of these areas, justifying their actions by stating that the land was located adjacent to their residential units and it was their responsibility to ensure its neatness and pleasant appearance. The majority of residents started to make changes to their ‘inhabitable’ semi-public spaces during the first year of their post-occupancy period. Some of them had even started at the beginning of their stay - they had envisioned their garden accommodating some native and aesthetic plant species long before they moved into this newly developed residential area. This situation signified the residents’ desire to create place identity and expressed their response to the homogenous residential settings. The significance of developing place identity was explained by Krupat (1983, p. 343):

> The concept of place identity makes explicit the key role that a person’s relationship to the environment plays not simply in terms of a context or action or in facilitating certain forms of behaviour, but in becoming ‘part of the person’ or being incorporated into one’s concept of self.

(Krupat, 1983, p. 343)

While Krupat (1983) admitted that environmental psychologists usually reject the idea that place identity is “coherent and integrated” with a person’s self-identity, he himself could see the importance of place identity acting as a role of “self-expression” in environmental design. Indeed, he suggested that this idea be further developed by architects and planners. The findings of my study, where the majority of residents express their identities through
plant selections composition in the garden, support Krupat’s ideas. The Malay, Chinese and Indian respondents created their own particular gardens which reflected their social behaviour and were imbued with cultural significance and religious value. In fact, they were proud to be identified with their gardens as an expression of their particular culture and to share their garden produce with all the neighbours, regardless of their ethnicity.

My observations in the field also revealed negative attitudes associated with the residents’ altered landscapes, particularly when their gardens were not carefully and regularly maintained. Some of the tenants in rented properties paid less attention to the appearance of their house and garden owing to their temporary residence. A few residents used this area as a ‘dumping space’ (to place their unwanted and old furniture for example) and there were some unattended and overgrown gardens. These ‘messy’ situations support Bunnell’s (2002) argument that creating a personal garden exacerbated cultural and religious differences, created unsightly views and generated an unhealthy living environment. My interview with the landscape architect of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council reinforced this understanding since there were cases reported to the Council complaining of overgrown, disorderly and unattended altered gardens as illustrated in Figures 9.4 and 9.5. This phenomenon, which normally occurs in the low-cost housing scheme, was considered as insignificant by the local authority (Azhar, 2008).

![Figure 9.4](image)

*Figure 9.4 This resident’s overgrown vegetable garden was detrimental to the neighbourhood.*
This section addresses my research aim, which is to understand the landscape alteration process practised by rural-urban migrants living in terrace housing in Selangor. My study revealed a distinct landscape alteration phenomenon in the semi-public spaces of urban residential areas of Selangor, Malaysia. Table 9.1 summarizes patterns of landscape alteration comparing low, medium and high-cost residential areas. The following discussion elaborates on the significance of this landscape phenomenon and the similarities in, and differences between each of these patterns in low, medium and high-cost housing, in detail.

Figure 9.5 Example of the semi-public spaces treated as an ‘extra space’ to locate old and unwanted furniture as well as a carport area.

9.1 ALTERED LANDSCAPES IN URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREA
My categorisation of gardens into three main different types (see table 9.1);

Low cost housing as the utilitarian garden type,

Medium cost housing as the utilitarian and aesthetic garden type, and

High cost housing scheme as the aesthetic garden type;

are a simplification to a certain extent. These categories were ascribed to the different housing schemes according to the dominance of types. I acknowledge that in reality there are more nuances and overlapping uses between the garden types. Nonetheless, these
distinctions become a useful analytical tool. The residents imbued each of the elements
grown in the individual gardens with meaning thus creating an expressive social and
cultural landscape. In these ‘forbidden spaces’ (owned by the local authority) residents
made an effort to build their meaningful gardens - the altered gardens I referred to – even
though they were fully aware of the government’s policy to keep the existing landscapes as
they were or be charged under the Town and Country Planning Act 172, 1995 subsection
A933 with regards to the tree preservation order (Government, 2010). The residents
however, disregarded this rule and continued to develop a substantial garden, replacing the
existing landscape which they regard as ‘a cosmetic finishing’. And despite these possible
threats, residents chose to invest capital, time and effort to create gardens. Their gardens
thus represent Helphand’s (2006, p. i) ideas of the “defiant garden”:

\[
\text{Helphand, 2006, p. i)
\]

9.2 THE EXTENDED BOUNDARY

9.2.1 LOW-COST HOUSING: PRIMARY GARDEN

In Chapter 1 outlined the typical layout of the low-cost housing units and elaborated on the
residents’ tendency to renovate their houses creating spacious indoor spaces. In this
process, they utilized the existing outdoor spaces in the front areas, which, in turn, left no
more green spaces for gardening purposes. Holmes et al. (2008, p. 224) described this
phenomenon as “houses swallow gardens”. The semi-public spaces available in the
forefront of their house areas were therefore appropriated and transformed by the residents
as their primary garden, as shown in Figure 9.6. This explains why the altered landscape
can be considered as the ‘Primary Garden’ and why the primary garden represents the only
way residents can fulfil their gardening hopes in low-cost housing areas. In these
appropriated spaces, residents invest their memories and hopes, their past and their future,
making this space a special place in the eyes of the beholder.

9.2.2 MEDIUM-COST HOUSING: EXTENDED GARDEN

The majority of residents in the medium-cost housing occupied two types of gardens. The
first garden was identified as a personal garden, created on their personal property. The
second or ‘Extended Garden’ was located in the semi-public spaces, as shown in Figure 9.6. The residents’ personal gardens included potted plants, water features and seating areas. They normally utilized this area for relaxation purposes, especially during the day and usually converted this space into their carport during night. For these reasons, the residents preferred to have this space completely paved to allow free circulation and movement. This paved potted garden was the place they used to get together with the family members - having their afternoon tea while experiencing the soothing water-flows in the ponds, within the secluded, gated property that could not easily be viewed from the outside by any hostile observer.

I also found that the medium-cost housing residents appropriated the semi-public spaces mainly as an extension that was closely linked to their personal gardens. The interconnections were expressed by the use of plant materials. For example, in Chapter 6 I described how Muslim residents developed luscious gardens as one of their ways to get closer to God. At the same time, these gardens functioned as a ‘green wall’ created by using a vertical composition of plants in the altered garden. This green wall provided a physical barrier establishing secluded spaces which, in turn created a sense of privacy for the personal garden. A sense of privacy is thus a crucial principle, applicable not only to the indoor Muslim house layout as discussed by El-Shafie (1999), but also to their urban garden design. This interconnection between the personal and extended garden provided both tangible and intangible benefits. The residents explained that they felt good when viewing the greenery and sweet flowers blooming in both of these gardens, listening to the birds singing through the windows, especially in the early morning before commencing a productive day.

9.2.3 HIGH-COST HOUSING: ENTRANCE GARDEN

My study suggests that the altered landscapes in the high-cost residential areas could be perceived as a ‘Sanguine Garden’ - reflecting its characteristics as a pleasant garden. This garden also suggested confidence through its use of expensive soft and hard landscape materials, forming a simple and straightforward garden design. The elegant garden design could be experienced by persons who passed by the area. It suggested achievement and life stability.

