Kampung / Landscape: Rural-urban Migrants’ Interpretations of Their Home Landscape. The Case of Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur

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

at
Lincoln University

by
Nor Zarifah Maliki

Lincoln University
2008
Abstract of a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_Kampung / Landscape:_
Rural-urban Migrants' Interpretations of Their Home Landscape.
The Case of Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur

by

Nor Zarifah Maliki

_Kampung_ is a pervasive concept in Malay Culture and considered counter urban in contemporary discourse. Rural to urban migration of the Malays from _kampung_ to cities occur at an accelerated pace in urbanizing Malaysia. Rural migrants are said to remain attached to their rural _kampung_ lifestyles and find the socio-spatial character of urban environment difficult to adapt to.

Previous studies on rural _kampung_ by anthropologists and social scientists have unpacked the socio-economic and cultural aspects of _kampung_ Malays in rural area. My study of migrants in Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur is focused on the landscape meanings of _kampung_ and explores how these ideas have been brought across to a city environment.

I investigated the meanings and symbolic values that _kampung_ holds to the rural-urban migrants through a ‘landscape lens’. I recorded the experiences of the rural-urban migrants in adapting to an urban landscape, identified _kampung_ elements to which people have strong attachment with and highlighted the _kampung_ characteristics that could be maintained or replicated in order to address the maladaptation of the migrants and enhance their urban living experience.

Study participants were rural-urban migrant respondents from rural _kampung_ in Yan, Kedah who have either moved to Kuala Lumpur or Alor Star. The case studies in the two cities were carried out using qualitative methods including photo elicitation, in-depth interviews, model mapping techniques and participant observation.
Respondents provided narratives of their journey from *kampung*, moving to the city, and their process of adapting and settling in cities. Challenges in adaptation to city living spaces included spatial use, privacy, social relationships, safety and surveillance. My findings demonstrated that the memory of *kampung* plays a significant part in guiding the life of respondents in the city, and that the image of *kampung* is pervasive in the daily social and spatial practice of rural-urban migrants, guiding respondents’ level of adaptation and place-making in the city landscape.

The use of landscape as lens was helpful in interpreting the complex and multivalent *kampung* meanings. Addressing a dynamic *kampung* idea through a landscape framework highlights the strong parallels between *kampung* and the early landscape concepts. The process of unweaving the meanings of *kampung* have illustrated that *kampung* ideas have the potential to inspire a landscape design language that could mitigate the harsh contrast between rural and urban Malaysia.

Keywords: *Kampung*, Landscape architecture, *landschaft*, Malaysia, social landscape.
Acknowledgement

In the preparation of this thesis, I am indebted to many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr Shelley Egoz & Professor Simon Swaffield, my supervisors for their constructive advice, kind supervision and sincere guidance throughout my academic life at Lincoln University.

For all the assistance and support, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to all academic and technical staff in the Landscape Department and Environment, Society and Design Division, in particular Dr Jacky Bowring, Neil Challenger, Douglas Broughton, Shona Mardles and Larry Mortlock.

My gratitude to those who took part in my research: my respondents in Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur, and friendly Yan villagers who welcomed me to their homes.

To my family in Malaysia: my deepest love and gratitude for your encouragements. Thank you for your love, for the blessings and endless doa.

To my office mates: Chiu Pih and Shannon; my flatmates: Elin, Ayu, Emma and Abby; and to all my friends in Lincoln; to my dearest friends in Malaysia, thank you for the friendships and encouragements.

Thank you.

Alhamdulillah.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgement ........................................................................................................ iv  
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... v  
List of Figures ............................................................................................................... viii  
List of Plates ................................................................................................................ ix  
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ xi  

1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 1  
1.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1  
1.2 Research Issues ................................................................................................. 1  
1.3 Research Questions and Research Objective .................................................... 4  
1.4 Case Study ......................................................................................................... 5  
1.4.1 Case study one: Kuala Lumpur ................................................................. 5  
1.4.2 Case study two: Alor Setar ....................................................................... 6  
1.5 Thesis structure ................................................................................................. 7  

2 Landscape and Kampung .......................................................................................... 9  
2.1 Landscape .......................................................................................................... 9  
2.2 ‘Landscape’ in Malay context ............................................................................ 11  
2.3 Cultural landscape ......................................................................................... 13  
2.4 Vernacular landscape ...................................................................................... 15  
2.5 Rural Landscape and the pastoral ideal ............................................................ 16  
2.6 Home and place attachment ............................................................................. 19  
2.7 Landscape of Nostalgia .................................................................................... 22  
2.8 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 23  

3 Malays and Malay Peninsular in Traditional Times ............................................. 24  
3.1 Environment ..................................................................................................... 24  
3.1.1 Geography .................................................................................................. 24  
3.2 Social History .................................................................................................. 26  
3.2.1 Timelines ................................................................................................... 28  
3.2.2 Malays ....................................................................................................... 29  
3.3 Religion and Philosophy .................................................................................... 30  
3.3.1 Animisme ................................................................................................... 30  
3.3.2 Hinduism ................................................................................................... 31  
3.3.3 Islam .......................................................................................................... 32  
3.4 Expression of Malay culture in Kampung ........................................................... 33  
3.4.1 Malay Kinship and Community ................................................................. 33  
3.4.2 The Malay Kampung ............................................................................... 35  
3.4.3 Kampung Leadership and Social Structure ............................................. 37  
3.5 Architecture ....................................................................................................... 40  
3.5.1 Mosque, surau and madrasah .................................................................... 40  
3.5.2 Built environment and spaces in kampung ............................................. 41  
3.5.3 The Malay House ..................................................................................... 42  
3.6 Landscape .......................................................................................................... 45  
3.6.1 Compound and boundary in kampung .................................................... 45  
3.6.2 Boundaries ................................................................................................. 47  
3.6.3 Kampung & Landschaft ......................................................................... 48  

4 Postcolonial Malaysia: Landscape, Urbanization, Migration & Kampung Images 50
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Malay Land and the Colonial Administration</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Redefining Malays and Bumiputera</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Rural and urban Malaysia</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Urbanisation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Malay Migration</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Rural-urban migration for Malays</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Balik kampung and family ties</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Kampung as a nostalgic icon in popular media</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Kampung theme in arts, design and architecture</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Landscape as a powerful lens in explaining kampung</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Kampung and the early landscape meaning, the Landschaft</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Evolution of kampung and landscape meanings</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Kampung, between the lived and the abstract</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Language of landscape</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Modernity effects on rural kampung</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Analysis: Rural-urban Migrant Respondents</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Methodological approach</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Case Study Technique</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>Case study one: Alor Star</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2</td>
<td>Case study two: Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3</td>
<td>Pilot study</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The Respondents</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Methods of Data Collection</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Participant Observation and Thick description</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Photo Elicitation</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.3</td>
<td>In-depth Interview</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.4</td>
<td>Mental Mapping with Models</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rural Urban Migrants’ Experience of the City</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Relationships Between Respondents</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Rural-urban Migrant Respondent Categories</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Photo Elicitation</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Results from Model Mapping</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.1</td>
<td>Physical Landscape in Kampung</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rural Urban Migrants’ Place Attachment and Sense of Place</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Rural Migrants Dealing with Urban Spaces</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Noise, Silence, Isolation and Privacy</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Social spaces and individuality</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Defensible Space and Moral Safety</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Creating Personalised and Social Spaces</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Negotiating Space in the City</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Spaces of Cultural Differences</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rural Urban Migrants’ Place Attachment and Sense of Place</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Home, Roots and Returns</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Religious issues and moral conduct</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>People-relation attachment</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Pastoral ideals &amp; ‘Malay Pastoral’ sentiment</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.1</td>
<td>Attachment to activities and physical environment in kampung</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.5 Picturesque Kampung .................................................................167
9.6 Pejorative view of kampung ......................................................169
9.7 Tale of Two Cities: Comparison Between Two Case Studies ..........171
10 Voices From Kampung .................................................................178
  10.1 Pastoral Ideal of Kampung and Rural Ambivalence ....................178
  10.2 Absence and Social spaces .......................................................180
  10.3 The Need to ‘Develop’ ...............................................................183
  10.4 Age and Kampung Living .........................................................184
  10.5 Crime, Moral & Religious Conducts ...........................................185
  10.6 Surveillance and Defensible Space .............................................188
  10.7 The Changing Kampung ..........................................................191
  10.8 Between Kampung and City .....................................................195
11 Findings and Conclusions ............................................................196
  11.1 Reflections on Kampung ..........................................................196
      11.1.1 Landscape Design Language .............................................200
  11.2 Rural-urban Migrants’ Interpretations of Kampung .......................201
      11.2.1 Cultural and Moral Landscape ..........................................202
      11.2.2 Social and Spatial Practice ...............................................203
      11.2.3 Pastoral Sentiments and Rural Ambivalence .......................204
      11.2.4 Changing Home Place and Place Attachment ......................206
      11.2.5 Nostalgia ..................................................................207
  11.3 Rural-urban Migrants’ Adaptation to the Urban Environment .........208
      11.3.1 Settling in Places that Resemble Kampung Landscape Character...210
      11.3.2 Creation of ‘Kampung-like’ Communities ............................210
      11.3.3 Modification and Negotiations to Spatial Use and Physical Boundaries 211
      11.3.4 Surveillance for Physical and Moral Safety ..........................212
      11.3.5 Gender Dimensions and Privacy .......................................215
  11.4 Design Recommendations and Strategies ...................................216
      11.4.1 Social Policy ................................................................216
      11.4.2 Urban Planning Policy ......................................................217
      11.4.3 Open Space and Landscape Design ....................................217
      11.4.4 Housing Design and Architectural Resolutions ....................221
  11.5 Future Research .................................................................225
  11.6 Conclusions ..................................................................227
Bibliography ..................................................................................229
List of Figures

Figure 3-1 Hirarchy of Kampung Administration .................................................................38
Figure 5-1 The change of landshaft and kampung meaning.................................................69
Figure 6-1 Iterative qualitative process ..................................................................................74
Figure 6-2 3-Steps-Interview ................................................................................................84
Figure 7-1 Relationship between respondents .....................................................................93
Figure 7-2 Five groups of rural-urban migrant respondents .................................................94
Figure 11-1 Key themes in rural-urban migrants’ interpretations of kampung ...............202
Figure 11-2 Rural-urban migrants’ stages of city living .......................................................209
List of Plates

Plate 1-1 Case study site: Alor Setar and Kuala Lumpur ...........................................................6
Plate 3-1 Malay Peninsular, Map during British Colonial Years ...............................................24
Plate 3-2 Current Map of Malaysia with states boundaries, not to scale ................................26
Plate 3-3 Kampung house and rice field ....................................................................................30
Plate 3-4 Mosque and cemetery ...............................................................................................40
Plate 3-5 A Malay house ..........................................................................................................42
Plate 3-6 Common elements around a Malay house. Source: Lim Jee Yuan, 1987 .................44
Plate 3-7 House compound ......................................................................................................45
Plate 4-1 A website providing online streaming of 50 years Petronas Merdeka advertisement ............................................................58
Plate 4-2 Kampung Series 2001 by Yeong Seak Ling .............................................................61
Plate 4-3 Cover of a cartoon book, The Kampung Boy by Lat, first published 1979 .............62
Plate 4-4 Lat’s expression of a little child wanting to explore the outside world, the kampung from inside a Malay house ...............................................................63
Plate 4-5 Kampung Warisan Condominium ..........................................................................64
Plate 6-1 Alor Star skyline .......................................................................................................77
Plate 6-2 Alor Star city .............................................................................................................78
Plate 6-3 Kuala Lumpur skyline ................................................................................................79
Plate 6-4 State of Kedah: a circle indicates Yan district ...........................................................81
Plate 6-5 A sketch of kampung by pilot study respondent ......................................................90
Plate 6-6 Model mapping .........................................................................................................91
Plate 8-1 Corridors at two respondents' apartments unit. Only the front door links dwellers physically and visually to corridors ........................................................................105
Plate 8-2 Open windows provide ventilation and natural lighting in kampung houses, difference in level keeps the privacy of the interiors ........................................................................106
Plate 8-3 Houses built right next to narrow roads in Kg. Kerinchi. Some respondents prefer to live in squatters than living in ‘pigeonhole’ flats and apartments .........................................................107
Plate 8-4 Kg. Kerinchi Squatters ..........................................................................................108
Plate 8-5 Mariam's apartment at a corner before a staircase ................................................109
Plate 8-6 KLCC Park .............................................................................................................112
Plate 8-7 Titiwangsa Lake Garden .........................................................................................112
Plate 8-8 Fallen coconut trunk used as boundary marker between these two houses in kampung .................................................................................................115
Plate 8-9 Karim’s house compound in a ‘pioneer kampung’ in Kuala Lumpur .....................116
Plate 8-10 Narrow roads and organic house arrangement in Karim’s ‘urban kampung’ ........117
Plate 8-11 A bench (pelenggar or pangkin) used as a meeting spot for older residents ......121
Plate 8-12 Fatihah’s current front porch with the gate closed ................................................122
Plate 8-13 A kampung house next to a rice field with windows on all sides ......................123
Plate 8-14 Drying laundry at corridors of low-cost apartment ...............................................128
Plate 8-15 Inadequate and poorly ventilated laundry spaces lead residents to hang clothes from windows and corridors .............................................................................................128
Plate 8-16 Balcony and lift lobby are informal nodes of interaction for apartment dwellers ..............................................................................................................................130
Plate 8-17 Staircase became one of the nodes for apartment dwellers to meet informally ........................................................................................................................................130
Plate 8-18 Ladies using front porch as a kitchen to cook together .........................................134
Plate 8-19 Men and women together making ‘bubur asyura’ ....................................................134
Plate 8-20 Ladies got together to make bubur asyura in Kuala Lumpur ........................................137
Plate 8-21 Getting a flat unit on the ground floor is an advantage for urban dwellers like Abdullah ...........................................................................................................................................137
Plate 8-22 Hasbullah b Rahmat’s house, ladies preparing ingredients for a kenduri kahwin ............................................................................................................................................138
Plate 8-23 Four house compounds/ front porches were used in the handling of a wedding feast for Ismail’s daughter ........................................................................................................................................140
Plate 8-24 Male guests’ feast tent in front of Ismail’s house: guests’ seating were gender segregated ........................................................................................................................................140
Plate 9-1 A mosque plays an important role in a kampung community ........................................151
Plate 9-2 Green open rice fields that Hasbullah claims as ‘rejuvenating view’ ............................155
Plate 9-3 Kampung dwellers fishing in water channels and rivers ..............................................158
Plate 9-4 Model Map by Hamid b. Abdullah, 74, Alor Star ....................................................160
Plate 9-5 Model map by Aishah bt. Zain, 45, Alor Star ..........................................................160
Plate 9-6 Home garden in the compound of a house in Kg. Permatang Keramat, planted with a mix of ornamental and edible plants ..................................................................................................................161
Plate 9-7 Potted plants outside Naimah bt. Endut’s flat unit ....................................................161
Plate 9-8 River is one of the most important natural landscape elements in the memory of rural-urban migrants ..............................................................................................................................163
Plate 9-9 Titi Hayun river received visits from both kampung residents and outsiders ...............163
Plate 9-10 Six out of ten paintings displayed at Rosli’s house ..................................................165
Plate 9-11 Landscape paintings which include water elements at respondents' homes in Alor Star ........................................................................................................................................168
Plate 9-12 Kampung life meant hard labour for some respondents ...........................................170
Plate 9-13 Fruit tree planted and pelenggar built on road reserve in front of Zabidah’s terrace house unit in Alor Star ...........................................................................................................................177
Plate 10-1 Pelenggar, a common spot for interaction in kampung ............................................182
Plate 10-2 Pelenggar in Kampung Raga .....................................................................................182
Plate 10-3 Boys in Kampung Raga work together to maintain their field and playground ...........187
Plate 10-4 'Gotong royong' spirit among young boys of Kg. Raga ..............................................187
Plate 10-5 Small tarmac kampung road , wide enough for a car to pass ....................................188
Plate 10-6 A small bridge connecting two house compounds separated by a ditch ..................190
Plate 10-7 Low shrubs marks the boundary but do not block any circulation between two house compounds ........................................................................................................190
Plate 10-8 Jelapang padi – rice storage that used to be revered to respect rice spirit .................192
Plate 10-9 Some kampung children still experience the 'kampung childhood' .............................194
Plate 10-10 Kampung children biking on small bund across a rice field ..................................194
Plate 11-1 Rosli’s small backyard planted with coconut tree, lime and torch ginger plant .............214

Note: Unless otherwise stated all the photographs in the plates belong to the author.
**List of Tables**

Table 1-1 Facts of the two cities: Kuala Lumpur and Alor Setar ...........................................7  
Table 2-1 Malay terms of landscape and literal translation ..................................................12  
Table 3-1 Timelines of Malaysia history ..............................................................................28  
Table 3-2 Pronouns with rank by age ...................................................................................34  
Table 4-1 Elements portrayed in Merdeka advertisements ................................................59  
Table 7-1 Photo elicitation: photos with most responses .....................................................98  
Table 7-2 Physical landscape elements drawn on in model maps (most frequent) ..........100  
Table 9-1 Number of respondents in two cities and their intention to return to  
kampung ..........................................................................................................................173  
Table 9-2 Differences in respondent's views in Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur ...............175  
Table 9-3 Similarities in respondents views in two case studies ....................................176  
Table 11-1 Respondents’ description of kampung-city dichotomy .................................205
1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Kampung is a term that appears frequently in the discourses of urbani ty and development in Malaysia. This study is an investigation into meanings of kampung to the rural-urban migrants in Malaysia. It is based on the premise that an understanding of how rural-urban migrants perceive the rural kampung landscape can help in developing design ideas and planning frameworks for future urban landscape development, and rural urbanization, in which ‘sense of place’ and traditional landscape values can be maintained. This study uses the concepts of landscape as lens to analyze how the rural kampung is interpreted by the people who were once connected to that landscape. The study involves people from agricultural based-rural regions in the north of Peninsular Malaysia who have moved to big cities in Malaysia, exploring the rural-urban migrants’ symbolic and personal associations connecting to the traditional landscape of kampung in Malaysia.

1.2 Research Issues

There are several issues that initiated my interest to study kampung from the perspectives of rural-urban migrants.

First, the rural vernacular landscape and a rural way of life in Malaysia are thought of in different ways. Some people hold favourable sentiments towards the idea of a rural lifestyle and rural landscape, others feel it is a backward environment, and there are those who are indifferent. A rural landscape is now seen by many westerners as the ‘place’ to live with a good lifestyle and sense of belonging. In Malaysia, the rural people usually live in a vernacular landscape of traditional villages, also known as kampung, and there is a growing concern that the positive associations of the kampung land use are now lost to urbanization.

The rural landscapes in South East Asia and most of the developing world, however, are typically related to poverty and hardships, while urban environments are associated with progress, wealth and success. Limited employment opportunities, education needs, the lack of
modern facilities and to a certain extent the lures of entertainment in cities sometimes drive people away from the rural landscape in these regions. It is a yearning for a better life that leads people to move from rural areas to cities. The process of migration involves displacement from familiar landscapes and requires an adaptation to a new urban environment and many migrants retain nostalgic feelings for the lost qualities of rural living. My study will explore and interpret these feelings and place them in a wider international discourse of landscape and rurality.

Second, most of the people living in urban areas in developing countries today have experienced living in rural areas. In Malaysia, the percentage of people living in urban areas increased from only 27% in 1970 to 62% in 2000 (Population and Housing Census 2000). Almost forty years ago, the Malay society in Malaysia had been mostly rural and agricultural. Since 1970s the Malaysia government, through New Economic Policy (NEP) and the Second Malaysia Plan (MP2) supports rural-urban migration for the Malays as a step to modernise the populations through an exposure to the urban environment (Malaysia, 1971). Malaysians now have become more itinerant and “urban-bound migration among rural Malays has not only become the norm, the alternative of not migrating has become extremely rare” (Thompson, 2002, p.71).

In planning for landscape development, we cannot assume people from different cultures and backgrounds are all the same. Some culture groups can easily bond to a new place and new lifestyles while others have difficulties adapting (Smith, 2002). In Malaysia’s national capital, Kuala Lumpur, Malay rural-urban migrants in 1970s tended to stay in the Malay urban villages such as Kampung Baru (Ismail, 1998); an environment similar to their rural ‘kampung’ life and landscape. Due to their low income, and insufficient supply of low-cost housing at that time, the rural-urban migrants took the other alternative by settling into squatter areas which are also called kampung, due to the self-built and unplanned character of the settlement.

Some of the rural-urban Malay migrants face problems adapting to the urban environment, especially those who moved (or asked to move) into high rise ‘pigeonhole’ flats. Tim Bunnell (2002) in his article ‘Kampung Rules: Landscape and the Contested Government of Urban(e) Malayness’ describes the ‘out of place’ problem: undesirable and inappropriate urban conduct among the Malay migrants in urban areas. From his study of newspaper reports, governmental
policies, interviews and other sources, Bunnell stated that “[k]ampung Malays supposed maladaptation to modern, urban life is manifested in ‘social ills’ such as dadah (‘drug abuse’) and lepak (‘loafing’)” (Bunnell, 2002, p.1690), while the government’s attempt to modernise the rural migrants in squatter settlement into ‘modern’ flats did not fully succeed due to their “undesirable kampung conduct in the Malaysian urban landscape – ‘inappropriate’ garbage disposal, ‘backward’ values, ‘apathetic’ attitudes and ‘immoral’ conduct” (Bunnell, 2002, p.1691) (emphasis in original).

Such social problems call for attention. Both social and spatial elements of the urban landscape can be factors that contribute to such problems. Mohd Talhah, in a campaign to save an urban village in Penang, was reported saying that people are inclined to change their behavior when they move to high-rise dwelling and stressed the need to retain the ‘traditional make-up’ and social interaction as it was in the traditional village (Seneviratne, 1995, December, 27). My study of landscape meaning looks into such rural-urban migrants’ difficulties in adapting to the urban landscape in an attempt to understand the rural place attachment among migrants and examines lessons to be learnt from the ways in which people have or have not adapted to big cities.

Third, landscape studies, especially involving the design of landscape, often treat rural and urban landscape as two separate entities. The urban landscape is commonly accepted to embrace modern, globally oriented and practical appearances while a rural landscape is supposedly idyllic and timeless. Jeffrey S. Smith (2002) argues that people who move from rural areas have some rural attachment, bringing with them memories and values of the rural landscape, and as such, the urban landscape can never be totally separated from the influences and sentiments of the rural. Smith (2002) studied the Hispano migrants’ experiences which reveal some symbols of the relationship between their rural village and urban places and found that rural landscape elements of the Hispanos are clearly visible in the urban landscape. Smith stressed that studies need to be done to analyze the urban landscape for the “strong emotional attachment city dwellers have for rural areas” (2002, p.435) while Rigg (1998) called for more research at the interface of rural and urban culture to better understand and appreciate the bond between rural and urban places.

Landscape is dynamic and always changing, both physically and in socio-cultural terms. However, with the rapid urban expansion, a declining agricultural sector and increasing rural
urbanization in Malaysia, the rural landscape is also changing at a greater speed and more rural people will live in urban areas in the future. Thus, it is crucial to understand the cultural meanings and values of the rural landscapes for practical use in design, planning for development, managing the landscape change, and in protecting the essential elements of the rural kampung landscape in facing urbanization and ‘progress’. Sani (1990) asserted that culture must be a central constituent of development strategies and such strategies should be sensitive to the cultural ethos of the society, whilst contributing to the development of a country.

I would argue that one of the ways to learn and understand the attachment and meaning of a cultural landscape is through people who have experienced the landscape from both the inside and the outside. My study therefore unweaves the meanings of kampung from the memories and experiences of rural-urban migrants and explores concepts and strategies on how the urban landscape can be better planned for the integration of rural people and rural lifestyle in urban areas.

1.3 Research Questions and Research Objective

The overall goal of this research is to understand the meanings and symbolisms of kampung to rural-urban migrants and how the rural place attachment affects their life in urban environments. In short the research aims to:

- understand the meanings and values of kampung to the rural-urban migrants
- understand the experience of the rural-urban migrants in adapting to an urban landscape
- identify kampung elements with which people have strong attachment
- identify the kampung characters that should be maintained in order to enrich future urban development
The main research questions in my study are:

- How do rural-urban migrants interpret the kampung and what are the important elements/symbols in kampung landscape that are significant to them?
- How do the rural-urban migrants adapt to the urban environment?
- What design strategies have the potential to ‘ground’ rural people within the urban setting?

1.4 Case Study

The process of answering my research questions involves two case studies;

1.4.1 Case study one: Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur is the national capital of Malaysia, with 100% of the population considered urban (Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2000). Kuala Lumpur has one of the highest influx of Malay rural-urban migrants. The Malay population in Kuala Lumpur increased from 15% in 1957 to 25% in 1970. The percentage has grown rapidly since the implementation of the National Economic Policy in 1971 which encouraged Malay rural-urban migration. The high Malay rural-urban migration in the 70’s and 80’s is largely absorbed by the urban squatter settlement in Kuala Lumpur, which has contributed to much of Kuala Lumpur’s urban issues.

Kuala Lumpur’s landscape has generally adopted a modern look while maintaining some traces of its colonial history, a mixture of modern skyscrapers and colonial buildings. Kuala Lumpur presents a living landscape that is highly in contrast to the rural kampung landscape. Rural lifestyle and kampung landscape is seen by some as not fit to this visionary city and there are lots of ‘maladaptation to urban life’ cases in Kuala Lumpur reported in media (Bunnell, 2002).
1.4.2 Case study two: Alor Setar

Alor Setar is the provincial capital of Kedah, a predominantly agricultural state. Kedah is also known as the ‘rice bowl’ of Malaysia due to its function as the main rice producer in the country. The percentage of urban population in Kedah is about 39.3% (Population and Housing Census 2000), among the lowest in peninsular Malaysia. Kedah is striving towards becoming a developed state by the year 2010. Rural-urban migrants in Alor Setar mainly come from neighboring districts and rural areas. The physical landscape of Alor Setar is a
mixture of rural and urban elements where agricultural areas and kampung are in close proximity with the urban centre. This type of urban setting is therefore different to Kuala Lumpur in terms of scale, land use pattern, population density, and availability of land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kuala Lumpur</th>
<th>Alor Star</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>National Capital</td>
<td>State Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>243 sq. km.</td>
<td>665 sq. km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.4 million (2000 Census)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur City Hall</td>
<td>Alor Setar City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received city status</td>
<td>1 February 1972 (1880 became capital of Selangor)</td>
<td>21 December 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>High density- highrise low-cost housing, highrise medium and high-cost, single storey, terrace and semi detached are for medium and high cost</td>
<td>Mixed types- traditional house, single storey, terrace, low density multi-storey housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>approximately 5761 person per sq. km</td>
<td>approximately 601 person per sq.km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Mining village, opened by a Chinese Captain-Yap Ah Loy</td>
<td>Agricultural center, major center for trade in rice and rubber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1-1 Facts of the two cities: Kuala Lumpur and Alor Setar

I chose the two cities for my case studies due to their differences in terms of their level of urbanization, the density in the land use and their character of urban landscape. My assumption is that rural-urban migrants adapt differently to different levels of urbanization.

1.5 Thesis structure

My thesis will be presented as follows:

Chapter 2 provides some explanation on the theories of landscape from the west that is used as a lens to understand kampung and the connection of the term landscape to the current use in Malaysia.
Chapter 3 discusses the background and history of the Malays in Malaysia, their environment and worldview.

Chapter 4 deals with postcolonial Malaysia and issues in the land system changes, urbanization and migration of the Malays.

Chapter 5 discusses the concept of kampung in relation to landscape and sets up the theoretical framework of my study.

Chapter 6 discusses the methods and data collection for the fieldwork.

Chapter 7 presents the analysis of the fieldwork involving two case studies undertaken in urban Malaysia.

Chapter 8 deals with spatial issues faced by urban migrants in adapting and living in the city landscapes.

Chapter 9 demonstrates the pervasive power of kampung idea in the minds and memory of rural-urban migrants. This chapter discusses the attachment to kampung and the strong nostalgia among the rural-urban migrants.

Chapter 10 brings the insider views on kampung. This chapter discusses kampung from the kampung dwellers’ point of view.

Chapter 11 Summarises the findings of the study and several design suggestions are given to help ‘ground’ the rural-urban migrants in the urban landscape. The chapter also gives conclusions of my study, in relation to theoretical contributions and suggestions for further research.
2 Landscape and Kampung

This chapter provides a review of some theoretical terms in landscape that will set the background and framework for my exploration on kampung. This study will begin with some clarifications and operational definitions of the term ‘landscape’ and kampung. These multilayered landscape ideas act as a lens to help in understanding the multiple meaning of kampung.

2.1 Landscape

Landscape is a polysemous and ambiguous term. It is interdisciplinary; used by different groups for various purposes and creates interests from different fields of enquiry (Groth, 1997; Meinig, 1979). Barbara Bender demonstrates in her work that landscape is convoluted, reflective and multi-layered, even difficult to classify or to quantify (Bender, 1993). Contemporary usage of the term ‘landscape’ varies according to context and typically contains “traces of active, experiential, and detached, pictorial meanings” (Swaffield, 2005, p.6). James Corner explains that landscape, as ‘medium of exchange’ that evolves within tangible and intangible elements in different societies in their own time, ascribing their own meanings to it without necessarily sharing the same standard or fixed meaning, values and characteristics (Corner, 1999).

The etymology of the word landscape has been well-documented (Corner, 1999; Jackson, 1984; Olwig, 2002; Relph, 1981; Spirn, 1998). From the middle ages to the contemporary meaning, landscape is mainly associated with the human shaping of space and the physical environment and the on-going interaction of a physical environment with the human way of seeing and thinking.

Kenneth Olwig (2002) explores the origins and developed an analysis of the early meaning of the term landscape or Landschaft in the German-speaking regions of North Sea and Western Baltic in Europe. The word landscape was widely used in the Netherlands and in other countries along the North Sea during the last centuries of the Middle Ages. Olwig points out that Landschaft denoted “a particular notion of polity rather than to a territory of a particular
size” (Olwig, 2002, p.16). In this sense, the land is defined by “[C]ustom and culture”, not by “physical geographical characteristics”. Instead, it was a social unit with “physical expression in the area under its law” (Olwig, 2002, p.19). The notion of landscape in a landschaft sense served as a political, social and cultural unit; a home for a specific group with its customs and institutions, expressed on a land. Landschaft does not focus on scenic aspects thus it mainly points to a spatiality formed through social and environmental practice. During the pre-modern era, production involving agricultural, artisan or industrial, dominated the landschaft (Olwig, 2002).

The early landschaft usage in Europe can be viewed to parallel the Malay kampung. Kampung is also is meaningful at different scales. In Malaysia, the kampung can refer to “the 'village' or to a single dwelling, or indeed to a wider geographical area encompassing more than a single 'village’” (Rigg, 1994, p.123).

Landscape in Europe started to include a scenic dimension in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This 'landscape’ term evolved from Germanic to Dutch’s landschap/landskip which “relates to the more abstract and pictorial representation of land” (Swaffield, 2005, p.6) before it entered the English language. The English term 'landscape' derives from the Dutch word landschap, from the common Germanic land and the suffix -schap meaning 'constitution, condition' (Makhzoumi & Pungetti, 1999). The first half of the word, 'land' ties the word to the physical and tangible, though 'land' also connotes with the intangibles such as emotions, actions, imagination, nationalism and identity. As Denis Cosgrove has argued, “[l]andscape is taken here in its broadest sense as the surface of the physical earth, the surface upon which humans live, which they transform and which they frequently seek to transcend” (Cosgrove in Bender (ed.) 1993, p.282). The term landscape was then shifted to form an ‘idea’ using graphic and mathematical methods that create borders and are mapped into territorialised spaces creating regional and national state boundaries (Cosgrove, 1998). The relationships between land and social life were given an aesthetic connotation. Picturesque landscape images became popular, yet the term lacked the social relevance given to landscape in earlier eras. Such an aesthetic pictorial view of landscape positioned humans as viewers outside the landscape (Cosgrove, 1998) and the images of landscape are very likely to have strong nostalgic and sentimental effects on viewers.
Upon first seeing a landscape, the tangibles are denoted, and upon further contemplation, human minds connote deeper meanings and association of the landscapes, reading the landscape. Looking at the signs and symbolism people ascribe to their landscapes, cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues that landscapes might be seen as ‘a story… [people] tell themselves about themselves’ (Geertz 1973, p.448). Ann Whiston Spirn (1998) equates landscape to language which “can be spoken, written, read, and imagined” (Spirn, 1998, p.125). Since the landscape “associates people and place” it cannot be replaced by the word ‘environment’ or ‘place’ as these two words omit ‘people’. “Landscape connotes a sense of purposefully shaped, the sensual and aesthetic, the embeddedness in culture” (Spirn, 1998, p.126). When the word was transferred through different languages in the European region, the meaning went through modifications and lost some of its original meanings (Spirn, 1998). Thus the diversity of landscape meaning may be even wider when the word is translated.

Makhzoumi & Pungetti (1999, p.4) categorize the multiple meanings of landscape under four broad perspectives. Namely, landscape as scenery; landscape as a specific place; landscape as an expression of culture; and landscape as a holistic entity. These categories are reciprocally inclusive. In this study, I explore the meanings of kampung through the multiple layers of a landscape framework. My study of kampung draws particularly upon the viewpoints of ‘landscape as a specific place’ and ‘landscape as an expression of culture’. The view of landscape as scenery and a holistic entity are nevertheless intertwined in these perspectives as well. While all the definitions and categorizations above are valid, my exploration of kampung as landscape will focus mostly on the cultural and social aspects. It therefore puts my study under the scope of ‘cultural landscape’ studies.

2.2 ‘Landscape’ in Malay context.

There is no exact word for ‘landscape’ in Malay. Currently the term ‘landskap’, adapted from the English ‘landscape’ is used as a translation to carry the multi-layered definition of landscape in Malay. There were also previous translations of landscape but the meanings were rather specific to certain concepts in landscape and non-inclusive. Table 2.1 contains some examples of the cognate terms used before the modern adoption of the term landskap; with their literal translations.
Use of the English term ‘landscape’ in Malaysia has been used synonymously with the process of ‘greening’ the land with ornamental trees and shrubs. As in popular usage elsewhere in the world, the landscape architect’s role is often thought of as a person who creatively uses plant materials to improve the outdoor area of a development (Shariff & Shuib, 1998). This has been reinforced by the usage promoted by professional and governmental organisations.