These sanguine landscapes, composed in the semi-public spaces in the high-cost residential areas also functioned as an ‘Entrance Garden’. This garden was designed in such a way that it created a sense of welcome to the personal spaces located within residents’ gated
property. In Chapter 6, I discussed how the residents perceived this entrance garden as a ‘sheer’ or day curtain. During the interviews, one resident referred to the two layers of curtain drapes which are usually used in tropical houses, as an analogy for the altered and the personal gardens. The first layer, which was the altered garden, was referred to as a ‘sheer curtain’. This kind of curtain could be made of light and transparent fabric allowing considerable light to penetrate to the indoor spaces and at the same time, permitting some visual connection to the outside areas during the daytime. The main drape (the second layer), comprised of a much thicker material, provided a sense of privacy especially during the night time and was associated with their personal garden. Thus, landscape as a sheer curtain was associated with its placement as a first layer to be seen from the outside, and its transparent fabric evoked a sense of mystery around the personal garden – indicating that this garden had great connections with ‘life’ in the inside areas. The altered landscapes, being the first layer to be seen by the public, would need to look presentable and beautiful at all times – expressing residents’ “idiosyncrasies and personal preferences” (Thwaites & Simkins, 2007, p. 37), while the personal garden reflected a desire for privacy that specifically applied to the Muslims’ way of life. Both these gardens were closely intertwined – the altered and the personal gardens complemented each other, as illustrated in Figure 9.6.

![Figure 9.6 Semi-public spaces in urban residential areas were utilized as the extended landscapes.](image)

### 9.3 THE FUNCTIONAL VALUES

#### 9.3.1 LOW-COST HOUSING: THE UTILITARIAN GARDEN

My study indicated that the changes made in the existing landscape in the low-cost residential areas generated a ‘utilitarian landscape’. “Utilitarian – usefulness rather than beauty” (Said, 2001b) was the reason why residents selected special plant species that were
meaningful on social, cultural and religious levels. The utilitarian landscape was one of their ways of reinforcing their close relationship with the village environment - a repository of their life experiences. I was told by the residents that it was their habit to bring back a few plant species when they returned for the Eid celebration\textsuperscript{31} in the villages. Sometimes, the plants were gifts from their parents, plant cuttings taken from gardens that belong to their family members or exchanged among friends in the village. As a result, residents’ altered gardens were dominated by indigenous and native plants alongside exotic species, reflecting authentic cultural expressions of their communities. These findings suggest that the residents’ altered landscapes can be understood as an interpretation of familiar rural landscapes that are consciously, carefully and constantly developed in the urban settings.

In my study, I found that these utilitarian landscapes were characterized by the use of \textit{Mangifera indica} (Mango) as discussed in Chapter 6. This was the first step taken by the residents in making structural changes to the existing landscape. I have identified that the Mango tree was favoured especially by the Malay and the Indian communities. The Chinese residents prefer \textit{Cyrtostachys lakka} (Red Palm or Sealing Wax Palm) with red trunks, believed to bring good fortune for the home owner and also reflecting their Taoist beliefs. The Malays favoured the sweet and sour Mango fruits and used them in their cooking or ate them fresh from the trees. The Indians enjoyed not only its delicious fruits, but also utilized its leaves as a religious symbol - protection from spirits as discussed in Chapter 2. After planting and securing the Mango trees the residents would then add other utilitarian and exotic species, as shown in Appendix III. This suggested that the Mango trees were the major structural species in the gardens, while other shrubs and groundcovers around it - subjected to dynamic changes from time to time - reflected the tastes and preferences of the house owners. On the whole, the plant combinations supported the residents in preparing their traditional cuisine and, represented their culture, beliefs and religion. My study has also shown that there was little use of hard landscape elements due to the limited space in the semi-public areas. A few residents however, enhanced the liveliness of this space by placing benches and keeping cages for poultry there. In summary, my case study showed that the urban utilitarian landscapes possessed distinct similarities to the soft landscape elements in the rural areas as discussed in Chapter 2. The

\[31\] Eid celebration or also known as Eid ul-Fitr is a Muslim festival celebrating the end of Ramadhan (the Islamic holy month of fasting).
process of changing and improving a garden through time has been termed by Giuliani (2003) and Riger and Lavrakas (1981) as “involvement and rootedness” – a practice that accentuates residents’ sense of belonging to their living environment.

My study shows that the altered landscapes were enjoyed for their healing and medicinal advantages as well. In Chapter 6 I described the garden elements that helped to enhance residents’ physical and emotional health and well-being, reinforcing Holmes et. al’s (2008, p. 223) proposition that “the creation of a garden and the activity of gardening are a reflection of oneself, a healthy, grounding occupation to help us cope with the stresses of life”. I found that the restorative experiences (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1987) in the garden were achieved especially when the residents constructed outdoor seating areas underneath the Mango trees, replicating the pelenggar (timber bench) of the rural setting. These hard landscape elements helped them to relax while keeping an eye on their children playing around the neighbourhood areas, especially in the afternoon. This time was also used to tend and nurture their garden - witnessing new shoots, flowers starting to bloom and anticipating fresh fruits produced by plants in the garden. This gardening activity provided relaxation and exercise in addition to the ‘satisfaction’ of creating their preferred outdoor environment. Helphand (2006, p. 13) explained that gardening satisfaction can be achieved even with a single plant in a small garden which is able to provide “a mental distraction from our usual routine – a sense of being away”. The prominent environmental psychologists, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan argued that “[t]he greatest is a sense of tranquillity, followed by the fascination with nature and the pleasure of garden’s sensory experience” (cited in Helphand, 2006, p. 13).

My study found that the residents themselves were productive gardeners and well equipped with knowledge about plants and gardening practices, acquired through their life experiences in the villages. They planted plants in the gardens not only for their physical function, but also for their medicinal properties. Some of the residents were keen to continue to practise the traditional procedures in curing certain illnesses using plant and natural materials, without totally rejecting conventional medicinal practices. This was a ways of sustaining their traditional methods of curing sickness which they were very proud of. In short, the residents’ altered garden can be considered as an alternative pharmacy with the house owner himself acting as the pharmacist. The residents managed to explain the distinct characteristics of each of the medicinal plants, the method of preparing the remedies and their application emphasizing their detailed understanding of those natural elements that helped to relieve human pain and discomfort, as discussed in Chapter 6. The
residents’ defiant garden was also a garden of symbolic representations. This was a platform of personal expression. Tuan (1979, p. 98) describes the power of the everyday landscape in portraying characteristics of the house owner as “they are abstract rather than concrete symbols and hence they can be used to reveal the dark and offensive sides of life without overpowering the listener or reader”.

Another insight from my study is the suggestion that different landscape tastes and preferences among the low-cost residents most likely represented their status. For example, residents who were earning higher incomes (represented by comprehensive house and garden alteration) preferred fewer ‘kitchen’ or utilitarian plants, focussing more on the exotics species and vice-versa. At the same time, I identified the appearance of the “anthropogenic landscape or a landscape replication” in this residential area (Julien & Zmyslony, 2001, p. 338). The anthropogenic landscape is the idea of replicating elements from one garden in another and was practiced by the residents when they exchanged their plant material among the three ethnicities, the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. This process strengthened neighbourhood relationships and illustrated ethnic trans-cultural values in the residential area.

A few residents in the low and medium-cost housing grew plants that related to spiritual and mystical values in their altered landscape. My discussion in Chapter 6 elaborated on the idea of residential landscapes that were inhabited by unseen forces and spirits. Following Bunnell’s (2002) idea on kampong conduct in urban living areas, this suggests that these rituals were still followed by some of the residents - evidence that belief in supernatural powers did not only belong in the rural and orthodox communities in Malaysia.

9.3.2 MEDIUM-COST HOUSING: THE AESTHETIC AND UTILITARIAN GARDEN

Study of the medium-cost residential areas revealed that the majority of residents have conducted significant garden activities in the semi-public spaces, which I also referred to as their extended gardens. Holmes et al. cite historian David Goodman who said that “garden became a metaphor for all qualities middle-class reformers wished to encourage among the labouring classes – industriousness, thrift, marital stability, home ownership” (2008, p. 18). Residents of the medium-cost residential areas aspired to create beautiful gardens that were imbued with meanings and values that reflected their identity, social status and desire to have the most flourishing garden in their neighbourhood.
The altered gardens belonging to the medium-cost residents were primarily structured with two types of expensive palm species, namely the *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* (Yellow Cane Palm) and *Chrystostachys lakka* (Sealing Wax Palm), and then adorned with other varieties of ornamental species, as listed in Appendix III. The Chinese community believed that these two species symbolized auspiciousness and prosperity. Having them planted in the extended garden, which was also the entry point into the property was believed to influence positive energy flow into the house (Said, 2001b). The Malay and Indian communities also cultivated these plants but for different reasons. They were captivated by the species’ uniqueness and considered that ownership of these expensive species was a way to exhibit their high social status. One of the respondents in fact, proposed that these palms be planted in the semi-public spaces instead of ornamental trees. She regarded them as plants with high aesthetic values and easy maintenance, suitable for the busy lifestyles of the medium-cost residents. My findings also provide evidence that these two species embody the phenomenon of trans-cultural assimilation – they were planted and favoured by the various ethnic groups, in contrast to Said’s (2001) suggestion that these two species were favoured only by the Chinese residents.

The residents kept improving and enhancing their gardens with the latest species available in the nursery. For example, there were times when *Bougainvilleas spp.* was popular among the residents and everyone tried their best to cultivate the most outstanding Bougainvilleas. At other times, *Dracenea spp.* adorned the gardens including *Asplenium nidus, Dieffenbchia spp.* This shared passion resulted in a strong bonding and feeling of closeness among them. Gardens were a conversation piece, they were the ‘glue’ that brought the residents together.

I was intrigued by the ways in which the gardens reflected residents’ past experiences and deep emotions. A few residents offered me personal poignant stories. One of them told me that some of the plants in her garden were in memory of her good friend that had passed away after suffering from breast cancer. She nourished these plants as if she were nurturing their timeless relationship. Similarly, elements in another garden reflected the yearning of a son for his deceased mother. The late mother, who depended on him to continue to care for her garden while she was ill, influenced him to become a keen gardener. She inspired him to create a beautiful garden and tending the garden was perceived as a continuation of routines that started when she was alive. Today, his garden was considered a ‘conversation piece’ and one of the outstanding gardens among the neighbours. He even has friends who
consider him a ‘garden designer’ and request his advice for ‘garden make-overs’, giving him personal satisfaction and encouragement.

My findings have also shown that residents re-created their garden in association with a past rural lifestyle. Elements such as a medium size *Bambusa vulgaris* or a Striped Bamboo were used to replace the Giant Bamboo usually found in the village. The residents collected antique hard landscape elements from the village such as clay pots and vases, timber seating and woodcarvings, and incorporated these in their gardens reflecting personal preferences, but also expressing connections with memorable rural environments. The utilitarian species were, however, becoming secondary. The residents normally located their potted herb plants at the back of the garden and sometimes in between other ornamental plants. Some of them admitted that they really needed the kitchen species but preferred to position the pots in their small backyard areas.

9.3.3 HIGH-COST HOUSING: THE AESTHETIC GARDEN

For these residents the connection between the altered and the personal gardens was very important. This connection was achieved through the repetition of materials in both gardens. On the whole, the residents saw these semi-public spaces adjacent to their properties as their opportunity to display their socio-economic status to the outside world.

The overall landscape appearance in the high-cost residential areas was minimalist – a style associated with the modernist landscape (Treib & Imbert, 1997). It took the form of a limited number of species and straightforward representation in the garden, as compared to the low and medium-cost housing schemes. These minimalist designs in the altered landscapes were thoughtfully composed. The gardens reflected the residents’ tastes and preferences for structural landscape elements - plants with unique and conspicuous characteristics such as palm species that included, *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* (Yellow Cane Palm), *Chrytostachys lakka* (Sealing Wax Palm), *Roystonia regia* (Royal Palm), *Ravenala madagascariensis* (Travellers’s Palm) and *Cycas revoluta* (Sago Cycad). Other ornamental species such as the *Bambusa vulgaris* (Buddha Bamboo), *Plumeria acuminata* (Frangipani), *Cananga odorata* (Cananga) and *Heliconia spp.* (Bird of Paradise). Besides these soft landscape entities, the hard landscape elements such as benches, lighting, planter boxes, elaborate fences and walls, urns and stepping stones, that were carefully incorporated in the gardens, enhanced their exclusiveness. The aesthetic representation of the gardens was also strengthened with the usage of expensive turf such as the *Hemianthus micranthemoides* (Pearl Grass) or *Axonopus affinis* (Carpet Grass), replacing the existing
grass, *Axonopus compressus* (Cow Grass). Sometimes, this flat ground was moulded with natural and subtle ‘berms’ that resembled a modern style in landscape architecture.

![Figure 9.7 Summary of the functional values of the appropriated gardens in low, medium and high-cost housing schemes.](image)

## 9.4 THE DEFENSIVE LANDSCAPE

### 9.4.1 LOW-COST HOUSING: THE AMBIGUOUS GARDEN

In my study, respondents recognized the importance of gardens and the benefits of gardening activities. The low-cost residents’ gardens embody ‘past’ (the village) and ‘present’ (altered landscape) landscapes. In this section, I would like to discuss the ‘future’ of these gardens – a future which I regard as ‘uncertain and ambiguous’.

My research revealed that the majority of the low-cost residents grew their plants in portable pots surrounding Mango trees in their altered gardens. I interpreted this as evidence of the residents’ belief that their gardens were only temporary – subject to the whim of the local authority. The potted plants could be re-located to some other area if needed (either as required by the local authority or maybe as a result of shifting house). At the same time, the potted plants were handy and mobile. Thus, having them nicely arranged in the gardens reflected the residents’ life history – of their having lived in other places before settling down in this new residential area. The potted plants also reflected characteristics of the rural gardens. Rural communities also planted their ornamental shrubs and ground covers particularly, in pots or containers (Ismail, 2003). The potted plants not only supported residents’ desires to keep improving their gardens and adding on new elements over time, but I also suggest they reflect a sense of uncertainty about the future of their gardens or an expression of ambiguity regarding their garden boundary.
9.4.2 MEDIUM-COST HOUSING: THE INVULNERABLE GARDEN

The majority of residents in medium-cost housing schemes owned both personal and altered gardens. The personal gardens located in their carport areas, were known as carport gardens. Normally, carport gardens’ surfaces were paved so that they could be used for outdoor gatherings. The carport gardens were embellished with potted plants indicating the spaces’ multiple functions. However the residents grew plants in the ground in their altered gardens, reflecting their physical and emotional dependence on the garden. My study indicated that the residents’ altered garden provided more meaningful experiences than their personal garden. Thus, the altered garden was perceived as their primary garden whilst the personal garden became secondary. The altered garden was the repository of memories. Complex varieties of soft and hard landscape elements signified a desire to own these altered gardens. I refer to the altered gardens of the medium-cost residents as ‘invulnerable gardens’ – gardens which stood on their own and resisted potential legislative orders from the local authority. The residents believed that their extended gardens added value to the overall landscape in the medium-cost housing areas. In fact, they considered their efforts in beautifying the semi-public spaces as assisting the local authority to properly manage these spaces, rather than leaving them unattended.