The formation of a professional body for landscape architects in Malaysia started in 1981 with a body known as Malaysia Landscape Architect Force (Angkatan Landskap Arkitek Malaysia-ALAM), which became known as the Malaysia Institute of Landscape Architect (Institut Arkitek Landskap Malaysia, ILAM) in 1998/1999. The National Landscape Department of Malaysia (Jabatan Landskap Negara) was established in 1996 as a governmental effort to facilitate and develop landscape industries. Among others, the department was formed with the aims to create a clean, beautiful, comfortable and safe living environment; guide and regulate landscape development; preserve the balance between development and the environmental sustainability; raise public knowledge and awareness of the development, management and use of landscape, public parks and recreational facilities; and to preserve and enrich the country’s landscape resources for the benefit of future
generations\(^1\). However, a scan through the policies and services listed on the department’s website indicates that they focus more on the ‘greening the nation’ projects, and also on the development of recreational parks. Thus it is not surprising if everyday people continue to think that landscape relates only to gardens and plants.

### 2.3 Cultural landscape

Cultural landscape studies originate in the discipline of geography (Jones, 2003). They also underpin landscape architecture and resource management (Taylor, 2002). The term cultural landscape was introduced to the English world by Carl O. Sauer (1925). His idea gained prominence through his essay, in ‘The Morphology of Landscape’, in which Sauer stated;

"The cultural landscape is fashioned from the natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result” (Sauer, 1925 in Groth & Wilson, 2003, p.5).

Hence cultural landscapes are traces of human living that change any part of a natural environment. Sauer’s definition underlies all the world wide human-reached landscapes. By the use of cultural ‘group’, Mike Crang also suggests that “landscapes are not individual property; they reflect a society's - a culture's - beliefs, practices and technologies” (Crang, 1998, p.15). Cultural geographer, Donald Mitchell recognises that “culture is spatial” (Mitchell, 2000, p.63). Although it is not clearly visible, it subsists in spaces and spatial practices in our everyday and ordinary world. The spatial expression of the Malay culture can be seen in their use of rural space, as will be explained in chapter three.

Dennis Cosgrove (1988) and J.B. Jackson (1984) stress that cultures are plural and constantly negotiated. In the same vein, James Corner (1999) asserts that landscape is:

“both spatial milieu and cultural image...[It] is an ongoing medium of exchange...that is embedded and evolved within the imaginative and material practices of different

\(^1\) From National Landscape Department website: http://www.kpkt.gov.my/jln/main.php?Content=vertsections&SubVertSectionID=95&VertSectionID=2&CurLocation=93&IID=&Page=1
societies at different times…[T]he landscape idea is neither universally shared nor manifested in the same way across cultures and times.” (Corner, 1999, p.5).

Although a landscape concept can be introduced to a different culture through colonisation or cultural assimilations, it may not be accepted and understood in the similar manner by people from a different culture. Barbara Bender (1993) notes that since the 1980s anthropologists have begun to recognise that landscape binds people’s perceptions of their world. She also questions the Western conception of landscape as a perceived view and argues that landscape meaning should be seen in the real context, because how people “understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions” (Bender, 1993, p. 2). Every society has their way of seeing their landscapes, some largely differ from another while others are shared although the cultures are separated across continents.

The multivalent and all encompassing concept of landscape provides an orderly framework to analyse our vision and our sentiments about the environment around us (Swaffield, 2002) and to comprehend the way humans customize their surroundings to suit their necessities and wishes (Swaffield, 2005). There is a tension, however, between the connotations of landscape; on the one hand it is “an elitist (and illusory) ‘way of seeing’” and on the other hand it is an expression of “a vernacular (and realistic) ‘way of life’” (Daniels, 1987 in Swaffield, 2005, p.6). The privileged and elitist views of landscape are discussed by Williams (1985) and Cosgrove (1988). Cosgrove’s interpretation of landscape suggests that landscape could be a strong symbol of social power. Cosgrove (1998) approaches landscape from an analysis of the historical appropriation of land, art history and the Dutch representation of visible world. He argues that during the rise of capitalism in the 17th and 18th century landscape was a product of dominant elites, and the conception of land as a saleable commodity produced an alienated relationship between man and land (Cosgrove, 1998), causing one to be an outsider and seeing landscape from “a privileged perspectival vision” (Groth & Wilson, 2003, p.18).

A more inclusive concept of landscape that interprets the concept on a more ‘non-elitist’ and ordinary level is supported by Jackson (1984), Bender (1993) and Spink (1998). In studying the kampung, the ‘cultural landscape’ where people work and make a living, I adopt the inclusive and vernacular idea of landscape. Kampung denotes the ordinary landscape of the rural Malays which at the same time holds an important image in the life of rural-urban migrants.
2.4 Vernacular landscape

Vernacular landscape is closely related to the idea of cultural landscape. Jackson, defined vernacular as “something countrified, homemade, traditional” (Jackson, 1984, p.85). In the vernacular landscape, the creation of landscape is not the first intention. As Jackson clarifies:

“No group sets out to create a landscape….What it sets out to do is to create a community, and the landscape as its visible manifestation is simply the by-product of people working and living, sometimes coming together, sometimes staying apart, but always recognizing their interdependence” (1984, p.12)

Donald Meinig (1979, p.228-9) lists the key features of Jackson's landscape idea: landscape is anchored upon human life, not something to look at but to live in, and to live in with other people. Landscape is a unity of human and environment which opposes in its reality the false dichotomy of man and nature. Landscape is to be judged as a place for living and working in terms of those who actually do live and work there. Individual dwelling is the primary landscape element and the prototype of the larger world in a culture. Primary attention must be given to the vernacular to understand the landscape in living terms and these landscapes undergo change because they are manifestations of society.

My approach in studying the kampung embraces the all inclusive vernacular landscape concept. Land clearings, spaces, places, houses, utility buildings and working farms are some of the various changes and process that resulted from human trying to make their living and it expresses the culture of the group of people. This is similar to Pierce Lewis’s argument that “the culture of any nation is unintentionally reflected in its ordinary vernacular landscape” (Lewis, 1979, p.15). Although kampung portrays an ordinary cultural landscape in rural Malaysia, I contend that the kampung landscape is a designed landscape in terms intentional creations of space and use of materials to fulfill the functional and cultural needs of the people living in the landscape.

Michael Hough (1990) lists the factors that shape vernacular forms as follows: “the determinants of nature, the culture and history unique to each place and time and the role of a
central authority whose decisions impose an organisational structure on the landscape” (1990, p.34). In the vernacular realm, landscape is a specific area shaped by a cultural group and strongly influenced by the limits of its natural surroundings and less attention is given to paintings, views, or gardens (Groth & Wilson, 2003). However, this does not mean that paintings, views and or gardens are totally excluded in the ‘vernacular’. Corner points out that "paintings, poems, myths and literature, in addition to buildings and other interventions upon the land... are the posts that map out a "landscape" (Corner, 1991, p131).

Landscapes are often represented in poems, paintings, myths and literature. Landscape painting more often than not, refers to the images of rural landscape views. Kampung, originated in rural locations and the word kampung itself signifies rurality. Thus understanding the concepts of rural landscapes would help in unweaving the meanings of kampung.

2.5 Rural Landscape and the pastoral ideal

Makhzoumi and Pungetti (1999) define rural landscape as the area between nature and urban areas, a "middle landscape" (Marx, 1964, p.71; Tuan, 1974) between wilderness and civilization. The ‘middle landscape’ concept was propagated by Thomas Jefferson; it is a powerful theme in American culture and admiration of rural lifestyle (Jackson, 1997), and a cultural backbone of the United States (Conlogue, 2002). The concept is shared by most western societies (Egoz, 2002).

The decline of traditional cultural landscapes in rural areas, changing land use, and the transformation of these landscapes into urban landscapes has become a topic of discussion in many recent international scientific conferences and workshops. The changes are seen as threats that could lead to vanishing diversity, unity and identity of traditional landscapes (Palang & Fry, 2003). In North America alone, according to the American Farmland Trust, three thousand acres of farmland in rural America give way to urban sprawl everyday (Factsheet cited in Conlogue, 2002).

In the Western world, especially in the English speaking nations such as North America, England, Australia and New Zealand, the ‘ideal’ rural life sentiment has become a cultural
myth known as ‘pastoral’. The pastoral idea separates city and country, making the two sets oppositional (Williams, 1973). Simon Pugh described a common model of; ‘rural=gemeinschaft=good’ – that reflects ‘humanity-leisure-individual-the weekend’ versus ‘urban=gesellschaft=bad’ – that reflects ‘materialism-work-society-the week’ (Pugh, 1990, p.1). Shelley Egoz (2002) argues that “pastoral is… a condition, a state of mind, of reaction, a contrariety; [which] is manifold in cultures in intricate ways” (2002, p.52). A similar pastoral ideal also exists in the non-western cultures like the Malays, although it is not identical. It is represented in popular media and contemporary landscape taste in the urban areas.

The ideal of rural life as a myth is also found in Claudia Bell’s study in her doctoral thesis on rural way of life in New Zealand. She found that “rural is not spatially contiguous, it is a media construct as well as a cultural construct, with nostalgia as a ruling paradigm” (Bell, 1993, p.236). Russel Frank (2003), in a study on crime news that took place in a small town in rural areas of America demonstrated how rural ideals are very much constructed by the media. He found that even while reporting on small town crime news, most reporters cite the stereotypes of the ‘rural/pastoral ideals’, proving how these rhetoric ‘cultural script’ and ideals are pushed further by the media culture, thus creating “disjunction between pastoral ideal and rural reality” (Frank 2003). From the crime news study he pointed out four recurring stereotypes of life in small towns; they are “close-knit”, safe, "sleepy," and a small town is a place where “terrible things are not supposed to happen” (Frank 2003).

Leo Marx (1964), in his classic ‘The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the pastoral ideal in America’, comments on the ambivalence that many Americans feel toward rural life. Many of them admired rural life yet wanted it to be controlled and proper. The rural pastoral as a ‘middle landscape’ abstains from both "the violent uncertainties of nature" and "the repressions entailed by a complex civilization" (Marx, 1964, p.22). The pastoral ideal "admire[s] improved nature, a landscape that is a made thing, a fusion of work and spontaneous process" (Marx, 1964, p.112). It is a dream of retreat to live closer to nature, getting away from exploitation, without totally leaving civilization.

Raymond Williams (1973, p.1) further remarks on the ambivalent relationship between city and country: “On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved center: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city
as a place of noise, worldliness, ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation.”

Leo Marx describes pastoral life as a lifestyle free from social constraint or political oppression (1964), which is a situation different from the current rural life in Malaysia. In contrast, rural landscape and rural life in Malaysia have always been political subjects and are not free from extremely imposed changes. According to Shamsul (1989), kampung has always been fed by political ideas from the propaganda sections of different political parties, as votes from the rural kampung dwellers were important in determining the winning political party. Kampung development such as infrastructure improvement is always subject to the inhabitants providing support to governing parties during the election. Shamsul (1989) explains that the rural kampung (village) went through various state-led changes, as the village is:

created, recreated, sub-divided, rejoined and sometimes imagined to exist, in the name of development. The 'village' has become the 'contested terrain' simultaneously proliferating 'terrains of meaning' regarding what a 'village' is. But one thing remains clear- the 'village' is the most powerful instrument through which administrative, political and social control has been effected in rural Malaysia. (Shamsul, 1989, p.20).

Eric C. Thompson (2002) investigates kampung using a discursive approach in “Raymond William’s sense”, in which he found that “kampung figures prominently in a structure of feeling that contrasts rural and urban in Malaysia” (Thompson, 2002, p.54) (emphasis in original). He found such ambivalence through his study of schoolbooks, formal media expressions and from everyday conversations with migrants and residents in a kampung. For participants in his study, kampung denotes life with “physical hardships” but it is also “a space of moral safety” while city life is “free (bebas) and easy (senang) but at the same time fraught with material and moral danger” (p.59).

In studying the kampung, a rural ‘landscape’ that is considered as ‘traditional’, this study is not meant to look at kampung in a nostalgic and ‘complex pastoral’ sense (Marx, 1964). I mean to follow James Corner ‘recovering’ of landscape, which is not about “passive pastoralism” but to see if kampung landscapes could be of function as “an active instrument in the shaping of modern culture” (Corner, 1999, p.1).
2.6 **Home and place attachment**

Migration involves geographical movements of individuals or groups from one place to another. Hence it involves a destination and home. The rural kampung landscape had once been the ‘home’ for rural-urban migrants in my study. Hence this landscape has its influence on migrants’ life.

Landscape has the ability to “generate powerful feelings of belonging, of aesthetic pleasure, and of wonder at the complexity of ecology, while also expressing the relations within and between societies” (Swaffield, 2005, p.6). Edward Relph (1976) argues that attachment to place is an essential human need. Relph provides a concept that helps to inform people’s understanding of placemaking and settling in a new urban environment. Relph explains how places became vital for human using notion of ‘insideness’, governed with the idea that the more strongly people feel belong to a setting, the stronger the setting become a ‘place’. The feeling of being ‘inside’ makes one feel safe rather than threatened, enclosed rather than exposed, at ease rather than stressed while the feeling of alienated or separated from a place is called as “outsideness”. The feelings of belonging, or being inside also enable one to feel ‘at home’ and attached to the surroundings. People have some affective connection, either positive or negative with some place or another, whether it involves our past landscape (childhood), current setting (place we live now), or even in the future (place we would like to go or return to).

Very much like landscape, place attachment is also multivalent and a topic of interest in various fields including sociology, anthropology, environmental psychology, human geography and landscape architecture. Place attachment is also associated with the concepts of ‘sense of place’ (Jackson, 1984), ‘topophilia’ (Tuan, 1974) and ‘community attachment’ (Hummon, 1992). Setha M Low defines place attachment as “the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land, that provides the basis for the individual’s and group’s understanding of and relation to the environment.... Thus, place attachment is more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place” (Low, 1992).
Dolores Hayden (1997), an urban historian and architect, tells how environmental psychologists describe ‘place attachment’ as a mental process which can develop “social, material and ideological dimensions, as individuals create ties to kin and neighbours” and able to take part as a resident in a community (1997, p.112). Yi-Fu Tuan uses the term Topophilia (1974) as a way to understand place attachment. He also uses the concept of "geopiety"; the loyalty and devotion to place and to one's native land or country (1976). 'Geopiety' covers a wide range of emotional attachment between man and his terrestrial home. Sopher (1979) helped readers comprehend a reverence for home. ‘Home’, according to Sopher also carries rich meanings within a flexible scale; from the size of a house (or smaller), land, village or even extending to the whole world (Sopher, 1979). Tuan explained the concept of a homeland as "an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man," (Tuan, 1977, p.154) and "the more ties there are [to a place], the stronger is the emotional bond" (1977,p.158). The attachment to homeland, according to Tuan, is universal, not restricted to any specific group of people. However, the intensity differs between various cultures and historical periods.

‘Sense of Place’ (Tuan, 1977, Relph, 1976) is a closely related term that emphasizes an intimate association between people and places. A space is considered to become place when meaning is introduced as a result of association with humanity (Tuan, 1977). The sense of place is “associational”, “connects to past experience” and formed through three levels: “atavistic, cultural and individual” (Motloch 2001, p.195). Culture plays a big role in place perception. Cultural identity is formed by both internal processes and external influences. Research dealing with environmental perception will involve people’s sense of place, place attachment and values that the different types of environment express and encourage. Allan Carson (1981, cited in M.M. Eaton, 1997) has explained it:

We do not aesthetically appreciate simply with our five senses, but rather with an important part of our whole emotional and psychological selves. Consequently, what and how we aesthetically appreciate cannot but play a role in the shaping of our emotional and psychological being. This in turn helps to determine what we think and do, and think it correct for ourselves and others to think and do. In short, our aesthetic appreciation is a significant factor in shaping and forming our ethical views (Carson, 1981 in M.M. Eaton, 1997, p.89).

In ‘Rootedness versus Sense of Place’ Tuan (1980) makes a distinction between rootedness and sense of place. Tuan explains that sense of place implies a certain distance between self and place which allows the self to appreciate a place" (Tuan, 1980, p.4) while rootedness puts
one at home in an unselfconscious way. As such the difference is that "rootedness is unreflexive" (1980, p.6), which is "a knowing of the result of familiarity through long residence" while a sense of place is "a knowing that is the result of conscious effort" (Tuan, 1980, p.8).

Kampung is both ‘home’ and ‘root’ to most urban Malays and remains in the memory of most migrants. I would argue that the rural-urban migrants’ attachment to a rural background affects their ability to adapt to the urban landscape. In this modern age, residential mobility is needed, and even deemed necessary at certain stages of life, for example throughout college life or getting work experience in big cities, but also is the need to be able to experience attachment to the new setting. Hay (1998) stresses that:

to achieve sustainability more members of modern society need to renew their ties to place. To develop local ecological knowledge and concern, to create sustainable communities that endure and prosper in the face of economic restructuring, more people therefore need to reconnect with a place that they call home, valuing the ancestral heritage that comes with developing and maintaining a rooted sense of place (Hay, 1998).

Issues of urban migration have been much studied by social scientists in the past decades but few geographical studies have provided evidence of the extent to which urban residents bond with rural places and, little has been studied on the connection of the two types of landscapes (Smith, 2002). Jeffrey S. Smith (2002) examines the ties between rural and urban places through a study on the Hispanics urbanites in upper Rio Grande country attachment to rural places and the manifestation of their rural attachment in cities, and asserts that one way urban dwellers cope with the "evils" of living in cities is by integrating “nonurban practices” in their city life (2002, p.432). Deep attachments Hispanics have for the village of their families’ roots are expressed materially in the form of murals painted on neighbourhood walls depicting rural village ideals and public art depicting rural acequias. Hispanics also prefer place-specific music and they prefer to be buried in their hometown cemetery. These indicate a broader psychological and spiritual life, which also reminds them of “their cultural roots, reinforcing cultural identity and providing them with feelings of comfort, security, and belonging” (Smith, 2002, p. 447).
Underpinning this study of kampung is a quest to better understand how rural-urban migrants in Malaysia deal with the shift from a rural home landscape to urban places, and how their ideas of rural kampung shape their feelings and experiences in the city.