9.4.3 HIGH-COST HOUSING: THE OUTRIGHT GARDEN

The altered gardens in the high-cost residential areas were considered to be ‘Entrance Gardens’, in close association with the personal gardens. Both of these gardens however, were perceived as having similar importance in the residents’ lives. Garret Eckbo in Treib and Imbert (1997, p. 2) summarized the significance of modern residential landscapes:

A landscape was the site of the interaction of the people and place, and landscape architecture – exterior spatial design – the purposeful formation of that interaction.

(Treib & Imbert 1997, p. 2)

The residents planted exclusive and expensive plant materials in this area. They beautified the area with costly hard landscape elements and they continuously furnished the gardens with new and ‘trendy’ purchases. My findings also suggest that such landscape alterations could lead to misinterpretation on the part of the low and medium-cost residents – who might think that these areas (the semi-public spaces) were originally part and parcel of the properties. The alterations and additions in the garden of these high-cost residential areas communicated to the public that these semi-public spaces were ‘exclusive’ areas, not to be
disturbed by anyone, including the local authority. This I could understand, knowing the legislative requirements of the landscape department, of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council. I was told during my interviews with them that:

If they [the residents’] properly ‘designed’ their landscapes, then we would not mind their alterations, as long as it does not look like the kampong landscape.\(^{32}\) (Translated transcription)

This explained why the altered landscape belonging to high-cost residential areas dominated the semi-public areas. This suggest that only the exclusive garden compositions of these wealthy residents with a ‘designer’s’ touch were appreciated as ‘landscape’, whilst the low-cost housing landscapes with their kampong attributes were perceived as messy by the local authority. However, the majority of respondents in this study provided indication that their gardens were more than just pieces of art; they were indeed, ‘meaningful’ art works and responsive to their way of life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-cost housing</th>
<th>Medium-cost housing</th>
<th>High-cost housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE AMBIGUOUS GARDEN</td>
<td>THE INVULNERABLE GARDEN</td>
<td>THE OUTRIGHT GARDEN</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 9.8 Summary of the level of defensive landscape based on garden characteristics.

### 9.5 THE MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY GARDEN

This section reflects on my second research question, looking at the advantages and possibilities of the altered landscapes contributing towards social and ethnic integration of the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities in urban residential areas. Ethnic integration has been one of the major social issues ever since Malaysian independence in 1957. My data illustrated how behaviours related to the altered landscapes worked to strengthen the social relationships of these ethnic groups.

\(^{32}\) The kampong landscape, dominant with utilitarian species belongs to the low-cost residents were perceived by the local authorities as untidy and unattractive.
9.5.1 CULTURAL DIFFUSION AND ASSIMILATION IN URBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS THROUGH:

I. THE UTILITARIAN SPECIES

The plant materials in the shared semi-public spaces provided evidence of cultural exchanges. My discussions in Chapters 6 and 7 referred to the utilitarian species planted in the residents’ gardens reflecting a distinct trans-cultural phenomenon in the urban society. For example, the Mangifera indica (Mango) was used by the majority of residents in the low and medium-cost housing schemes as a structural species in the altered gardens. Based on my data, which illustrated the residents’ plant preferences (see Appendix III) - I suggest that the Mangifera indica (Mango) is one of the best plant species to help represent cultural assimilation and social coherence in urban residential areas. This tree is favoured by the three major ethnicities, provides fruits, is used in the residents’ cultural and religious practices and creates inspiration in art and craft activities. Besides these benefits, this tree provides good shade in the house compounds, is easily maintained and is one of the elements that trigger memories of life experiences in rural areas in the hearts of the rural-urban migrants. The Mango, with its significant attributes, should be considered as one of the structural plants to be planted by developers in their future housing projects, replacing the ornamental species.

II. RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL VALUES

I discovered that the residents showed great interest in growing plants that were both associated with their distinctive religious and cultural values and also other ethnic influences in their altered gardens. For instance, the Chinese residents grew Piper bitel (Betel Leaf) that was strongly related to the Malay and Indian communities. This plant was well-known as a source of food, medicine and cosmetics in Malay society, and was used in religious ceremonies by the Indian communities. Similarly, the Malay communities were attracted to the physical characteristics of Chytostachys lakka (Sealing Wax Palm) and planted them in their gardens, even though this species has explicit traditional and cultural values that relate to the Chinese people. The Indian community favoured nasi lemak (rice cooked in coconut milk) which is among the popular Malay foods, and planted the Pandanus annaryllifolius (Pandanus) in their gardens, with the intention of using it as one of the ingredients in cooking this meal. This sort of interaction strengthened the social integration of the ethnic group. At the same time, their sense of respect for one another can be seen in the tolerance and sensitivity towards other people’s religious and traditional beliefs present in the neighbourhoods. My findings are in contrast to research by Said
(2001a) who argued that plants in the residential garden reflected the sole cultural identity of the house owner. In my study, I am proposing that the utilitarian plants in urban altered gardens do not only represent the house owners’ cultural identity. It is clear that the residents grew plants in their garden that were not only to be used by themselves and peculiar to their identities, but also to be shared with other neighbours with different ethnicities and cultural identities. For example, both the Malay and Indian residents planted *Lawsonia inermis* (Henna) in their altered gardens while the Malays have been influenced by the Chinese to grow Bamboo species in front of the house area.

### III. TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

The Malay and Indian communities shared similar traditional beliefs in the mystical and symbolic properties of plants. In this case, the planting of *Azadirachta indica*, known as Pokok Semambu by the Malays and Neem by the Indians, reflected a distinct cultural assimilation. This plant was among the sacred species used by the Indians in their religious ceremonies and was also part of their traditional medicinal usage. The Malays likewise, used it for medicinal purposes and believed that this plant should be respected. They believed that one should place some coins near the tree bark to express feelings of appreciation, otherwise the plant would die. I also found that the three major ethnicities shared a similar spiritual belief in the *Ephyphyllum anguliger* (Bakawali or Queen of the Night). The unique characteristics of this species, which only blooms at midnight, invited various mystical expressions from these communities. For instance, it was perceived as one of the sacred species in traditional Malay society, guarded by spiritual beings during its blooming period. For the Chinese and Indian people, an opportunity to witness the plant’s blooming was believed to bring good luck and prosperity. This finding suggests that certain elements planted in the altered gardens were shared physically, emotionally and spiritually by the ethnicities in the neighbourhood, creating strong associations between them.

#### 9.5.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LANDSCAPES DEVELOPMENT

My study suggests that the altered gardens developed in semi-public spaces enhanced community engagement and promoted integration among the multiple ethnicities in the neighbourhoods. My fieldwork provided an opportunity for me to talk to the residents, as the end-users of the public landscape developments and in return, they found our conversation a means through which they could express their feelings of dissatisfaction towards the existing landscapes. They gave the impression that their ‘layman’ suggestions,
forwarded to the local authority, on improving the landscapes to better represent themselves in their living spaces, had never been considered. The residents indeed, utilized our meetings as an opportunity to express their disappointment with a local authority that they felt was unable to successfully maintain the semi-public spaces surrounding the neighbourhoods. I could sense their hopes that I, as a landscape architect, could convey these messages and that they could look forward to a new approach to the development of public landscape areas as one of the community projects.