2.7 Landscape of Nostalgia

Sociologists also attempted to explain the capacity of human attachment to places that have totally changed or no longer exist (Hayden, 1997), a phenomenon known as nostalgia. Such attachment can be said of people who are attached to their childhood playhouse, or squatter settlers facing removal while still attached to their demolished settlements. It can also apply to migrants who moved and no longer have homes to go back to. In a study in a Boston suburb where a group of residents were forced to move out from West End for urban renewal, Fried (1963) found that even after two years, the dislocated residents still described that the move feels a lot like mourning the loss of loved ones. This described sentiment may have significance for rural-urban migration.

Rural landscapes have been the subject of popular nostalgia of the good life in villages and small towns (Bell, 1993). Globalization, migration and the hurried pace of modern life have intensified such nostalgic longings. Svetlana Boym narrates the emergence of the phenomenon of nostalgia. She begins her introduction to her book “The Future of Nostalgia” with a narrative that involves specific place and space, indicating the centrality of space to the concept of nostalgia. Boym explains that the word nostalgia comes from two Greek words, nostos – return home and algia - longing; as a whole the word nostalgia is defined as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (Boym, 2001, p.xiii). The word nostalgia was coined by a Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer in 1688 to describe a condition that troubled Swiss soldiers who were away from home (Boym, 2001).

Boym theorises that there are two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia focuses on nostos, attempts to recover a lost home or restore a lost tradition, mythologising the past and frequently been connected with religious or nationalist revival. Restorative nostalgia alleviates its pain by recreating the childhood home or rebuilding relics
that have ceased to exist and seeks to re-establish a long gone experience. Pictorial representations and verbal traditions attract this type of nostalgia (Boym, 2001).

On the other hand, reflective nostalgia which dwells on *algia* has its base in longing, contemplating, and remembering. However, this does not attempt to bring back the past. Boym describes this as the type of nostalgia that “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time” (Boym, 2001, p.41). Reflective nostalgia is ironic, critical and pensive, an unfulfilled yearning complete with ambivalence, while it is prone to include “individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself” (p.49). Reflective nostalgia does not seek a particular time and place. It shapes a way of thinking and feeling, prompting sympathy with the conditions of modern life. Being reflective, this version of nostalgia could help one explore one’s experiences and guides one’s perception of the present.

Boym also explains that nostalgia could involve forgetting, the omission of pain, stress and sufferings. Although some remember the trauma and pain that one went through in the past, in the form of nostalgia, the trauma and pain does not cause the same effect. In nostalgia, the past would not be remembered in the way it really was. Boym asserts that homesickness could also mean ‘sickness of home’. Nostalgia is also shown to be spatial in its manifestation as well as causes. Boym notes that “nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible (Boym, 2001, p.11). One of the themes I explore in rural-urban migrants’ account of kampung is the way in which nostalgia, in any form, shapes their experience in city.

### 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed five different but not mutually exclusive headings of landscape that I utilize as lens in my journey to understand the elusive meanings of kampung. In the next chapter, I present some history and description of the Malay peninsula, where kampung became a subject of this study.
3 Malays and Malay Peninsular in Traditional Times

This chapter provides the context for understanding kampung. It presents the background of the Malays and the land they live in as a basis for discussion on kampung and the essence of Malay conception of space and urbanity. The discussion is grouped into sections on physical environment, social history, philosophy, expression, architecture and landscape.

Plate 3-1 Malay Peninsular, Map during British Colonial Years
Source: http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Malay_Peninsula

3.1 Environment

3.1.1 Geography

Present day Malaysia consists of two geographical regions: Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and Malaysian Borneo (East Malaysia). They are divided by the South China Sea. Peninsular Malaysia covers 131,573 square kilometres of land (Andaya & Andaya, 2001) bordering Thailand in the north and Straits of Teberau in the south, separating it from
Singapore. The peninsula consists of eleven states: Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Pahang, Selangor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Johor; and two Federal Territories: Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya while East Malaysia consists of Sabah, Sarawak and Federal Territory of Labuan.

Malaysia has tropical weather, influenced by monsoonal climate with average temperature around 31°C during the day and around 23°C at night. It is hot and humid throughout the year, known as the “endless summer” by European settlers during the colonial years (Savage, 1984). The zone receives heavy rain fall, which is subject to monsoon seasons which come twice a year. In general the weather in the zone is without extremes, however, due to the hot and humid climate, the vernacular design of buildings and dwelling units needs to be locally adaptable to ensure thermal comfort of the dwellers. Shade trees are most welcomed in such climate to filter the glare and heat from the tropical sun. Vernacular houses are built on stilts for better ventilation and flood safety measures.

The natural vegetation is the million years old rainforest that boasts high biodiversity. Unlike the neighbouring country Indonesia which has landscape of rice fields on hills and mountainous areas suited to their fertile volcanic land, the hilly areas in Malaysia with heavy rain and high leaching are unsuitable for permanent crops, while dry-rice farming can only be practiced for a short period of time. The early dry-rice planters practiced temporary farming and moved from one place to another, causing too much land clearing.

The Malay peninsula lay on a strategic position between the east and the west when seafaring was the fastest way to travel between continents. Prior to the twentieth century, before aviation transports became available, the Straits of Malacca were one of the shortest sea ways to travel between the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean, exposing the region to foreign trade and shipping and at the same time creating contacts with cultures from other kingdoms, nations and continents.
Rubber, imported species from Brazil and oil palm from West Africa were proven to suit the hilly land in Malaysia (Gullick, 1981) and became main contributors to the nation’s product and international commerce. Rice, which is the staple food for Malaysians, on the other hand is planted to feed the locals. However, the production is not enough to cater for the whole country’s need.

### 3.2 Social History

Melayu, or in English known as Malay, is an ancient word. The earliest available evidence of use was in the map by Egyptian geographer Ptolemy, in the second century (CE) (Reid, 2001). As the traditional Malays live with an oral tradition, there are limited written historical sources by the locals prior to colonization from western powers. Early written history in the Malay realms, using Malayized Arabic scripts, are in the form of historical and literary classics that were woven with mythical lores such as *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) which describes the rise and fall of The Malay Kingdom in Melaka (Reid, 2001; Andaya, 2001; Haron, 1989; Zaharah, 2004) and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (The Kedah Annals), which are historical and mythical stories of Old Malay Kingdom in Kedah (Zaharah, 2004). The Malay Annals is the only written account of the history of the Malay Sultanate in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. It conveys a historical narration on the origins, evolution
and demise of a great Malay maritime empire of Melaka, and follows the transformation in
the lives of the people of the Malay Peninsula and Malay Archipelago from a Hindu-Malay
culture to an Islamic-Malay.

Other historical records that mentioned the Malays before 17th Century were the early sailing
journals by merchants and representatives of kingdoms who came to South East Asia for
trades and also to learn Hinduism. The lack of local written records in Malay has led to the
utilization of colonial records, which were written from a colonial and western perspective.
Hence the colonial influence is deeply ingrained in mainstream Malaysian history (Andaya,

As with most other early settlements in other parts of the world, the Malays in the Malay
Peninsula used to be farmers, residing in fertile river valleys, sustaining their livelihood
through rice farming, fishing and forest gathering. Then came the rubber planting that was
introduced by the colonials. The colonial years have changed much of the process of
leadership, economy and lifestyle of the Malays. The colonial economy brought with them
foreign labourers, changing the homogenous society into a plural one.

When the first western colonial power, the Portuguese, landed on the Malay peninsula,
Melaka had already grown to become a big entrepot, sitting on one of the busiest sea routes.
After the Portuguese, the peninsula was colonized by the Dutch and the British.

The colonization by the Portuguese left a few colonial traces to the peninsula. Namely old
fortresses and churches in Melaka, many of which were later ruined by the Dutch, Portuguese
ethnic enclaves in Melaka, and some borrowed Portuguese words, most of which are used to
name things that were probably introduced by them. The legacy is found only in Melaka but
borrowed Portuguese words are used nationwide by the Malays until today. Some examples
are ‘almari’ for cupboards (Portuguese armario), ‘bendera’ for flag (Portuguese bandeira),
‘gereja’ for church (Portuguese igreja) and ‘keju’ for cheese (Portuguese queijo)

When two cultures come into contact, the effect of the contact would usually influence both.
As the Malays adapted some words from the Portuguese, some Malay words were picked by
the Portuguese. One of them is the word kampung which was later brought to other colonies
and adapted in their language as “compound” (Yule & Burnell, 1903).
### 3.2.1 Timelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,500 BCE</td>
<td>Proto-Malays, migrated to the peninsula from China &amp; drove the former Negritos inhabitants into the hills and jungles. Cultural evolution formed the Deutero-Malays the racial basis for the Malays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 BCE - 1400 CE</td>
<td>Hindu Kingdoms, Indians arrived in Kedah sometime around 100 BC and streams of Indian traders follows in search of gold, aromatic wood, and spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th century</td>
<td>Conversion of Malays to Islam begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 AD - 1511 AD</td>
<td>Golden Age of Malacca. Malacca Kingdom came to control the entire west coast of the Malay peninsula, Pahang and much of Sumatra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1511</td>
<td>Portuguese fleet led by Alfonso de Albuquerque conquered Malacca and states under her power. Malacca's Golden Age had come to an end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1641</td>
<td>Dutch captured Melaka, giving the Dutch an almost exclusive hold on the spice trade until 1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Kedah Sultan lost Penang to Francis Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Sir William Raffles established a trading post in Temasik (now known as Singapore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Three British colonies - Penang, Malacca, and Singapore - came to be known as the Straits Settlements, from where the British extend their influence by establishing protectorates over the Malay sultanates of the peninsula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Pangkor Agreement. Gave Britain a much greater role in the region &amp; monopoly on the vast amount of tin being mined in the peninsula. Britain ruled over Malaya until the Japanese invaded and ousted them in 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Four Malay (Perak, Selangor, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan) states combine to form the Federated Malay States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Bangkok Treaty: Transfer of suzerainty of unfederated northern states to British (Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu). Johor accepted a treaty of protection in 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-45</td>
<td>Japanese occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945, Sept 3</td>
<td>World War II ended, Britain reoccupied Malaya and the British Administration is set up. Malaya's independence movement had matured and organized itself in an alliance under Tunku Abdul Rahman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946, April 1</td>
<td>Malayan Union inaugurated. UMNO (United Malay Nationalist Organization) and the Malay Rulers boycott inauguration ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Federation of Malaya (Persekutuan Tanah Melayu) Inaugurated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>British-ruled Malayan territories unified under Federation of Malaya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-60</td>
<td>State of emergency to counter local communist insurgency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957, Aug 31</td>
<td>Federation of Malaya becomes independent from British Colony with Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>State of Emergency in Malaya ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963, Apr 4</td>
<td>Indonesia announces “Confrontation” of Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963 Sept 16</td>
<td>British colonies of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore join Federation of Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Singapore separated from Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969, 13 May</td>
<td>Racial clash between the Malays and Chinese in Kuala Lumpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Tun Abdul Razak becomes prime minister following Abdul Rahman's resignation; forms National Front (BN) coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Tun Hussein Onn steps down as Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad becomes prime minister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991, Feb 28</td>
<td>Dr. Mahathir announces his Vision 2020 and the Concept of Bangsa Malaysia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3-1 Timelines of Malaysia history**

3.2.2 Malays

The term ‘Malay’ can be defined in two ways. First, Malay refers to a group of Astronesian speakers that lived in South East Asia, and their diaspora in all other part of the world. There were various theories on the origins of the Malays. One of the theories claim that Proto-Malays who were seafarers and farmers came to the peninsula from China, and their movement into the peninsula forced the earlier nomadic Negritos into the hills and jungles. Through cultural contacts, combination and adaptation of the Proto Malays and with foreign cultures: Indians, Chinese, Siamese, Arabs; formed the Deutero-Malays. Combined with the peoples of Indonesia, the Deutero-Malays formed the racial basis for the group which today we simply call the Malay. The second definition of Malays, which relates only to Malaysian Malays, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Geographers and historians are still debating whether traditional Malays before the 19th century were mainly agrarian or maritime (Zaharah, 2004). According to accounts of foreign merchants and ship owners, Malay men were fishermen and skilled seafarers, and the existence of Malacca as a famous port in 15th century was the proof that shows the Malays were a maritime society. Zaharah (2004) points out that the geographical characters of the peninsular Malaysia make both agrarian and maritime lifestyle possible. A linguist, Asmah Omar (1979) supports the idea that Malays are first and foremost agrarian based on the rich vocabulary that the Malays have in rice culture, especially for the Malays using Kedah dialect in northern peninsula (Asmah Haji Omar, 1979).

Having rice as their staple food, the Malays ascribed a high value to paddy growing, with some added spiritual and symbolic values compared to other agricultural activities such as rubber tapping (Kuchiba, 1979). The life around paddy planting is elaborate, yet it is toiling. Shahnon Ahmad’s novel, Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan (1972) (translated as ‘No harvest but a thorn’ by Harry Aveling), is one of those that best describes the hard life of a rice farming family in the 1950s when all the work on the rice field was done manually. There is an agricultural society’s landlord-tenant relationship among the Malay peasants, similar to that in the European feudal system. The landlord-tenant relationships among the Malays are constantly non-permanent, changing and flexible (Kuchiba et.al, 1979, p. ix)
3.3 Religion and Philosophy

Religion has a significant role in the life of the Malays and is the defining factor of Malay culture, extending beyond ethnic affiliation. Through the ages, the Malays went from animism, believing in spirits in nature, combined with Hindu ideologies, and later embraced Islamic belief.

3.3.1 Animisme

Animistic beliefs, especially towards the spirits in nature, still exist among some Malays today, although such beliefs are forbidden in monotheistic Islam. In the traditional belief of the Malays, there are spirits that roam free, and natural places have ‘owners’ and guardians whom permission has to be sought first before anyone does anything in its surroundings. For example, to enter a forest, one would ask permission from the keeper of the forest. The same
goes when one ventures to the sea. One is not supposed to do anything that would enrage the guardian spirits, in fear that they would inflict illness or bad luck on humans. Such beliefs have created a certain level of high respect towards nature (Haron Daud, 1989). A novel titled ‘Srengenge’ (1973) by a winner of Malaysia National Laureate novelist, Shahnon Ahmad describes the strong animistic influence within rural Muslim Malays. Richard Winstedt observed that “to protect the soul-substance of his staple food-plant, the Malay peasant… is content with the primitive ritual of the animist, covered for decency's sake with a thin veneer of later religions” (Winstedt 1961, p.103). Such old beliefs led the peasants of traditional times to have elaborate rituals before every rice planting season.

Animistic influence can also be seen in many other rituals in connection to various events in a Malay life. For example, to build a house, various rituals were carried out to bless and to ensure the ‘suitability’ of a place for a person to live or to build a house. The choice of plant species to be planted around the house is also associated with spirits and luck. However, the spread of modern Islamic thinking and teachings among the Malays and the interest in science have reduced the practice of these rites and rituals. Some elaborate rituals that involve dance, trance and singing are now reduced to performing art, which is only staged for the purpose of tourism and cultural shows.

3.3.2 Hinduism

Legend holds that it was an odyssey in search of Savarnadvipa, the Land of Gold, which brought the first Indians to the Malay Peninsula. They arrived in Kedah from India sometime around 100 BC. From then onwards, an ever-growing stream of Indian traders arrived in search of gold, aromatic wood, and spices. Besides exchanging goods, the Indians also brought Hinduism and Buddhism, bringing temples and Indian cultural traditions. Local kings were impressed by the efficiency of the Hindu courts, and soon began to refer to themselves as "rajahs." Today, the most visible example of the early Indian influence is in the Malay wedding ceremony, which is very similar to that of the subcontinent.

Until the 15th century, the Hindu kingdoms of peninsular Malaysia were largely outshone by stronger Hindu kingdoms in Cambodia and Indonesia, especially Srivijaya, the first great maritime kingdom in the Malay archipelago. Ports like Melaka quickly followed its success,
and some time around the 13th century, as other entrepots emerged, Srivijaya's influence declined.

### 3.3.3 Islam

The Malay Annals describe that the Malay kings in the Malacca sultanate were the descents of mythical Greek and Indian royalties who reigned over a Malay kingdom in the Island of Sumatera. During that era, people of Malay peninsula and the surrounding Malay archipelago were Hindus and had strong animistic beliefs. Hinduism spread among the peninsular people through trading contacts with Hindu merchants, starting from the ruling family and followed by the common subjects.

Islam came to Malay Peninsula through different routes from China, Arabia and India. The earliest proof of Islam in the Malay Peninsula was a stone stele that explains the Islamic Law dated 1303 AD in Terengganu, on the East Coast of the peninsula. The religion also took root on the West Coast of the peninsula during the days of the Malacca Sultanate in the fifteenth century. Islam was introduced by Muslim merchants who came to trade in the Peninsula and at the same time gained influence over the people of the peninsular. Islamic teachings slowly reached rulers, officials, community leaders and later permeated into the ordinary people.