The residents believed that their living environment belonged to them and therefore, they should be authorized to create their own landscape imprints reflecting their traditional, cultural and religious authenticity. They sarcastically suggested that this could help the local authority in doing their work, by giving the authorities more chance to focus on the public park or other urban spaces. The process of re-investing effort and capital to create these landscapes, and then sharing the public spaces, could be one of the rural influences replicated in the urban environment. This provides evidence that the lifestyles of the urban residents can never be detached from the place they came from, the place that first moulded their way of life.

9.6 DESIGN AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Landscape alteration in urban residential areas has been proven to contribute the residents’ feelings of belonging and attachment to the urban neighbourhood. The residents modified the existing landscapes and imprinted their personal identity – expressing both the way they identified themselves and how they wanted people to recognize them. They re-created rural experiences in these semi-public spaces. These landscape alterations however, were unlikely to be recognized as outstanding community efforts by the local authority. The low-cost residential landscape particularly, was negatively perceived as kampong reflections – ‘physical and visual pollutions’ with traditional images that contradicted the modern geometric landscape principles. The local authority, the housing developers and the housing planners in this case, treated the newly developed residential landscapes as another homogenized artefact ignoring any distinct semiotic meanings that the residents may hold (Salleh, 2008). The “homogenous environment” created by developers in urban areas reinforces the problems associated with “ecological heterogeneity”; a result of limited species diversity (Naveh, 1994, p. 181). Naveh (1994) further suggests that “our open landscapes are losing not only their biological richness and ecological stability, but also their cultural wealth and scenic beauty”. Thus, my research findings revealed that the
residents’ effort in planting varieties of native and exotic plant species in their altered gardens is one of the ways of improving the quality of residential environments. The residents altered landscapes were found to correlate to what Naveh’s advocates as “ecodiversity”, defined as “biological, ecological and cultural landscape diversity” (Naveh, 1994, p. 181).

This study was conducted to mediate the above landscape conflicts and to this end, I present several recommendations that will help to enhance the spirit of place in urban living environments. I also suggest a new modus operandi for landscape architects, who should be considering how to create ‘places’ in the urban residential areas.

I. RECOMMENDATION: LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR SHARED SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES

The current landscape and housing planning policy in Malaysia designates that only ten percent of overall housing development should be given over to green spaces. This is insufficient for residents to fully enjoy their recreational activities. I therefore propose that the green buffer zones surrounding low-cost neighbourhood areas to continue to be utilized as social gathering spaces, in addition to the existing playground areas. The local authorities could work together with the community and assist the residents in designing these shared public spaces whilst continuing to advise them on landscape maintenance regimes.

The private housing developers in Malaysia are currently focussing on medium and high-cost housing developments where they provide a distinct green infrastructure surrounding the neighbourhood in contrast to those offered in low-cost housing schemes. My research has illustrated how the residents turned these ‘passive spaces’ into ‘active public’ socializing centres that contributed to the residents’ well-being in the congested urban areas. My findings indicate that the medium-cost residents were ambivalent about these landscapes. On the one hand they felt the need to replicate their rural experiences and on the other hand they tried to portray a modern image using ornamental plants in the urban residential settings. The new image of these shared semi-public spaces including public activities such as walking, jogging, cycling and playing sports and games in the ‘urban orchards’, will help to inject new life into dull semi-public spaces for the benefit of urban dwellers.
My suggestion is that the shared, semi-public spaces in the high-cost residential areas be planted with a combination of ornamental species and fruit trees, that can help to create this place as one of their outdoor gathering activities. The children can utilize this area as an environmental laboratory to learn about nature and it can become a gathering place for shared outdoor activities.

II. RECOMMENDATION: LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR PERSONAL SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES

The low-cost residents were found to have special interest in fruit species being planted in the semi-public spaces, rather than ornamental trees. The *Mangifera indica* (Mango) was the species most preferred by the residents in this study. The landscape architects should consider designing each of the housing rows with similar fruit trees or combining other fruit species such as *Psidium guajava* (Guava), *Lepisanthes ammonia* (Johar), *Anona cherimola* (Castor Apple, Nona), *Manilkara zapota* (Ciku) and *Musa rosacea* (Lotus Banana) in the neighbourhood. I suggest that the developers and the landscape architects work together to provide these species, rather than expecting the residents to buy the plants themselves. In this way, the residents can continue to adopt and maintain the trees that are planted in front of their houses. At the same time, every household should also be given an opportunity to grow other utilitarian and ornamental species in their personal public-spaces, legalizing landscape alterations rather than casting them as acts of resistance.

The low, medium and high-cost residents should be left to make their own decisions on the appearance of the landscape in their personal, semi-public spaces. This is in contrast to the current practice in which the landscape designs and their implementation, in both of the personal and personal semi-public areas, are in the hands of others.

III. RECOMMENDATION: A PARADIGM SHIFT AMONG THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, DEVELOPERS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

My research has provided evidence of how the majority of rural-urban migrants, as the end-users of urban housing developments in the Malaysian urban context, contested the idea of the homogenous landscapes provided by developers. These homogenous landscapes created a sense of placelessness and alienation. The residents challenged the current landscape practitioners by re-creating their desired home landscapes in the semi-public spaces. The residents also confronted the local authority by re-creating personal landscapes or “defiant gardens” (Helphand, 2006), implicitly informing landscape architects, developers and government agencies that the provided landscapes were
meaningless to them. Such findings beg the question: Are we, the landscape architects, failing to design landscapes that are sustainable? Should ‘residential landscape’ be part of the National Landscape Policy with its aim of Greening the Nation? And, should the developers who failed to provide a responsive living environment be penalized and have their services discontinued?

Issues of homogenous landscape development in urban residential areas have been debated in various disciplines especially with the establishment of the “Journal of Place” in 1983 (Jaros, 2007; Sime, 1986). A modern housing development has been described as a soulless sterile community estate - clean and hygienic but lacking vibrancy (Ahmad & Syed Abdul Rashid, 2005). The attitudes of local developers inclined to imitate ‘western’ architectural and landscape design, have implicated negatively on the social and cultural lifestyles of modern communities (Rashdi, 2005). According to Rashdi, negative implications include the loss of traditional identity in architectural structures and more importantly, a sense of ‘alienation’ in our own living spaces. Thus, this research is a call for the local landscape architects and the architects [to get] out of ‘their’ buildings and some psychologists [to get] out of ‘their’ experimental laboratories from which either the people or physical environment, respectively, have for so long been metaphorically excluded

(Sime, 1986, pp. 49-50)

This is a reminder to me and my colleagues in this profession that we are ethically responsible to community needs. Landscape is not a two dimensional art piece. Landscape comprises habitable places and it ought to support human well-being. As Tuan said:

A poem or an essay is not itself an important element in our surrounding. By contrast, a building is. A designed landscape is indeed an all-encompassing milieu. Architecture, unlike literature, can affect our senses directly. It influences us by simply being there, bypassing the necessity to stimulate the active cooperation of the mind.

(Tuan, 1979, p. 97)

Inspired by Tuan’s observations, I suggest that landscape projects should do more than reflect the professional’s personal creativity. The real challenge for us in an era of globalization is to be creative designers and resolve site design problems, as well as being sensitive to vernacular meaning and values (a sense of place) in a way that provides for the social well-being of the users. This paradigm shift can also help to transform the current
image of the landscape architecture profession in Malaysia, which is known to prioritize physical landscape appearance into a profession that is able to support our government’s mission to foster social and ethnic integration in Malaysia through sustainable landscape design. As landscape architect Jane Gillette articulated: “shifting the production of meaning from designers to the audience” (Gillette, 2005, p. 91).