The Malay Peninsula lay in a strategic position between the east and the west, when seafaring was the fastest way to travel between continents. Prior to the twentieth century, before aviation transport became available, the Straits of Malacca were one of the shortest sea ways to travel between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. An early Malay Kingdom based in Kedah also gave way to trans-peninsular in-land travel that shortened the journey. The trading way enabled the interaction between the Malays of the peninsula with other foreign civilizations. Assimilation and intermarriage with traders from India, China, Arabs; from neighbouring Thais and Malays from Indonesian islands, and colonization from the West have produced a myriads of influences that have been absorbed and accepted in the Malay culture. Hence it is hard to identify Malay from a single ethnic descent. The unifying factors among the Malays from different groups with different influences then and now is the religion of Islam. In Malaysia, Islam has played a very important role in the life of the Malays, not only in the theological domain, but also in the political and social field. The political
socialization role of Islam came into maturation in the late 1940's, when the religion was also viewed as a source of political ideology (Abdullah, 1985, p.162), especially in the rural Islamic school known as 'pondok'.

After the independence Islam was declared as the official religion of Malaya but other religions may be practised in peace in any part of the federation. In Malaysia today, after a declaration in 1967, being Malay is legally synonymous with being a Muslim, although a Muslim is not always Malay. Although Islam is dominant in the life of the Malays, animistic and Hindu influences still have traces in Malay customs and rituals. Traditional beliefs and a fusion of cultures are still manifested in arts, literature, festival and ceremonies. Early Malay literature was highly influenced by Hindu epics while the Malay words also formed mostly from Sanskrit language, the liturgical language of Hinduism. Some rituals in wedding ceremonies still retain residues of Hindu influence.

3.4 Expression of Malay culture in Kampung

The kampung environment largely depends on the principles of the Malay socio-cultural practice and worldview.

3.4.1 Malay Kinship and Community

In the Malay culture, the family system is fluid and open. One can be considered as a close relative through marriage and even through a close relationship without any blood ties. Once a marriage takes place, both families from the groom and bride are considered to become close relatives.

The Malays practice a ranking system by seniority. It is expected that a younger person should pay more respect towards the elders and this also comes with a rank name pronoun. For example ‘pak’ or ‘pakek’, literally means uncle for an older man who is considered old enough to be one’s father. The young are expected to pay more respect towards anyone older than oneself. This practice is also applicable to people who are not family or have no blood relation at all, even to strangers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Refer to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tok</td>
<td>Grandmother/grandfather</td>
<td>Anyone of one’s grandparents’ age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak / pakcik</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Anyone of one’s father’s age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mak/ makcik</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>Anyone of one’s mother’s age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abang</td>
<td>Elder brother</td>
<td>Any older male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakak / kak</td>
<td>Elder sister</td>
<td>Any older female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adik</td>
<td>Younger sister/brother</td>
<td>Anyone younger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-2 Pronouns with rank by age

These pronouns indicate the importance of being ‘polite’ to anyone older, and at the same time the use of family pronouns for non-families shows the ‘openness’ of the Malays who ‘treat’ non-families as family. Although most kampung communities start on a kinship basis, the entrance of newcomers is welcomed, and after a while they will also be considered as *saudara* (related). This is quite unlike how a village community works in Japan, which is strictly based on kinship (Maeda, 1975). Koichi Maeda compares the Malay system of family and kinship with the Japanese. According to him in Japan,

> [T]he family is conceived as a definite fixed group or corporation… every Japanese belongs to only one family group with no overlapping membership. A wife loses membership in her natal family group…..there is a clear demarcation between family members and relatives. ‘My family’ is not my relatives. (Maeda 1975, p.163)

For the traditional Malays, *keluarga* (family) refers to more than just the nuclear family, it may include cousins, distant cousins and sometimes those who have hardly any blood-ties are deemed as ‘*keluarga*’. In-laws are considered as part of *keluarga* for the Malays. Hence, most anthropologists who studied the Malay kampung use the term ‘family circle’ (Carsten, 1997; Maeda, 1975) as it is unclear what differentiates between family and non family. Maeda further states that “multiple memberships in various family circles is [sic] not only possible but common” (Maeda, 1975, p.164).
3.4.2 The Malay Kampung

The early Malays of Malaysia started their settlements in river valleys, river banks, islands and seasides and usually spread along communication axes, along roads, river banks and seasides (Hooker, 2004). The word kampung is a Malay term. It is often anglicized to kampung. The meaning of the word is ambiguous. Kampung can be used as a noun, a verb or an adjective. The most common use of the term kampung, as given in the Malay-English dictionary, is a hamlet or village in a Malay-speaking country (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2006). In Malay, a kampung can also mean a settlement. As a verb, kampung means “to gather” or “to group” people, animals or objects. Kampung can also mean rural, and it is also used to describe a traditional or vernacular way of doing things; and to describe something that is non-modern or outdated. Although generally started in rural areas, some kampung became urbanised, yet still retain their name as kampung.

While kampung is primarily translated as a “village”, kampung is not synonymous with the European’s image of village as an administrative territorial group (Evers, 1977 in Kemp, 1988, p.9). Syed Husin Ali (1975) stated that “anthropologists have attempted to define the Malay village and quite often their definitions tend to be as varied as the villages that they study” (1975, p.40). Koninck (1992) concurs that the definition of kampung is also contested in studies by economists, political scientists and geographers. Below are some definitions from different case studies:

A number of foreign social scientists and anthropologists have found the kampung, village and community in Malaysia of research interest and have developed various interpretations of kampung. Peter J. Wilson studied Kg² Jenderam Hilir in Selangor in 1960s, and claimed that “(t)he Malay village is primarily a coresidential [sic] unit, and it displays little or no unity arising out of the interlocking of social relations among villagers.” (Wilson, 1967, p.vii). Later Tsubouchi Yoshihiro (2001) from Japan conducted a community study that spans over thirty years in Galok, Kelantan. From the study, Yoshihiro defines kampung as “a series of overlapping neighborhood circles. Village boundaries are not always distinct and the villages have no well-defined organizations” (Yoshihiro, 2001, p.98). British Janet Carsten’s (1997) case study of ‘Sungai Cantik’ in Langkawi, Kedah, revealed that kampung applies to different

² Kg is short form of kampung
scales: it could mean “a village, a sub-village, a compound, and land used, or intended for residence” (Cartsen, 1997, p. 161).

According to Zaharah (2004), a kampung could “comprise a collection of dwellings within a family compound, or as was more often the case, a collection of such compounds… (but) was not closed to newcomers or outsiders” (Zaharah, 2004, p. 176). Although kampung has been closely connected to the Malays, kampung does not exclude non-Malay residents. Different ethnicities in Malaysia also found a home in rural kampung. Jeremy Kemp (1988) highlighted that in Malay kampung there is emphasis on interaction rather than geographical boundaries (Kemp, 1988).

Hence, “sekampung” (living in one village) does not only mean people living close together in the same village, it could also mean people that have close interaction with you although they live away from you. The people who are called sekampung may not be living in the same kampung, but the closeness of the relationship makes them described as though they live in the same village. As the followers of Islamic tenets, ideally, the Muslims also adhere to the two rights to relationships. The first is ‘Hablun Minallah’ which refer to the relationship between a man and his Creator, and secondly ‘Hablun Minannas’, the relationship between a man and fellow man. As such a Muslim is to fulfil his duty towards God and respect the rights of fellow men. In these terms, neighbours are fellow men that have their rights stated clearly in the religion. Neighbours are those people living forty houses from one’s house, that is forty in front, forty at the back, forty to the right and forty on the left, regardless of how close or far the houses are.

Zaharah (2004) notes that the current ‘practice’ of taking kampung as the smallest administrative unit was imposed by British colonial administration. She claims that traditional kampung is a natural settlement which began and evolved on the basis of environmental and cultural criteria; and presents the lack of boundary of the kampung and the use of place names “based on the elements of natural flora, fauna, topographic or hydrographic environments” as proof that kampung is not administrative related (p. 175). However, I would not say that traditional kampung is never an administrative unit. Although previously there had been no formal system in a kampung, a kampung that is based on kinship has an informal organisational ‘system’ for its members. For example, when there is a dispute among family members, the elders will be the ones responsible to handle and resolve disputes.
3.4.3 Kampung Leadership and Social Structure

Although the administration system of a kampung is deemed as not a clearly organized system, kampung is considered as the smallest administration unit (S. Husin Ali, 1968). Syed Husin Ali studied traditional kampungs in Kelantan in the 1960’s (S. Husin Ali, 1968). Syed Husin describes that kampungs started with a small close knit community with common genealogical ancestry and were kept strong through marriages with close relatives. Kinship structure was the basis of their community, which grew bigger with strong social interdependence and high respect of familial orientated values, customs and mores. Social status within the traditional kampung Malays depended both on economic standing and kinship. During the days when animistic belief was still very strong, shaman and medicine men were also given much respect in the Malay society. Besides its function as a social and economic unit, kampung also became part of a political and administrative unit of the state (S. Husin Ali, 1968).

The British control over administration and economy in Malay peninsula during the colonial years affected the local demography, politics, education and economy. Demographically, there were migrants from other colonial states including Chinese and Indian migrants. The British administrators also incorporated kampung formally into the centralised colonial administration. State and district boundaries were drawn and the districts were divided into mukims. Several kampungs are grouped together to form a mukim, a subdistrict (S. Husin Ali, 1968).
The British also introduced Torren’s System for central administration of land together as with defining and marking of land boundaries. Lands were measured, demarcated, and registered in the *mukim* register (Guan, 2001, Cleary, 2002). Prior to this, kampung were not precisely defined spatially in a centralised system.

Other than the findings by Syed Husin Ali (1968), most researchers highlights the “lack of social and territorial cohesion in Malay villages” (Koninck, 1992, p.6). Koninck states that the variations and contradictions are probably due to differences between regions, the types of agricultural productions and also the time factor. One thing that they have in common is all kampung have residences, and kampung exists when there is human actor living in it. Although the kampung is not accepted as “a neat unit of sociological analysis” (Thompson, 2002, p.53), its important role in Malaysian’s life and Malaysia’s national cultural landscape cannot be denied. Although the country is urbanizing, rural-urban relationship becomes more significant and kampung continues to be relevant in everyday lives of most Malaysians (Thompson, 2002).

In popular media such as travel magazines, kampung is usually portrayed as a homely and serene setting: A place where “everybody knows everybody” due to a close-knit community and also due to old practices of marriage of the same blood line, usually with cousins or second cousins (Hooker, 2003; Mahathir Mohamad, 1970). This is still practised in some Malay families today, though not as popular as in the past. Kampung are believed to be the last remaining places that still have the elements and values of identity for the Malay people.
of Malaysia. Kampung places the ‘roots’ for the Malays, “imagined as a seat of Malay identity” (Thompson, 2002, p.59), and “a retreat or haven from processes of capitalist modernity” (Bunnell, 2002, p.1695). Further discussion on the nostalgic elements on kampung in popular media follows in the next chapter.

The following sections describe the character of the physical and tangible elements in kampung and the discussion on the intangible aspects of Malay culture expressed in these elements.
3.5 Architecture

3.5.1 Mosque, surau and madrasah

As noted above, contemporary Malay culture is closely related with Islamic practices. This influences the kampung architecture. Some of the most common and prominent structures in kampung are those associated with Islamic practices. A village mosque (masjid) often stands out in a kampung landscape. Every kampung has a masjid or a smaller prayer house (madrasah or surau) to which it belongs. Smaller kampungs share a masjid for weekly Friday prayers. Zaharah (2004) argues that kampung is “more defined in terms of their parish than of the physical boundaries of their villages…because Friday prayer congregations were and is a cardinal ritual of village life” (Zaharah, 2004, p.177). The ‘boundary’ of a congregation for each masjid is also known as ‘kariah’. Within the compound of masjid one can usually find a religious school house (madrasah) where children are taught to read the Quran, and for elders to attend religious classes or talks. A mosque usually has a burial ground in its close proximity, and “to the traditional Malay being properly buried was [sic] as important as living a proper life” (Zaharah, p. 177).
3.5.2 Built environment and spaces in kampung

“the vernacular dwelling is designed by craftsman, not an architect, that is built with local techniques, local materials, and with the local environment in mind” (Jackson, J.B. 1984, p.85).

In Discovering the Vernacular Landscape, J.B Jackson (1984) described that the individual dwelling is the primary landscape element and prototype of a larger world in a culture. I would argue that his idea also applies to the cultural landscape of the Malays. The cultural practice of the Malay is represented in the spatial concept of a basic traditional Malay house, which is also expressed in their traditional settlement. Hence, it is important to first look at the Malay house before exploring other elements of kampung landscape.

Janet Carsten (1997) conducted an anthropological study in a Malay kampung in Langkawi and she claims that in Langkawi, “house is central to social organization” (1997, p.283). The Malay house is unquestionably an element of the Malay landscape and it reveals both the cultural affinities of its inhabitants and the nature of the physical environment conditions. The architectural features indicate physical correlations; the Malay house is built on stilts to avoid dampness of the ground and for better ventilation. Lim Jee Yuan (1987), Abdul Halim Nasir (1985, 1996) and Raja Bahrin Shah (1988) are among a few experts in vernacular architecture in Malaysia that have discussed and explained in detail the Malay house and its symbolism. Lim argues that “[t]he philosophical base of the traditional Malay house is basically very different from that of the conventional westernized modern houses: the environmentally-respectful against the nature-conqueror; the conserver culture against the consumer culture; use-values against exchange values; decentralization against centralization; and basic needs against luxury needs” (Lim, 1987, p.10).
3.5.3 The Malay House

The Malay house represents a traditional vernacular architecture of the Malays; an art and technology that has been developed through a tried and tested system. Such architecture is well adapted to the microclimate of the region. The Malay house varies from one locale to another, yet houses still have some traits that are shared among them. One very significant characteristic is to have houses on stilts, which is common among other tropical countries. The houses usually have large openings for good ventilation that is very much needed for climate comfort in the hot and humid region.

Building a Malay house, until the end of twentieth century would follow many rites and rituals. With the advent of Islam and the control of animistic practices among the Malay Muslim, the animistic practices have ceased. For example, choosing the site to build a house using an elaborate ritual is no longer practised, besides, land is scarce and people have no choice but to utilize the piece of land they own regardless of the suitability of the site.
Spaces in the Malay house represent the spatial practice in the Malay culture, one that is negotiable, convertible and amorphous. A space must be multipurpose and should cater for various needs. The hall of the house is usually large and wide, without much furniture. Even if the owner has some, the furniture is movable to enable a large open space when the need arises. This happens when certain rites of passage take place in the house. Small *kenduri* (thanksgiving feasts), although always deemed as small, could involve the whole kampung, for example, rites such as a child’s birth’s thanksgiving, circumcision, weddings and deaths. When a death takes place, the body of the deceased will go through the last ablution and rites at one’s house before proceeding to the burial ground.
Plate 3-6 Common elements around a Malay house. Source: Lim Jee Yuan, 1987

[Copyright clearance to reproduce image not obtained]
3.6 Landscape

3.6.1 Compound and boundary in kampung

The kampung may seem to be without a clear structure to the outsider, with no tidy geometric order in the layout. It has few clear visual landmarks. The houses blend harmoniously with the environment. Paths link from one house to another, winding through the houses. Paths from one house to another are unclear as many of them flow easily and merge into and through sandy open compounds of houses, “creating a visual experience of the village as an organic whole, largely free of boundaries” (Zabielskis, 2002).

According to Oxford Dictionaries and Hobson-Jobson glossary compilation, the English word ‘compound’ meaning a building or buildings, especially a residence or group of residences, set off and enclosed by a barrier; or, an enclosed area used for confining prisoners of war; originated from the word kampung. The word was adapted by the Portuguese and Dutch
colonials. The Portuguese use the word as *campon* and the Dutch as *kampoeng* which later used in English as ‘compound’ (Yule, H.& Burnell, A.C., 1903).

A difference that is apparent in the two words is that ‘compound’ in the English meaning has barriers and is enclosed, while the kampung is lacking in boundary. In Malaysian English, the area around the house called the *halaman* is also known as compound, although it is fenceless. The barrier which is insignificant in kampung is later given a priority in the English term compound. Although the meaning of kampung has been altered, it still gives some indication that the compound in the kampung, also known in Malay as *halaman*, plays a big role in the spaces of kampung. The word kampung and *halaman*, when put together become a phrase ‘kampung halaman’ which means hometown or birthplace.

Frank Swettenham, a Resident General of the Federated Malay States (28 March 1850 – 11 June 1946), described a Malay kampung and a house compound in Penang;

“...The sand soil goes back inland for a width varying from two to four hundred yards, and the whole of this slightly rising ground – permatang as the Malays call it–is thickly planted with coconuts; while the picturesque Malay huts are clustered, not close together, but within easy sight and call of each other, under the shade of the palms. Round each house planted between the coconuts, are usually a few fruit trees; the dark leaved mangosteen, the rambutan, with its striking red or yellow fruit, the coarse mango called bachang, which blossoms into a perfect glory of magenta, and the rambei, whose fruit resembles nothing so much as exaggerated bunches of pale yellow grapes, without either the sheen or the transparency of the wine fruit. Often there will be a few durian – that tree of magnificent dimension and most graceful foliage, which from a wonderful flower produces the great golden spiked studded fruit, so worshipped by its votaries, so disliked by those in whom the repulsive smell of the thing induces nothing but loathing.”

(Swettenham in Roff (ed. ). 1993, pp.171-172)

Swettenham noted in his narrative the spatial character of a Malay kampung in colonial years. Malay houses which he called huts were built within a space not too close and not too far from one another, giving enough space for privacy, yet at the same time within a ‘sight and call’, providing enough indirect surveillance within the kampung. Another significant element in his narrative was the notable fruit trees around the Malay huts, implying the high interest in productive species. Swettenham also saw the huts in kampung as picturesque, showing his English landscape perception, as an outsider, seeing the kampung in a scenic way.
3.6.2 Boundaries

The concept of boundary in Malay is different to Western ideas. Based on a ‘Western’ perception Jackson argues,

boundaries stabilise social relationships. They make residents out of the homeless, neighbors out of strangers, strangers out of enemies. They give a permanent human quality to what would otherwise be an amorphous stretch of land. Those roughly geometrical enclosed space are a way of rebuking the disorder and shapelessness of the natural environment…. It is when we find ourselves in a landscape of well-built, well-maintained fences and hedges and walls, whether in New England or Europe or Mexico, that we realize we are in a landscape where political identity is a matter of importance, a landscape where lawyers make a good living and everyone knows how much land he owns.

J.B Jackson, 1984, p.15

For the traditional Malays, the boundary called sempadan is rather vague and one can seldom find clear physical boundary. The separation between a kampung with another kampung is also indistinct and not determined by a simple physical boundary. Boundaries in rice fields are more clearly defined by the bunds and irrigation canals. Those who live in kampung sometimes identify themselves with a certain kampung not by the physical territory, but rather by their connection to the community of their kampung. In a traditional kampung, a house compound which is unfenced flows into one another. In this sense a ‘boundary’ is in the form of transitional space that is changeable and negotiable.

According to Yuan (1987), it is difficult to tell apart and separate the territories of public and private spaces in the kampung due to “the preference for community intimacy over personal privacy” (Yuan, 1987). The definition of public and private areas is unclear and overlaps. Boundaries between neighbours were also somewhat vague. House compounds are often open and without fences, making private spaces not clearly-defined and merging with public spaces which lead to a well-integrated spatial environment that promotes close community ties. Hence, spaces in kampung are defined and constructed by social activities and use rather than a fixed, physically bounded space. This lack of clear boundary also can be related to the non-territorial landscape as discussed by Olwig, (2002).
The house compound in the kampung is usually planted with various types of common kitchen spices (commonly lemon grass, ginger turmeric, etc.), vegetable and fruit trees (common ones are mangoes, banana, guava and rambutan). Trees provide shaded compounds which become favourite places for children to play in and social interaction, but are also used as working areas. The open bottom of the stilted Malay houses also act as a semi-private spaces that function as workplaces, resting and chatting places and for storage of all sort of things including vehicle. The territory of a compound can be marked by the area which is cleanly swept. The Malays takes pride in their halaman or laman, the compound or courtyard. Non-obstructive markings are used to segregate the spaces: low shrubs, fruit trees and even a cleanly swept compound can already define a house compound. These mark one’s outdoor semi private space without imposing a visible and permanent boundary. The reason behind this is that the space is negotiable and the defined private or public is changeable according to the needs. The spaces can be shared with others when the need arises. It is a common view to see owners sweeping the compound mornings and evenings, getting rid of fallen leaves from fruit trees around their compounds. One’s halaman would flow into another unfenced halaman. The compound has become a semi private place where neighbours and any other kampung dwellers can pass through and even sometimes join the owner of the house to have a rest under shady trees and have a chit chat. With the change of status and in some parts of the rural areas, some houses are fenced to guard their laman from invading cattle that roam free around village.

3.6.3 Kampung & Landschaft

One definition of kampung given by Syed Husin Ali,

A kampung whether it be by the sea-side, along the river or in the plain, is not merely a unit of settlement, but more important than that it is also a coherent social entity in the sense that members are in close interaction with one another…the kampung had no clearly demarcated boundaries, and what held them together was not merely the area of settlement, but the common social, economic and political interactions. Their political leaders exercised their jurisdiction not so much over geographical units as over coherent social units (Syed Husin Ali, 1968, p.111).
The arrival of colonial powers in Malay peninsula have brought along and imposed the notion of capitalist property rights upon the land and ceased the practice of community and customary rights, which had altogether transformed the meaning of kampung, both socially and economically and expressed spatially. The social change took place when rights over land were shifted from the local community and kinsman to property owners which were subject to regulation by colonial laws. Such change affected the rural Malay worldview, having the landscapes diverted from the mainly attached to its local people and adat practices (customs) to the ‘removed’ and unattached relationships to land. Despite this, the socially and culturally formed ideas of kampung still prevail throughout the changes in the society over the generations.

Aesthetic and scenic aspects that are now so closely associated with landscape were not crucial to the meaning of kampung. What mattered the most in kampung was the community living and working in an area, and the customs they practise that defines the territorial limits of the land. This parallels closely with the concept of landscape in the earliest form, landschaft. As Olwig explains that in landschaft, “[c]ustom and culture defined a land, not physical geographical characteristics—it was a social entity that found physical expression in the area under its law” (Olwig, 2002, p.19). Both kampung and landshaft are meaningful at different scales. Material and spatial appearance of both are constituted through social practice.

This chapter has explained the background of the Malays and their history, environment, culture, their worldview and their concepts of space in the kampung. The next chapter describes the effects of colonisation on the Malay life, urbanization and migration of the Malays as well as the iconography of kampung in the modern Malaysia.
4 Postcolonial Malaysia: Landscape, Urbanization, Migration & Kampung Images

Malaysia, formerly known as Federation of Malaya (in Malay, Persekutuan Tanah Melayu or literally, Federation of Malay Land), gained independence from British rule on 31 August 1957. The country began to be known as Malaysia in 1963 and consists of thirteen states and a federal territory with three components, covering the Malay Peninsula and the State of Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo. Fifty years after the independence, the country went through a significant change from a mainly agricultural and rural to a mainly urban one.

This chapter discusses the social and spatial growth and changes in Malaysia towards the end of colonization, post-colonial and modern Malaysia. Many of the changes that took place in Malaya towards the end of colonial years and after independence affect the life and landscape of its people.

4.1 The Malay Land and the Colonial Administration

An inquiry into the development and use of landscape as a concept in contemporary Malaysia needs to be positioned in the social-cultural and historical context of the Malay people. Discussion on landscape is deficient without discussing the concept of the land for the Malays and how this differs from the modern land ownership systems. Land is not just a primary means of agriculture for the Malays, it also holds kin and community together (Brookfield et al., 1991). The Malay concept of land has changed through time. The current land tenure system in Malaysia that treats land as a commodity that can be owned, transferred, mortgaged, and sold, was introduced and imposed by the European colonial administration from the 16th century onwards (Brookfield et al., 1991, Guan, 2001). Before the arrival of the colonial powers, land tenure in traditional Malay culture was based on the adat system, a codified customary law. Being peasants with their economy based on self-sufficiency did not require the Malays to have a highly structured land ownership system (Brookfield et al. 1991). The population was sparse during the pre-colonial times where most of the land was still covered...
by forests and resources were plenty. The abundant land enabled a tenure system based on “the demands of the livelihood system” rather than based on “perception of limited resources” (Brookfield et al., 1991, p.30).

Guan (2001) and Mohammed (1985) quote translations of Malay legal text by W.E. Maxwell (1884);

..there is no restriction upon the selection and appropriation of forest land, and a proprietary right is created by the clearing of the land followed by continuous occupation. Forest land and land which, though once cleared, has been abandoned and bears no tract of appropriation (such as fruit trees still existing) are said technically to be tanah mati, or "dead land". He who, by clearing or cultivation, or by building a house, causes that to live which was dead (menghidopkan bumi), acquires a proprietary right in the land, which now becomes tanah hidop ("live land") in contradistinction to tanah mati. His right to the land is absolute as long as occupation continues, or as long as the land bears signs of appropriation.

(Maxwell 1884, in Guan, 2001, p. 105)

Malay custom has, therefore, fixed three years as the term which wet-rice fields, if left uncultivated shall remain subject to the proprietary right of the owner. If wet rice land remains uncultivated for more than this period, it is open to the Raja, Chief or headman, within whose district it is situated, to put in another cultivator. Abandoned fruit plantations, on the other hand, may be successfully claimed and resumed by the proprietor, or by any one claiming under him by descent or transfer, as long as any of the trees survive, and the proprietary right is not extinguished until all evidence of proprietorship is gone.

(Maxwell, 1884, in Mohamed, 1985, p.53)

No legal procedure was present to implement these adat proprietary rights over the land. Land was not considered as a commodity to the Malays. As Frank Swettenham (1906) noted, "Land had no value in the Malay States in 1874, and it was the custom for any one to settle where he pleased on unoccupied and unclaimed land and leave it when he felt inclined" (Swettenham, 1906 in Mohammed, 1985, p.52). This historical perspective still influences the form and meaning of kampung landscapes today.

The pressure upon land changed dramatically with the arrival of capitalism in the Malay Peninsula, particularly the early tin miners and the associated colonial administration
The British administration viewed the local traditional system of land tenure as not providing a secure period of tenure for landholders, which is a hindrance to the capitalist economy (S.M. Mohd Idris, 1997). They declined the use of Malay legal code as it was deemed incompatible with commercial economy (Lim Teck Ghee, 1977 in Guan, 2001).

According to Guan (2001), by 1830s the British administration approved a series of land enactments which became the foundation for a standard land tenure system for the Straits Settlement and later for the whole Malay peninsula. The system was based on English land law which enabled handling and management of ownership and control of the land as a commodity (S.M. Mohd Idris, 1997) and gave the Malay rulers the authority to alienate land. Two methods of land alienation were introduced; leasehold for town lands and alienation by registration for village lands which were entered into mukim (subdistrict) registers. They also introduced ways of allowing commandeering of land by foreigners and the protection of indigenous peasants (Guan, 2001). The colonial land laws permits individuals to own land with their ownership title “recorded at the land office” and one would be given a certificate called geran (grant) for each title (Brookfield et al., 1991, p.29). Thus, land was transformed from being something that belongs to people who worked on it and the community to some kind of goods or commodity that can be sold, transferred and purchased. Colonialists had introduced or rather imposed their concept of private ownership to the land that once belonged to the community.

The British introduced Torren’s System for the central administration of land together as the beginning of defining and marking of land boundaries. What might be seen as obvious here is that the colonials found their way to facilitate their capitalist goals. Guan (2001) asserts that the British saw boundless and unorganized space as “chaotic, meaningless and threatening” (Guan 2001, p.107) and it just had to be rearranged into a group of distinct spaces which enabled it to be distinguished in their own words. From then onwards, the Malay land is measured, surveyed, mapped and ‘boundaries’ formed between ownership plots. Such ownership of land rights had impacted the traditional Malays awareness and mindset towards property rights. The money economy prevailed as agriculture surplus were traded and more and more activities that did not depend on land were carried out. Land became a source of economic wealth (Syed Husin, 1968)
4.2 Redefining Malays and Bumiputera

In order for the country to be independent, the British colonials requested that local leaders prove their ability to lead and at the same time protect the rights of other immigrants. Redefinition of groups and ethnicities took place. According to Article 160, Clause 2 in the Malaysia Constitution, a Malay or Melayu is a Malaysian citizen who professes the religion of Islam, normally speaks the Malay language and observes the Malay custom and resides in Malaysia or Singapore. The Malays, along with other indigenous people, the Orang Asli of the peninsula and the Iban, Kadazan Dusun, Dayaks and other smaller tribes, form a group called bumiputera, a Malay term which literally means "sons of the soil", which accords them special privileges as enshrined in the Constitution.

4.3 Rural and urban Malaysia

Prior to 1874, when British set their colonial power in the Peninsular, Malay States were sparsely habited. There were only about 300,000 people living in the peninsula (Gullick 1981). Main centres of Malay settlement were Province Wellesley, Kedah & Kelantan, and little is known on the local condition of the common people then (Gullick 1981). Some of the earlier writings before the British era only touched on subjects of royal courts and formal systems of the states. Up until the 1970s, the Malaysian population was mainly rural and agricultural. The Malays were mostly farmers and fishermen with a small number of ‘urban Malays’ living in small urban centers. According to Cho (1990), the ‘urban system’ idea was absent in Malay peninsula before European colonisation. Most cities then were ‘orthogenetic’, short lived and in the form of settlements led by nobles or warriors (Cho, 1990, p.142). Most of the more populated areas were royal towns where homes for the rulers were built. Lim describes that the modern urban system which was introduced by the European colonisers was an “imposition of an imported ‘alien’ European phenomenon upon the customary settlement system” (Lim, 1977).

Rural and urban division in the early decades of postcolonial Malaysia showed geographical ethnic separation. Rural agricultural areas were populated primarily by Malays and
immigrants were mostly in cities. Chinese were mostly involved in commerce and their dominance can be seen in the ubiquitous Chinese shops in most towns, especially on the west coast of peninsula. During the emergency (1948-1960), some Chinese were resettled in new villages called Kampung Baru in towns, while the Indians were mostly in rural rubber estates (Cho, 1990, Gullick, 1981). The geographical divide and separation of the ethnic groups lead to bigger economic disparities.

Before independence, the number of Malays living in urban areas was relatively small. This led to a marginal difference between the city and the rural areas where racial distribution was a major problem. After independence in 1957 and the racial riots in 1969, the government set up the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, with the main aim of “restucturing the society” and “to eliminate poverty”. For the first few decades after independence the politically dominant Malays were lacking in economic development (Andaya and Andaya, 2001), hence Malaysia’s government policy which aims at reducing the economic gap between the Malays and non-Malays.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) action by the Malaysian Government in the 1970s increased the number of Malays living in the urban areas (Chitose, 2003), especially the national capital, Kuala Lumpur. Urbanisation started at a slower rate of only 3.21% from after the Independence in 1957 until 1970 compared to 5.84% within the decade before independence between 1947 and 1957 (UNUP). Yet a radical landscape change took place within the half a century of independence, as Malaysia changed from a highly rural and agricultural nation into mainly urban and industrial.

4.4 Urbanisation

In the 2000 Malaysia Population and Housing Census, urban areas are defined to include gazetted areas with their adjoining built-up areas which had combined population of 10,000 or more and had at least 60% of their population (aged 10 years and over) engaged in non-agricultural activities, as well as having modern toilet facilities in their housing units (Population and Housing Census 2000, p.xxi)
Cities in Malaysia showed a significant growth rate in the 20th century and have expanded and crept into the surrounding peri-urban areas. For example Kuala Lumpur started as a town of 3.1 square km in 1901 with the total population of 32,380 (UNUP). A hundred years later the core centre has grown to 243 square km with a total population of 1,423,900 (Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020). Natural population increase, added to high in-migration from rural hinterlands and international migration have filled up the city. There was a need to increase the area. The housing needs for the migrants were particularly critical.

The surrounding districts in Selangor quickly grew into new urban centres to keep up with the increasing number of urban migrants and the servicing needs of the urban population. These districts did not really siphon the population in Kuala Lumpur, but it supplemented the need for industrial, servicing and “suburban” settlement.

Urban development policies in the 1970s firstly focused on dealing with disparities between the rural and urban sectors, through better rural-urban linkages and making urban functions more accessible to the rural populations. Secondly, regarded to reduce disparities between regions and states by stimulating growth in lagging regions (Malaysia, 1971). In the mid-1980s the National Urbanization Policy (NUP) was set up to guide urban development.

Being Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur has to accommodate the need to be the central city of a modern visionary country. This has triggered the revitalization of high-level central business districts and gentrification of the inner city areas, similar to what is happening in American cities (Castells, 1985). Inner Kuala Lumpur permits office construction only if it involves "high-tech" and "intelligent" office buildings (Malaysia, 1991).

4.5 Malay Migration

Rural Malays were the least itinerant group prior to Independence from Britain, but soon after the Independence they became the most mobile group, migrating to other Malay dominated rural areas and also to the mainly non-Malay urban areas (Sulaiman, 1981).
Under the British Administration in Malaya, the colonial administrators decided to keep the Malays practising their traditional lifestyle of rice farming in the rural areas (Gullick, 1981). The concept changed when nationalism and awareness among the Malays spread and the people wanted more than just being concentrated to rural hinterland and being farmers.


Although they were the least mobile, migration is not new for the Malays. It has been a long tradition in some subgroups of the Malays. Some Malays, especially those of Minangkabau and Achehnese descent, have the cultural tendency of migrating to find jobs and experience. The Minangkabau have the traditional concept of ‘merantau’, that is the men leaving their birthplaces to search for experience and wealth elsewhere.

Some Malays also practice seasonal migrations. It was common for some Malay peasants especially from the east coast state Kelantan who did not own land, to go to other states such as the rice valley in Kedah and work as labour during harvesting seasons.

### 4.6 Rural-urban migration for Malays

Place-utility decision making, employment status, occupational changes, past mobility, education, age, ethnicity, household tenure status, gender, marital status, and occupational background are some of the variables that correlate with mobility behavior (Sulaiman, 1981, p.22). Exaggerated stories of the goodness of life and opportunities in cities from those who have moved to the city sometimes sound attractive and admired by kampung folks, especially the young and curious youths. Sulaiman (1981) asserts that migration leads to better employment status than that attained by the non-movers.

NEP introduced in 1970 was meant to ‘rearrange’ the society economically and socially and was meant for all ethnic groups (Cho, 1990). However, most researchers claim that it was
more in the favour of Malays. The NEP was a step taken after the racial unrest that took place on May 13th, 1969. The racial clash erupted due to a huge economic gap between the racial groups during the fragile years after independence and unstable political holding of the ruling party in the country’s politics.

4.7 Balik kampung and family ties

Malay households have undergone a tremendous transformation following the changes in the economy. The change from agricultural commodities to industrial production made it difficult for extended families to live together and migration became a norm. Most Malays who moved to cities have strong attachment to their rural roots. One common phenomenon for city dwellers in Malaysia is ‘balik kampung’- “the exodus to one's roots” (Nordin, 2000), the periodical return of urban Malaysians to their hometown or birthplace during festivals and public holidays for kin reunions (Gannon, 2003). As family mobility expands, efforts to maintain kin ties also increase. Improved telecommunications keep distant kin in contact, as does the better transportation network.