I recommend that sustainable residential development become part of the Landscape Policy of The National Landscape Department of Malaysia. ‘Greening the Nation’, a landscape policy associated with planting more trees in public green spaces and the redevelopment of urban public and recreational parks, should also consider greening and giving meanings to the residential landscapes as part of its objectives. Residential areas should be considered as part of a total urban living environment. Having a sustainable landscape policy implemented for urban residential areas is also one of the ways to curb developers’ ‘greed’ in making substantial profit without considering social development.

IV. RECOMMENDATION: ‘RURALIZING’ THE URBAN RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPES

Industrialization and urbanization in Malaysia have highlighted the urgency of providing adequate urban housing units. Environmental factors that could contribute towards well-being of the residents are, however, neglected. Residents’ involvement in landscape alterations in low-cost housing schemes indicated that their rural, home landscape inspires them in creating a responsive landscape. The term responsive landscape was used in my previous research (Ismail, 2003) and referred to productive landscape elements that responded well to the residents’ cultural, religious and spiritual needs. My data illustrated that medium and high-cost residents were also physically and emotionally bonded with the serenity and tranquillity of the rural settings.

In line with these findings, a landscape policy that implements rural attributes is required. This is to acknowledge the major contribution that utilitarian species have in the gardens in terms of issues of sustainability. Maliki (2008) observed that rural-urban migrants “replicated a kampong-like landscape” in urban living settings. Malaysian urban residents often consider rural social practices to be outdated, in contrast with urban images of success and progress. Deelstra and Girardet (1999, p. 44), revealed that “planners tend to think that urban food growing is a messy business”. 
On the other hand, there is a growing realization that utilitarian plants and gardens can have ornamental aesthetic qualities in themselves, in addition to their crucial role in reducing the “urban ecological footprint” (Deelstra & Girardet, 1999, p. 44). They emphasised that “food supplies to cities are an important component of the footprint”, the key issues of urban sustainability. Mougeot (2006, P.4) describes “Urban Agriculture” as the “growing, processing, and distribution of food and non-food plant and tree crops and the raising of livestock, directly for urban market, both within the fringe of an urban area”.

With this study, I challenge the notion that the traditional plant species and the traditional social habits necessarily imply inappropriate urban living conduct. I also advocate that the residents’ knowledge of gardening, understanding plants and their physical and tangible benefits and the way they re-created semi-public spaces as a meaningful and sustainable living environment should be recognized by the local government and landscape practitioners as well.

V. RECOMMENDATION: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The findings of this research highlight the importance of public participation in the community development process. Public participation combined with the “expert-led” approach is considered to be the best strategy for urban residential developments (Moore-Colyer & Scott, 2005). Consultation with the end-users will ensure that proposals from landscape architects address the needs and values of communities.

Emphasizing a community approach in Malaysian landscape design will ensure an effective engagement between the policy makers and the public. I recommend that mechanisms for efficient collaboration between these two parties are established. Feedback from the community could be facilitated through internet interactive questionnaires in addition to face-to-face focus group meetings. A community landscape association that includes the three major ethnicities can also be established for each of the housing schemes and registered under the local authorities. The local authority’s landscape architects should also be part of the committee. This is to ensure that this program is well-coordinated in achieving its objectives - working together in designing, maintaining and caring for the semi-public spaces. The government’s representative in this association could be the mediator between the government and the public, ensuring all messages are delivered to the local authority for further perusal. The government’s representatives can assist the
residents, especially in the process of applying for the funding and assistance required for community landscape works. In addition, the local authorities can organize annual, bi-annual and monthly activities among the community landscape associations in Selangor. Continuous landscape programmes can help to encourage younger generations to work together in ensuring a healthy and sustainable living environment.

In addition, I see the possibilities of developing landscape projects a few months after residents have occupied their new houses. A landscape community programme could be conducted prior to the design development to ensure their needs and requirements are well considered. The landscape architects could then proceed with the submission and approval of the local authority. The community should be invited to participate during the implementation phase and this activity could help to strengthen neighbourhood relationships. Residents would continue to nurture the plants and help to maintain these areas with continuous support from the local authority. Landscape workshops that include theoretical and practical gardening practices can add to the residents’ knowledge.

VI. RECOMMENDATION: SHARED SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES A CENTRE FOR SOCIAL GATHERING

The lively shared semi-public spaces can become social gathering centers. This is the place where residents can meet after busy and hectic demands of life in the urban areas. They can continue to share produce from these ‘urban orchards’ in the shared semi-public spaces as well as fruits from their personal, semi-public areas.

The three ethnicities in the urban neighbourhood, namely the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, can utilize this space to celebrate events of cultural and traditional significance. The Malay community, as an example, can organize a community gathering during their Eid celebrations. The Chinese society can conduct their Chinese New Year celebrations, while the Indian residents can celebrate their Deepavali festivals in this landscape area. These domestic landscapes have significant knowledge embedded in them. The plants have value for cooking, medicinal use, cosmetics, cultural and ritualistic practices. This is also one of the best platforms for educating the children about environmental values. Theoretical and practical programmes can be conducted from time to time to increase environmental awareness among the younger generations.

Tan Sri Najib Tun Razak, the current Malaysian prime minister, established the slogan of One Malaysia, also known as 1 Malaysia, in his administration. This concept emphasizes
national unity, mutual respect and tolerance among the three major ethnicities in Malaysia. In line with this, I propose that landscape alteration that takes place in semi-public spaces and reflects a degree of cultural assimilation, be adopted as one of the ways of fostering ethnic integration in urban residential areas and at the same time, helping to fulfil the aims of 1 Malaysia programmes.

9.7 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

I have relied on the rural cultural landscapes of the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities as one of the theoretical frameworks underpinning landscape alteration undertaken by rural-urban migrants in urban residential areas. This has enabled me to understand the reasons driving the residents to change the existing landscapes in ways that reflected their cultural and religious identities. Theories of place identity, place attachment and the everyday landscape reinforced the importance of this landscape alteration phenomenon as practiced by the urban residents of a homogenous living environment. Altered gardens become tangible and symbolic expressions of emotional states and attachments.

Most of references used in this study were derived from related disciplines, especially from the field of environmental psychology. There is a lack of studies focusing on urban residential landscapes. Research on the Malaysian residential landscape is also inadequate. My study therefore helps to fill the knowledge gap in landscape literature, particularly in the study of Malaysian residential landscapes.

In an attempt to apply these theories in my study, I engaged with the post-occupancy evaluation method, allowing me to investigate the landscape changes made by the residents living in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. The influence of grounded-theory helped to shape my field work investigations. A case study enriched with face-to-face interviews enabled me to ground the issues and problems related to landscape alterations and exposed me to the challenges encountered by my participants in the process of developing their preferred living settings. These approaches, while uncommon in landscape architecture field, have proven useful in understanding the residents’ interpretation of their living environment. I have found that direct interaction with an existing phenomenon - landscapes and people - is important, especially for designers who generally spend most of their time in their offices and being involved in the initial process of residential development, but tend to overlook how their design will respond to the daily
community activities. This sort of community engagement and professional re-evaluation will increase professional credibility and integrity of consultants.