Awang Goneng, a Malay Journalist who left his kampung and lived in London for over three decades expressed his longing for kampung and wrote his childhood memories in a book - ‘Growing Up in Terengganu’, in which he described; “In a sense the kampung is the womb of the Malay body and soul. The mentally damaged curl up in a foetal position, and the insecure and the uncertain go back to the security of their mums. It’s one thing or another, but the Malays always go back to their kampung” Awang Goneng, (2007, p.155) (emphasis in original).

4.8 Kampung as a nostalgic icon in popular media

During every religious festive season, advertisments of all sorts remind city migrants of hometown, of kampung and families. Come the festive seasons, viewers wait to see and spot the best ‘seasonal’ advertisements from the government and private companies. Most of these show a setting in rural kampung, amidst rice fields or in rubber estates.
About a month close to 31 August, the anniversary of Merdeka, the Malaysia Independence, National Day ‘advertisements’ or message are aired on televisions and radio channels, printed on print media, and since a decade ago, on internet web pages, transmitting patriotic messages and as reminders for the public to appreciate freedom and the country’s progress. The advertisements come from government bodies, private companies and government linked companies (GLC). Petronas, a government linked company airs National Day advertisement every year. Images of rural scenes and modern cities are used interchangeably. Rural areas and rural kampung are used to portray where these people come from, memories and childhood years. The ‘return’ theme, memory of home and childhood frequently lingers in rural scenes. Rural scenes are mainly portrayed as a carefree scene of the past. The adult world is mostly shown to be in cities, where people ‘develop the nation’ and where progress is.
As a multi-cultural nation, unity and integration among the different cultures and religions that exist in Malaysia is deemed important for the country’s stability.

Besides television, the use of computers with connection to the internet for work and entertainment is common to city dwellers. Personal writings on weblogs also known as blogs is growing. Some kampung migrants in cities express their longing for kampung on personal weblogs that can be read by the public. The following is a snippet from a blog about the memory of a ‘pelenggar’ a simple wooden bench or a wooden platform normally found under a tree in kampung written by an anonymous blogger who now lives in Kuala Lumpur, using the pen name Budak Kampong [sic] which means kampung boy.

I still remember back in the old days in the kampong at my grandmother’s place we use to have this “evening conference” under a mango tree on a “pelenggark” [sic]. Since those who lived in the parameter of the pelenggark were related to each other, thus, the topic of the conversation would range from family matter to family problems and national matter.

My grandmother, Tok Puteh, is [sic] a regular among those who commune on the pelenggark. There were Tok Ndak, Tok Lang, Mak Tam, Mak Teh, Mak Su, Long Kiah, Teh Aishah, Mak Su Pah and my mother on the pelenggark at times. Sometimes the men would join the group. Tok Puteh and Tok Ndak were almost 75 or 80 years old at that time. They were the “advisers” to all the matters in hand. All things, this and that but as the elderly, people come to seek advice from them.
The best thing about the evening meeting was the food. Mak Tam will bring “cucork udang” [prawn fritters] with kuah kacang [peanut sauce] and tea from her kitchen and sometimes Mak Teh would make her famous “tepong talam” and coffee and how I miss Tok Lang’s pulut inti and pulut udang [glutinous rice cake with prawn paste filling]. Oh my God, the foods were wonderful.

Believe it or not, weddings, trips, and other events were planned and discussed on the pelenggark. Well at least most of my second cousin’s wedding plans were discussed here. Luckily the meminang [proposal] ceremony or the akad nikah [solemnization of marriage] was not done on the pelenggark. If not I would apply to the Museum and Antiquity Department and ask them to certify the pelenggark as one of the “National Treasure”.

Mango Tree Memories by BudakKampong, August 5th, 2005

This weblog post shows a deep sense of nostalgia and longing for the writer’s kampung childhood, with a simple mango tree, pelenggar and other older actors. Pelenggar is usually simply a wooden platform, commonly found near kampung houses, yet this simple structure has an important social function in the kampung community, at least among the writer’s family. Such writings may seem to be insignificant and simply a personal expression of the writers, yet they are cultural expressions of the role of kampung in Malay society.

4.9 Kampung theme in arts, design and architecture

Unlike in Europe where landscape painting became an established genre by 15th century, landscape painting was not part of precolonial Malay art. Nor did colonisation by the European powers leave any major impact on the development of visual arts in the Malay peninsula. Before the colonial powers came to the peninsula, Malay arts were in the form of woodworks (carvings, furniture making, building), metalwork (weaponry, brassware, gold and silver adornment), weavings and batik prints. Malay arts were first inspired by nature and later they were highly influenced by Islamic beliefs beginning in the 16th century and only in the 20th century the arts started to get moulded by the western art education system (Mohamed, 2004).

Accessed 30/09/2006
The Malays did not have a tradition of painting prior to British arrival. Landscape was introduced to the Malay Peninsula by the British Colonials painters who came and painted the Malay landscape (Savage, 1984; Keat & Barlow, 1988). However, the British did not set up any art institutions in Malaya, unlike the Dutch in Indonesia or the Spanish in Philippines, hence leaving the Malay masses mostly unaware of art education. Early Malaysian painters were those who were introduced to painting interests when they went to study overseas in United Kingdom and United States of America (Mohamed, 2004). A local art industry slowly began flourishing after the MARA Institute of Technology offered the first tertiary fine art course in the country in 1967, taught by painter-educators who were trained abroad.

Images of rural life and kampung are now a popular subject in contemporary urban discourses. Current city dwellers’ interests in a nostalgic rural kampung image can be seen through its many representations in arts and designs (Plate 4-2). According to Zakaria Ali,
Kampung has become one of the most popular subjects for contemporary local paintings (Personal communication with Zakaria Ali, Associate Professor in History of Art, University Sains Malaysia, 2007).

Plate 4-3 Cover of a cartoon book, The Kampung Boy by Lat, first published 1979
Source: Lat, Kampung Boy 1979, front page.

Kampung Boy is a cartoon book, a simple story narrating the early life of a rural Malay Muslim boy growing up in the 50s and 60s in a kampung in Malaysia drawn and narrated by Mohamed Nor Khalid or his pen-name, Lat. It is a childhood memoir of the cartoonist who is also a social commentator. The book was first published in 1979 and became a hit with over 60,000 copies sold locally within the first three months (Rohani, 2005), a considerably huge number for a book sale in Malaysia in 1979. The expressive cartoons that portray a Malay setting and Malay life was first published in English. Until today the book is very much sought after and has been translated to numerous language, including Japanese (in 1984), and (French in 2003) (Rohani, 2005) and then released in America in 2006. An animation series based on the same cartoon and title was produced in 2002. The graphic novel is full of nostalgic and emotional expression, with vivid graphics of the rural environment around a child’s life. The success of Kampung Boy in international markets could be explained as an interest by the people outside Malaysia for the rural lifestyle and culture, yet for Malaysians,
the cartoons represent a childhood memories and nostalgic sentiments to a vanishing landscape.

Simple explanation together with graphics help a stranger understand the tangible and intangible expression of Malay life in a rural kampung; while for those who are familiar with kampung can relate to the goodness of simple kampung life. Lat narrates the traditional way of life in his kampung which was steadily disappearing with urban sprawl, tin mines and factory jobs increasingly overtaking the village's agricultural way of life. The closing of the Kampung Boy showed the protagonist leaving his kampung on a bus to go to a boarding school in a city, with the hope that his familiar kampung will still be there when he returns (Khalid, 1979). Although it portrays the life of a child, the cartoon became a favourite among the adults, especially for those in urban areas. Childhood nostalgia is clearly reconstructed with the choice of incidents highlighting daily routines and Malay rituals surrounding a child’s life and the rural childhood. The cartoon brings one to the scene, time and place that no longer exist now; scenes of childbirth celebration, circumcision ceremony, getting to know nature in kampung, mischief making, toy creations and work.

Plate 4-4 Lat’s expression of a little child wanting to explore the outside world, the kampung from inside a Malay house
Source: Kampung Boy, (Lat, 1979, p. 12)
The relevance of *Kampung Boy* in this chapter is that it shows how a cartoon book that entered popular media almost three decades ago, yet still appeals to the urban Malaysians. Lat’s cartoon have been part of national pride, which also portrays how nostalgia resonates amongst urban people who yearn for the good old time and the simple life in rural kampung.

Lat’s impression of kampung life has encouraged a developer to apply the physical ideas of kampung landscape character into an urban development. With Lat’s involvement in the conceptual design, the developer, E&O Properties built *Kampung Warisan* (trans. Heritage Village), an upmarket and luxury version of 275 condominium units with a rustic Malay village theme in Kuala Lumpur.

![Plate 4-5 Kampung Warisan Condominium](http://www.seksan.com/kwarisan.html)

[Copyright clearance to reproduce image not obtained]

The ‘blend’ proved a success in the property market but it is unknown whether the essence of ‘kampung life’ was successfully brought into the luxury housing. This is another example of how kampung is a pervasive ideal in Malay psyche and was therefore a successful marketing device. My study explores this ideal and its relationship to the concept of landscape.
This chapter has illustrated how the changes in the society had also added layers to the kampung meanings. The introduction of colonial land administration and individual land ownership had impacted the Malay social concept of land and the *adat* law. The tight connection between people and the land they worked on slowly diminished. After the independence, landless Malays were driven to urban areas to work in non-agricultural sectors. Support from the government increased the migration, thus driving more kampung people to city and bringing along their kampung memories. As people build their life in cities, the kampung idea they brought with them gained new meanings and kampung is seen from many different perspectives. To the privileged few it is seen through elitist view of an aesthetic ideal, and ‘kampung trends’ are being materially reconstructed, thus becoming a luxury commodity that they can buy.
5 Kampung and the landscape framework

In this chapter I will discuss the concept of kampung in relation to the landscape framework that sets the base for the theoretical implications of my work. This chapter reflects upon how my study on kampung meaning could contribute new knowledge to a current body of landscape theories.

5.1 Landscape as a powerful lens in explaining kampung

In shaping my study of kampung, I used the concept of landscape as lens to explore experiential dimensions and meanings of kampung. Landscape provided a helpful framework of understanding, a perspective through which I could interpret the complex nature of the kampung idea. The landscape framework has been effective in exploring rural-urban migrants’ connection to both the tangible elements of the kampung and the intangible aspects, such as sentiments, socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions.

Landscape is an overarching multidisciplinary concept addressed in many fields of study from geography, archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, history, social science, ecology, architecture, and design (Cosgrove, 1998; Olwig, 2002; Corner, 1999; Bender, 1993). It provides a powerful organising principle in explaining many concepts that govern human life and the worlds we live in, as a way of knowing the world (Corner, 1999; Seddon, 1997; Swaffield, 2002, 2005). Kampung also exists in many different forms of meanings, as a changing reality and also an imagined and abstracted one. The idea of a multivalent landscape and its multiple layers has provided a model to help unweave the intertwined layers of kampung meanings, and in providing insights in understanding the pervasive and multivalent kampung.

Seeing kampung through ‘landscape’ could help me to draw out the important elements of kampung in the life of rural-urban migrants, and helped me to explore the importance of kampung in the city context. In the following sections, I examine the social origins of both terms, the evolution of usage, the bi-model character, links to pastoral sentiments, and to modernity.
5.2 Kampung and the early landscape meaning, the Landschaft

Landscape was a foreign word to the Malays during the pre-colonial years. However, some concepts that already existed in the traditional Malay culture appeared to have significant parallels to landscape, as it has emerged in Europe. I have shown earlier in my literature review in Chapter 3 that even before the introduction of the word landscape to Malaysia, kampung had parallels with the earliest meaning of landscape- the landschaft.

Kenneth Olwig (2002) studies the complex associations between archaic ideas of land, landscape, nature, environment, country, countryside, custom, law, politics and tradition; and recovered the original ‘Germanic’ definition of landscape as a territorial and customary unit, the Landschaft (Olwig, 2002). Landschaft is not bounded by physical territory, instead, it is based on law and custom of the people living in it. That is, it was primarily an expression of social organisation. One conspicuous feature of kampung based on previous studies is the lack of clear boundary (Zaharah, 2004). People originally related to a kampung based on their affinity and ties, kinship and community as well as religious and customary practices. Kampung, in its fundamental sense, therefore shares a similarity with the concept of landschaft: it is defined by the people and their culture. Kampung is also a place; a site of social and cultural construction.

The following list sums up similarities between kampung and landschaft. They are both:

i. defined by custom and culture, not by physical geographical characteristics,
ii. structured around moral values and customary law,
iii. contextual and substantive,
iv. focused more on people, polity, ethics, and socio-environmental conflicts,
v. community-centred and constituted through social and cultural practice,
vi. a home for a specific group with its customs and institutions
vii. multiscale, with no clear and fixed boundary
viii. relate closely to the meaning of ‘place’
ix. place less importance on artistic representation, imagery, scenery, and an ideological way of seeing
It is notable that significant importance is placed on moral values and customary law in *Landschaft*, an element that is given less importance in the contemporary landscape disciplines (Olwig, 2002). Traditional kampung too in essence was bounded by religious, moral and customary laws (*adat*). The idea and reality in both *landschaft* and kampung represent the ideas of *gemeinschaft* (Tonnies, 1887), or what is now known as community. Kampung too is a word that describes a real physical place with no particular physical form but at the same time represents a social structure (S. Husin Ali, 1964).

Although the two concepts of *landschaft* and kampung share similarities, the emphasis in each context varies. What clearly differs between the two is the clarity of the political systems. *Landschaft* is claimed to be an organized system of law and administration (Olwig, 2002), while the old traditional kampung in pre-colonial years had informal administration systems that varied in terms of organization from one kampung to another.

The core sense of *Landschaft* has its equivalence in other European languages, like the English countryside and the French *paysage* (Girot, 1999) all of which were similarly social, and flexible in size, signifying a communal relationship with land more than a specifically bordered territory, although the exact lawful condition may differ from the North Sea and Western Baltic region. Across the globe, in South-East Asia, kampung expressed meanings equivalent to *Landshaft*, suggesting some shared human needs or characteristics in pre-modern societies.

### 5.3 Evolution of kampung and landscape meanings

Kampung acquired layers of meanings as it evolved from pre-colonial times to today’s modern era. The transformation of ideas appeared to have paralleled the transformation of *Landschaft* into today’s multivalent landscape ideas. The history and ideas of landscape also evolved across the eras and became an important concept in different cultures and locations.

Specifically, kampung has moved from being a culturally and customary ‘living landscape’ into a diverse form which includes being a visual icon, a design theme and an idealistic image. In the west, landscape, also refers to different facets of the rural place, the countryside
which in part became the mark of nationhood. English countryside is also known as ‘the country’ which subsequently forms a nation, making the land where the English live to be known as England (Olwig, 2002). In Malaysia, the kampung is also mainly known to be rural. However, traces of old, pre-independence kampung do exist in cities and in contemporary times the idea has clearly crossed the rural-urban boundary, making kampung an ubiquitous idea in contemporary urban discourses, in the life of rural-urban migrants, and also in popular media. Kampung also provides a sense of identity for the Malays, representing homeland and roots. Malaysia, was once known as Tanah Melayu, literally means the Malay Land. The name, however, is seen as an Orientalist-colonial construct given by the British colonials (Shamsul, 2001). More so, kampung has become a nationwide home-icon. Returning home is usually known as return to kampung (balik kampung) even when one’s home is not in kampung.

Commentators such as Cosgrove (1998) link the development of landscape as a rural ideal with the emergence of rural capitalism. The customary law of land that governs pre-colonial kampung was also affected by the intrusion of capitalist economy where customary land changed hands, which also changed the meanings of kampung to people. In kampung, the sense of power and ownership of landscape have also grown more clearly with the change in the capitalist system of land ownership, introduced by the British colonials. It became a complex relationship when land became a commodity that could be transferred (Guan, 2001).

Figure 5-1 The change of landschaft and kampung meaning
The two parallel developments converged when British Colonials brought the influence of the English landscape paintings into Malayan art (Keat & Barlow, 1988). Such influence has come to be popularly seen as a kampung view (pemandangan kampung), that until today has become a popular art theme. With post independent development that first targeted urban centres, further change in kampung meanings occurred. Urban development largely erased the traditional kampungs that are placed within the city growth area, and migration from rural areas further shifted the meanings of kampung into new dimensions.

### 5.4 Kampung, between the lived and the abstract

Kampung on the one hand is seen as a living landscape, a vernacular realm. In vernacular sense, kampung is an arena for people to work, make a living, and interact socially and culturally. However, this living landscape has also now moved to become an abstraction – an outsider’s view.

As a lived landscape, kampung includes the reality of, physical, social and cultural aspects that have connections with the life of people that are directly or indirectly related to it. Kampung is made of both the tangible and intangibles. The tangible aspects of kampung are the land, nature, the farms, the built form and all the artefacts in the man modified surroundings. These tangible aspects are used and modified by the dwellers and at the same time are agents that form the life of the dwellers, shaping the intangible aspect of the kampung: the feelings, perceptions and experiences of those who live in kampung.