9.8 CONCLUSION

My research has investigated the meanings invested in the altered landscapes in low, medium and high-cost residential areas. I found that the majority of residents contestated the existing homogenous landscape. I have discussed the values in each of these residential settings that are undeniably important in the daily lives of the community. I have shown how the residents imported ideas and replicated elements of the utilitarian landscape from the village to their urban semi-public spaces. These utilitarian landscapes that related to *kampong-conduct* were viewed negatively by the policy makers. However my findings suggest that *kampong-like* landscapes hold positive values and are able to enhance a sustainable urban living environment.

This study focuses on the altered landscape phenomenon in the landed property of urban housing. Currently economic growth in Malaysia is encouraging the development of multilevel apartments or highrise housing schemes. There is a need for further research to investigate landscape alteration in the shared public spaces of multi-storey buildings. It will be important to explore further to what extent altered landscapes are able to strengthen community relationships and feelings of attachment in these shared living spaces.

As an outcome of this study I identified conflicting attitudes between the government or the local authorities who established urban planning policies, the landscape architects who were constrained by the need to minimize residential landscape costs and professional fees and finally the developers who focussed on profit margins rather than the social and cultural implications of their housing developments. I made a number of recommendations for addressing the above concerns.

My suggestions provide a new modus operandi for the local professional landscape architects with a new design approach for sustainable residential landscapes. I propose that landscape architects work together with the communities in enhancing social domestic landscapes in a way that is congruent with community needs.

In conclusion, I would like to advocate the application of sustainable landscapes in urban residential areas. Landscape architects, along with developers and local authorities should work together to employ a ‘user-oriented’ approach in each of their housing development
projects. The integration of the cultural and modern landscapes can help to produce a unique tapestry reflecting a new identity in the Malaysian landscapes – thereby enhancing the cultural values of the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities.
REFERENCES


phrasefinder.co.uk. doi:http://www.phrases.org.uk


## APPENDIX I  GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ang-pau</td>
<td>‘Red envelope’ a tradition during Chinese New Year celebration symbolizing prosperity and longevity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-la carte menu</td>
<td>A French term meaning ‘according to the menu’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balairaya</td>
<td>Community hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomoh</td>
<td>Shaman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budi concept</td>
<td>Virtuous qualities that include generosity, respect, sincerity, righteousness and discretion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid celebration</td>
<td>A joyous three days Fast-Breaking festival at the end of Ramadhan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotong-royong</td>
<td>Shared labour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablun Minallah</td>
<td>Islamic principles and practice related to the relationship between Man and his Creator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablun Minannas</td>
<td>A relationship between humans in Islamic principles and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Quran</td>
<td>The main religious guiding scripts of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampong</td>
<td>Rural village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampong values</td>
<td>Traditional way of life practised by the rural villagers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenduri</td>
<td>Festive gathering or Thanks Giving ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maghrib prayer</td>
<td>A prayer performed just after sunset, the fourth of five formal daily prayers of Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melayan</td>
<td>Literally means friendly and encouraging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi lemak</td>
<td>Traditional food; rice cooked with coconut milk belonging to the Malay communities in Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OneMalaysia or</td>
<td>Development based on unity and integration to promote the country’s progress introduced by the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMalaysia concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahala</td>
<td>Recompense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pantun</strong></td>
<td>The traditional Malay oral form of expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pelenggar</strong></td>
<td>Outdoor seating bench traditionally used in the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penghulu</strong></td>
<td>Head of the village, elected by the rural communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ponggal celebration</strong></td>
<td>This is one of the important annual celebrations by the Indian communities in the middle of January to denote the sun’s movement towards the North.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puja rituals</strong></td>
<td>Form of worship that relates to dedication and belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sadaqa</strong></td>
<td>What is given voluntarily for the sake of Allah to obtain the recompense from <em>Allah</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semangat</strong></td>
<td>Vital force, animating force within living beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tai-chi exercise</strong></td>
<td>Chinese practice designed to exercise the mind and body through a series of gentle and flowing postures and movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quranic calligraphy</strong></td>
<td>Arabic calligraphy of the Holy Quran.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II   LANDSCAPE SUBMISSION PLANS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. THE LOW-COST HOUSING
2. THE MEDIUM-COST HOUSING
3. THE HIGH-COST HOUSING
APPENDIX III THE ALTERED LANDSCAPE PLANS

1. THE LOW-COST HOUSING

### INVENTORY FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Type</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia agra (Water apple)</td>
<td>F M D C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable (Zucchini, Eggplant)</td>
<td>C M C D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamom (Cardamom)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandanus (Pandanus)</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymbopogon (Citronella)</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group:** 2 3

**Case Study No. 14**

- House Address: Po Box 100, 2nd floor, Parkview
- Tel: 0811345678
- Ethnity: C
- Gender: M
- Age: 34
- Reason for Interest:
  - To have a private garden
  - To have a house
  - To have a house
  - To have a house
  - To have a house

**Categories of Gardeners**
- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Expert

**Garden Elements**
- Flowers
- Trees
- Shrubs
- Vines

**Remarks**
### INVENTORY FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Plant Info</th>
<th>P/M</th>
<th>F/M</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. <em>Pseudobulboidea</em> Elizabeth Argo</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Rhoeo discolor</em></td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Adansonia digitata</em> (Diaspora)</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Allamanda cathartic</em></td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Alstroemeria</em> [Image]</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Apera spica-venti</em> [Image]</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Case Study No: 1
- **Hena Address:** 60, BS BK 65, Fomos Renaissance Resort, Puchong, Selangor 65200, Malaysia
- **Ethnicity:** M | F | C | I
- **Gender:** M | F | C | I
- **Age:** *
- **Function of Garden:**
  - Privacy
  - Tactile
  - To get away from it all
  - To carry on a daily tradition
  - To make a house a home
  - Where you can learn about nature
  - Where you can share with neighbours
  - Where you can express your identity
- **Categories of Gardens:**
  - Exotic Gardens
  - Leisure Gardens
  - Hive gardens
- **Real Landscape Element:**
- **Remarks:**

---

### INVENTORY FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant List</th>
<th>Plant Info</th>
<th>P/M</th>
<th>F/M</th>
<th>C/S</th>
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<td>1. <em>Pseudobulboidea</em> Elizabeth Argo</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <em>Rhoeo discolor</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <em>Adansonia digitata</em> (Diaspora)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <em>Allamanda cathartic</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. <em>Alstroemeria</em> [Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. <em>Apera spica-venti</em> [Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Acer palmatum (Coral Bark)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Convolvulus 'Cobaea'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dianthus 'Coral Carpet'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Euphorbia 'Tutti Frutti'</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kalanchoe 'Apple Blossom'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lamium 'White Nancy'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lavandula 'Crimson Lion'</td>
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#### Case Study: M15

- **House Address:** 19 Am Bk 4H, Bandar Kinrara
- **Tel:** 013 3925777
- **Ethnicity:** C
- **Gender:** M
- **Age:** 40

#### Functions of Garden:
- Oil privacy
- To relax
- To get away from it all
- To carry on a healthy condition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

#### Categories of Gardeners:
- Modern Gardeners
- Local Gardeners
- Keen gardeners

#### Herb Landscaping Elements:
- 

#### Remarks:
2. THE MEDIUM-COST HOUSING
### INVENTORY FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant List</th>
<th>Plant Image</th>
<th>Functions of Gardens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mangifera indica (Mango)</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Mango" /></td>
<td>- Of privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Eucalyptus globulus (Blue Gum)</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Blue Gum" /></td>
<td>- To relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phoenix roebelenii (Date Palm)</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Date Palm" /></td>
<td>- To escape from it all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bougainvillea 'Ugo Carlini'</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Bougainvillea" /></td>
<td>- To carry on a family tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chrysalidocarpus lutescens (Pandanus)</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Pandanus" /></td>
<td>- To make a house a home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Carissa macrocarpa 'Honeysuckle'</td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Honeysuckle" /></td>
<td>- Where you can have fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Phormium tenax (New Zealand Flax)</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="New Zealand Flax" /></td>
<td>- Where you can play with your identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group:** 1  3

**Class Study No:** 4

**House Address:** 3, Jln Bintulu 1/4

**Tel:** 012-3888293 / 012-3890810

**Ethnicity:**  C 1

**Gender:** M

**Age:** 50

**Functions of Gardens:**
- Of privacy
- To relax
- To escape from it all
- To carry on a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can have fun
- Where you can play with your identity

**Categories of Gardens:**
- Relaxation Gardens
- Leisure Gardens
- Easy gardens

**Hard Landscape Elements:**
- Pots
- Concrete and tidying

**Remarks:**
### INVENTORY FORM

| Plant List | Plant stage | Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Argemone mexicana</td>
<td>C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Corokia cotoneaster</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cytisus scoparius var. grunveleri</td>
<td>M C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cytisus scoparius</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cotoneaster versicolor</td>
<td>C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cotoneaster cultivar</td>
<td>C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cosea papyracea</td>
<td>C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study no: 15**

**House Address:** Suja Town
18399 Bally Keshi L200

**Category:** C I

**Remarks:**

---

### INVENTORY FORM

| Plant List | Plant stage | Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mangifera indica</td>
<td>M D S</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Malus spectabilis</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Solanum melongena</td>
<td>M C</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prunus pyrus</td>
<td>M C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Olea europea</td>
<td>C D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nasonovia indica</td>
<td>M D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study no: 12**

**House Address:** Atulkash 1/9

**Category:** C I

**Remarks:**

---

**Functions of Gardens:**
- Privacy
- Terrace
- To grow one's own food
- To enjoy a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can mix with neighbors
- Where you can express your identity

**Categories of Gardens:**
- Residential Gardens
- Leisure Gardens
- Commercial

**Landscape Elements:**

---

**Remarks:**
3. THE HIGH-COST HOUSING
| Plant List | Plant Usage | F.M. D.C. S | Planta maximum (Tangguh) | D:
0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Euphorbia dyeriana</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Euphorbia dyeriana</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Euphorbia dyeriana</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study 1: 1-4**

**House Address:** Dr. Yat

**Gender:** M

**Age:** 60

**Functions of Garden:**
- Places to relax
- To get away from it all
- To serve as a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

**Categories of Garden:**
- Relaxation Garden
- Leisure Garden
- Leisure garden

**Hard Landscape Elements:**
- Plant beds
- Garden lighting
- Stairs

**Remarks:**

---

| Plant List | Plant Usage | F.M. D.C. S | Planta maximum (Tangguh) | D:
0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chrysanthemum latifolium</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Euphorbia dyeriana</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Euphorbia dyeriana</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Euphorbia marginata</td>
<td>D: 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study 2: 1-8**

**House Address:** N. Herman Kubrick

**Gender:** M

**Age:** 60

**Functions of Garden:**
- Places to relax
- To get away from it all
- To serve as a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

**Categories of Garden:**
- Relaxation Garden
- Leisure Garden
- Leisure garden

**Hard Landscape Elements:**

**Remarks:**
## INVENTORY FORM

### Case Study no: 5

**House Address:** Bij Ako
**No:** 12

**Ethnicity:** [C] I

**Gender:** [ ] C [ ] I

**Age:** 55

**Functions of Garden:**
- Of privacy
- To relax
- To get away from it all
- To cater to a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

### Landscape Elements

**Remarks:**

---

## INVENTORY FORM

### Case Study no: 6

**House Address:** Pt. Anti
**No:** 14

**Ethnicity:** [ ] C [ ] I

**Gender:** [ ] M

**Age:** 40

**Functions of Garden:**
- Of privacy
- To relax
- To get away from it all
- To cater to a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

### Landscape Elements

**Remarks:**

---

### Plant List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

### Plant List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
INVENTORY FORM

Case Study no: 10
Home Address: House 15
Pin: Madhish Muthal

Gender: M

Age: 50
Functions of Garden:
- To relax
- To get away from it all
- To carry on a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

Categories of Gardeners:
- Residential Gardeners
- Leisure Gardeners
- Commercial Gardeners

Hard Landscape Elements:

Remarks:

INVENTORY FORM

Case Study no: 16
Home Address: Bikayil

Gender: M

Age: 57
Functions of Garden:
- To relax
- To get away from it all
- To carry on a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

Categories of Gardeners:
- Residential Gardeners
- Leisure Gardeners
- Commercial Gardeners

Hard Landscape Elements:

Remarks:
## INVENTORY FORM

**Plant List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Usage</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sunflower Yellow</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fuchsia 'Cheerful'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cabbage 'Fermat'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bougainvillea 'Elizabeth Angus'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Crape myrtle</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cryptomeria japonica</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study no:** 18

**House Address:** Omar Munic

**Ethnicity:** C | I

**Gender:** M

**Age:** 45

**Functions of Garden:**
- Privacy
- Relaxation
- To get away from it all
- To create a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

**Categories of Gardeners:**
- Indoor Gardeners
- Leisure Gardeners
- Keeper Gardeners

**Hard Landscape Elements:**

**Remarks:**

---

## INVENTORY FORM

**Plant List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Plant Usage</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sunflower Yellow</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fuchsia 'Cheerful'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cabbage 'Fermat'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bougainvillea 'Elizabeth Angus'</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Crape myrtle</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cryptomeria japonica</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study no:** 3

**House Address:** Puan Zainal

**Ethnicity:** C | I

**Gender:** M

**Age:**

**Functions of Garden:**
- Privacy
- Relaxation
- To get away from it all
- To create a family tradition
- To make a house a home
- Where you can learn about nature
- Where you can help to care for the planet
- Where you can share with neighbours
- Where you can express your identity

**Categories of Gardeners:**
- Indoor Gardeners
- Leisure Gardeners
- Keeper Gardeners

**Hard Landscape Elements:**

**Remarks:**

---

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### Case Study 12

**Home Address:** Avenue Fields  
**House:** 22

- **Function of Gardens:**
  - To relax
  - To get away from it all
  - To carry on a family tradition
  - To make a house a home
  - Where you can learn about nature
  - Where you can help to care for the planet
  - Where you can share with neighbours
  - Where you can express your identity

- **Category of Gardens:**
  - Residential Gardens
  - Leisure Gardens
  - Kent gardens

### Case Study 13

**Home Address:** En. Annie  
**House:** 22

- **Function of Gardens:**
  - To relax
  - To get away from it all
  - To carry on a family tradition
  - To make a house a home
  - Where you can learn about nature
  - Where you can help to care for the planet
  - Where you can share with neighbours
  - Where you can express your identity

- **Category of Gardens:**
  - Residential Gardens
  - Leisure Gardens
  - Kent gardens

### Inventory Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant List</th>
<th>Plant Usage</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>S. vulgaris</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>B. vulgaris</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>D. genista</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>E. globulus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>G. pyramidalis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>G. purpurea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Special Images

[Images of plants and garden layouts]