As an abstraction, kampung has become an image, that to an extent detaches the dwellers (and those who once dwelled in it) and reappears as an icon that emerges in the form of a popular theme in drama, painting, tourism promotion, landscape design, property design, film, and political discourse and popular media. In this abstract sense, kampung is seen aesthetically and as an ideal. This abstraction, in part turns the kampung insider into an outsider. Kampung has migrated from just a small settlement, a loose political form, a Malay landschaft into the “aesthetic category” and became iconic.
5.5 Language of landscape

There is no Malay word that is in use to define the polysemous ‘landscape’. Hence the meaning of landscape word being in the Malay context is ambiguous. At present, the term used for landscape in Malay is a Malay-nized version of ‘landskap’. According to a Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan* (4th Ed.), ‘landskap’ has three main meanings:

1. View of nature in an area that contains elements such as hills, rivers and vegetation, especially the view of a country side.
2. A painting or a drawing, etc. that portrays a view of nature.
3. Garden art that depicts a view of nature


These meanings are colonial and modern “imports”. What is missing from the term ‘landskap’ in this Malay usage is that it omits the human and social dimensions of the term, covering only the imported pictorial and aesthetic dimensions.

5.6 Modernity effects on rural kampung

As stated in earlier sections, with time new layers of meaning were added to kampung. The changes in kampung meanings parallel the evolution that landscape meaning has gone through. Kampung started off as a culturally formed setting of a living landscape for people. Kampung landscape is, as most landscapes of the world, a result of natural and cultural processes, shaped by the people who make a living on the land. It involved mainly the Malay people living socially, bounded by their Malay culture and Islamic rules, and surviving in their physical surroundings. Rural kampung faces an ongoing transformation of physical and socio-economic structure within the developing Malaysia. Some of these changes are very much welcomed by the kampung dwellers but on the other hand, have been slowly eroding the physical elements that embed symbolic meanings that make a kampung feel like a kampung. Urbanity has seeped in, and kampung is almost urban (Bunnel, 2002).
The kampung Malays no longer ‘live off the land’. Most production and generation of economic worth today is dissociated from the land. The rural mode of occupation changes from relying solely on agriculture and manual labour that involves communal work to a mix of various different industrial and administrative jobs in wage paying industries. Agricultural activities are no longer regarded as the main source of livelihood as other sectors proved to be more economically viable for the kampung people to survive financially. Those kampung people who remain in agriculture have upgraded their agricultural methods with technology that no longer requires communal and reciprocal help, hence the social ties between neighbours and kampung-folks is loosened. The younger generation mostly migrate to cities, leaving the older generation to keep up with agricultural kampung lifestyle. Similar to Europe, rural landscape has become post-productivist - a landscape of consumption – so kampung is also becoming as much a site of consumption as of production.

Furthermore, ‘land-shaping’ in the rural kampung, is no longer a mere by-product of primary land-use but a matter that is partly in the hand of ‘outsiders’ which include planners, investors and governmental bodies. Kampungs are now slowly moulded by change in consumer and market preference, for example, many rice farm land owners successfully changed their agricultural land into housing plots, as smallholding rice production appear not to produce profitable returns. New housing is built in the forms of terrace houses over rice fields, justified by the need for land-space and the practicality of providing infrastructural facilities.

Eventually, like landscape, kampung is a creation of the human mind. The perception of the kampung is idealised in painting, literature, political propaganda and in the modern media. This phenomenon is similar to other places in the world where development takes over agricultural land. As the physical landscape is lost, the iconic power of what was there beforehand strengthens.
6 Methodology

6.1 Methodological approach

I explored the meanings of kampung and its saliency to the life of rural-urban migrants using a qualitative research strategy. I adopted multiple ethnographic methods including three steps – photo elicitation, in-depth interviews and model mapping for this research.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) list some practical features of ethnography. In their words, ethnographic social studies usually have the following features:

- a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them.
- a tendency to work primarily with “unstructured” data, that is data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories.
- investigation of a small number of cases.
- analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p.248)

Ethnography and qualitative research are subject to critique especially from a positivist view, being labelled as ‘bricolage’ and of lacking in rigor and validity compared to those achieved in a ‘hard science’ approach. To address this issue, I adopted the use of multiple methods in qualitative research to enable triangulations. Flick (2002, 2004) explains that triangulation could be applied as a validation strategy and also as a way to achieve deeper understanding of the issue under investigation.

Ethnography is a “scientific approach” in studying “social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions and other social settings” (Schensul et. al.,1999, p.1). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) describe,
"the craft of qualitative research involves a holistic approach... the practice of qualitative research is reflexive and process driven, ultimately producing culturally situated and theory-enmeshed knowledge through an ongoing interplay between theory and methods, researcher and researched" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p.5, emphasis in original)

My study is focused on the exploration of the kampung as a landscape and the meanings that rural-urban migrants attach to this concept. My quest to reach the goals of this research through a qualitative process follows a cycle which involved an iterative route of data collecting, documenting, analysis, reworking of theoretical/analytical framework and reassessing the data and re-theorizing.

![Figure 6-1 Iterative qualitative process](image-url)
My main interest was in finding the meanings of kampung and how kampung is being seen by those who left and started their life in urban areas. To achieve my goals, I chose the technique of case-study involving two groups of respondents in two cities.

### 6.2 Case Study Technique

The case study approach enabled me to get hold of the broader sense and ‘meaningful’ features of actual happenings that are essential in understanding the experience of migration and what kampung means to migrants. Mark Francis (2000) argues that “case study analysis is a particularly useful research method in professions such as landscape architecture, architecture, and planning where real world context make more controlled empirical study difficult” (2000, p.17). A landscape concept may not be understood in the same way everywhere as culture is plural and constantly negotiated. Hence, one landscape concept could be translated with a different meaning altogether in a different setting (Seddon, 1997). Bender argues that landscape meaning should be seen in the real context because of how people “understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions” (Bender, 1993, p.2).

One of the strengths of the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to employ different sources of evidence which would allow triangulation. Triangulation in qualitative research allows richer and more valid interpretations (Denzin, 1978, 1989). Triangulation refers to the use of more than a single exploration approach to a research question in order to enhance the credibility of a research account, reduces uncertainties in the findings, and offers a better confidence (Bryman, 3/12/2008). Any doubts in an interpretation of data could be significantly lessened when a proposition is supported by two or more independent methods (Webb et al.,1966). Denzin (1978) initially explained triangulation as mainly a validation strategy, however, in his more recent work (Denzin 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 1994) Denzin explains that triangulation is now seen less as a validation strategy but more as a strategy for explaining and supporting findings by gaining additional knowledge of the phenomenon in question.
Triangulation in my study involves the triangulation of qualitative data sources, or known as data triangulation (Patton, 2002). Triangulation was done by comparing and cross-checking the findings from the analysis of different types of data including the analysis of:

i. data from verbal in-depth interviews with respondents;
ii. visual data from model mapping technique;
iii. data from participant observations, in the form of photographic and descriptive records of respondents' physical and social settings.

The use of projective techniques using photo elicitation and model mapping provided indirect means of qualitative questioning and re-questioning which were validated with the data gained during in-depth interviews. These projective techniques helped draw out respondents’ interpretations, which otherwise could be obscured.
6.2.1 Case study one: Alor Star

The first case study was conducted in Alor Star, the provincial capital of Kedah. Kedah, a predominantly agricultural state, is also known as the ‘rice bowl’ of Malaysia. The percentage of urban population in Kedah is about 39.3% (Population and Housing Census 2000), among the lowest in Peninsular Malaysia. Rural-urban migrants in Alor Star mainly come from neighboring districts and rural areas. The physical landscape of Alor Star is a mixture of rural and urban elements where agricultural areas and kampung are in close proximity with the urban centre. This type of urban setting is very different to the higher density urban form of my second case study, Kuala Lumpur in terms of scale, land use pattern, population density, and availability of land.

Plate 6-1 Alor Star skyline
6.2.2 Case study two: Kuala Lumpur

The second case study was conducted in Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding Klang Valley. Kuala Lumpur is the national capital of Malaysia, where 100% of the population is considered as urban (Malaysia Population and Housing Census, 2000). Kuala Lumpur has one of the
highest influx of Malay rural-urban migrants. The Malay population in Kuala Lumpur increased from 15% in 1957 to 25% in 1970. The percentage has grown rapidly since the implementation of the National Economic Policy in 1971 which encouraged Malay rural-urban migration. The high Malay rural-urban migration in the 70’s and 80’s was largely absorbed by urban squatter settlements in Kuala Lumpur, which have contributed to much of the Kuala Lumpur’s urban issues.

Kuala Lumpur’s landscape has generally adopted a modern look while maintaining some traces of its colonial history, a mixture of modern skyscrapers and colonial buildings. Kuala Lumpur presents a living landscape that is highly in contrast to the rural kampung landscape. Rural lifestyle and kampung landscape is seen by some urban planners and decision makers as not fit for this visionary city and many ‘maladaptation to urban life’ cases in Kuala Lumpur are reported in media (Bunnell, 2002).

I chose these two cities for my case studies due to their differences in terms of their level of urbanisation, the density in the land use and the character of their urban landscape. My
assumption was that rural-urban migrants adapt differently to different levels of urbanization, and that their relationship to kampung may also be different.

6.2.3 Pilot study

Yin (2003) suggests that in a case study, a researcher must fully comprehend the issue being studied. Background information relating to the issue is crucial. Before seeking the meaning of the kampung landscape to the rural-urban migrants, I included a scoping stage in which I visited a Malay kampung. I did this so that I could know the kind of landscape and social milieu that the rural-urban migrants were actually from. It helped me to better understand the environment that has once moulded the rural-urban migrants’ life. I began with a descriptive study of the kampung landscape through existing literature (contemporary and historical), photographic notes of kampung and also through discussions with kampung folks. Some of the photographs taken during this stage were used as prompts in the in-depth interviews which were later conducted with the rural-urban migrants. I focused on the kampung in the Yan district in Kedah, north of Peninsular Malaysia. These regions are mainly populated by the Malays and the kampung are still agricultural based, maintaining rice as the main crop. This state is also less urbanised compared to the states in the south and western parts of the peninsular.

I conducted a pilot study with ten rural-urban migrants before the formal data collection stage. Yin (2003) argues that conducting a pilot study will facilitate in improving the strategies of data collection and analysis. The pilot study also helped me to “develop relevant lines of questions... providing some conceptual clarification for the research design” (Yin, 2003, p.79). Besides, the pilot study further clarified the phenomenon being studied, helping to identify relevant questions to use and any logistical issue that may arise in the field. Indeed, that proved true, and from the pilot study I managed to further refine the questions asked, the techniques to get respondents to speak and the way to initiate discussion. Doing a pilot study increased my confidence of speaking to people and returning to see the respondents I met in my pilot study helped me to gain more information than when I met them for the first time.

Ethnographic research also highlights the differences in outlook between an insider and outsider. It would be natural for a foreigner to question everything on site and everyone
around him or her, but fieldwork with people from the same culture presents another challenge.

The pilot study helped me reassess my point of view as a researcher. I also took a qualitative research class from which I read Tolich and Davidson’s “Starting Fieldwork” advice on studying ‘familiar territory’ (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). I realized that I went into the fields for my pilot study with a familiar lens. I saw things not through an observer’s eyes but through the eyes of a Malay girl who visits people’s home, ask questions and takes pictures. The everyday activities that they do seem natural and ‘normal’ things to me, in other words, I blended in the setting. Then I learnt that I had to see things ‘as if I’m seeing it for the first time’(Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p.7).

![Plate 6-4 State of Kedah: a circle indicates Yan district](http://encarta.msn.com/map_701513669/Kedah.html)

Before going to the cities, I first started my fieldwork in Yan, Kedah, where I visited kampungs, getting respondents contacts and interviewed kampung elders on their kampung history, culture and traditions. Next, I went to Alor Star and then to Klang Valley. Although I
had them put into three different stages, I also went to Alor Star when I did my work in Yan, returned to Yan when I did my fieldwork in Alor Star, and also back to Alor Star when I was doing my work in Klang Valley.

6.3 The Respondents

I chose to learn the meanings of the rural kampung landscape from the eye of rural-urban migrants. I chose my interview respondents from rural-urban migrants who have experienced the transition from rural to urban landscape. I believed that knowing the layers of meaning through their experience will in some ways project the feeling and situation that those in rural landscape would have to go through when they migrate to cities or when their rural kampung gives way to urbanisation. Thompson (2002) asserts that the “migrants… are an important source of information and opinion about ideas of urban and rural in Malaysia” and by conveying their opinion, they declare “their own subject position in relationships to identities of place and place-based identities” (Thompson, 2002, p.56).

The chosen rural-urban migrants were born in rural kampung in the Kedah, a state in the north of Peninsular Malaysia and have migrated to urban areas from as early as 1970s (during which the government introduced the New Economic Policy that promotes rural-urban migration), and had been living in the urban areas for at least one year.

I started to search for contacts of rural-urban migrants when I visited the kampung. I obtained a list of Kampung Security and Development Committee (KSDC) for the kampung from Yan District Office and I contacted the KSDC Chairmen of the kampung, who also have the role of village heads. Through the village heads who agreed to help me, I was introduced to families who have children, friends, or relatives who migrated to Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur, and I started gathering contact numbers of the rural urban-migrants. At the same time, I also had informal discussions with the villagers about the history of their kampung, the changing landscape of the kampung, the land use, the social relations, and the development they hope to see in their kampung.
After receiving the contacts, I started making calls to set appointments. My fieldwork in the city started with Alor Star and then later in Kuala Lumpur. I made calls to set appointments for the interviews. As I expected, it was not easy to see people at home since they are out working on weekdays and they had family activities planned throughout weekends. The limited number of respondents from the list I gathered in the kampung who were willing to take part was frustrating at first. Luckily the respondents I met in the cities also had networks of friends or relatives who migrated into the same city, especially in Klang Valley. Hence I adopted snowball sampling to get more respondents.

The respondents were chosen from various social classes – mainly the working class and the middle class; living in different types of housing areas. This is due to the notion that I wanted to know how the meanings and attachment of migrants to the kampung landscape differ across social classes and to those who moved to the cities with different goals.

I used the principle of theoretical sampling rather than random or statistically representative sampling. Samples were small (17 in Alor Star and 20 in Kuala Lumpur), and each of them generated a large amount of data. I did not pre-specify the exact number of samples, instead, selection was sequential. Once an interview was completed, I made a sequential selection for the next respondents.

My respondents are Malays so I decided to conduct the interviews in Malay language. Two respondents used a mixture of English and Malay words. With one respondent, I did the interview mainly in English when I noticed that the respondent was comfortable using English to welcome me into his house. All interviews I conducted were recorded using a digital recorder. The exceptions were two interviews that I failed to notice that the recorder stopped working while I was interviewing. However for these two interviews, I quickly wrote down mental notes from the interview as soon as I realized it when I got back to my car. As the interview went along, I also wrote down points from respondents’ answers in my notebook. I transcribed all the interviews myself.
6.4 *Methods of Data Collection*

My main source of data came from the in-depth interviews with rural-urban migrants. Each interview involved a visit to the participant’s house which usually lasts a few hours. All respondents were given an information sheet each which also explained confidentiality and their rights to withdraw from the research. Respondents were required to sign a consent form if they were willing to participate in the research. All my rural-urban migrant respondents are literate.

![Diagram of 3-Steps-Interview](image)

*Figure 6-2  3-Steps-Interview*
6.4.1 Participant Observation and Thick description

While visiting respondents, I applied the method of participation observation with ‘thick description’ and also took photographs to record my observations. “Thick description” was used by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his writing The Interpretation of Cultures (1973), a term which he adopted from philosopher Gilbert Ryle to describe his ethnographic method (Geertz 1973:5-6, 9-10). A thick description of a human behaviour is an explanation of behaviour and the context of the behaviour. This is to ensure that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider. Besides assisting outsiders to understand behaviour in context, it also contributed to data triangulation.

All interviews with respondents were conducted at participants’ homes except in the case of four participants whom I interviewed at their workplace. It was based on various reasons given by respondents, including those who claimed that if the interview was held at their houses, they would be interrupted by their children and others who said that they do not have much time to talk to me at home. However, on a different day after the interviews, these respondents allowed me to visit them at home. One respondent had the interview at her office and drove me to her house right after the interview. On these occasions, I kept written notes of my conversations in their homes. When visiting respondents’ homes, I also had the chance to meet their family members and in the case of single respondents, their flatmates. Although interviews were held on one-to-one session, respondents allowed me to stay and most of the time, I would be invited to have a cup of tea or coffee, which would be joined by their spouse or family members. Informal chats before or after the interviews also gave me opportunities to counter check the information given by respondents.

By writing field observation notes while conducting and right after interviews, I could note occurrences during the interview that did not appear on interview recording and transcript. This includes non-verbal activities, reactions and bodily expressions that may support or contradict a verbal data. When visiting respondents to conduct the interviews I observed the surroundings of their living space, outside and the inside. Descriptions of elements in the setting of the respondents’ homes where I did all my interviews were noted in addition to photographs taken on interview sites. In some interviews, only descriptive notes were taken,
as some respondents were reluctant to allow me to take photos in their dwelling unit, mainly due to uncomfortable living conditions that they consider as shameful (malu). To respect their confidentiality, I did not take any photos of the respondents. Throughout my fieldwork I also kept track of news in printed forms and on electronic media regarding kampung.

Some elements that I took note of around participants’ homes were:

- the type of house and the furnishing - this will give me some indication of the socio-economic level of the participant.
- availability of social interaction space outside the house, utilisation of space
- observe for any ‘kampung’ elements that exist or are being used in and around the participants’ dwellings- e.g., any paintings of ‘kampung landscape’ being used to decorate the interior of the house, keeping ‘kampung’ pets (chicken, ducks, etc.).

During the fieldwork, I stayed in a family house in one of the kampung in Yan and rented a room in a semi-detached house in a housing area in Alor Star and a room in an apartment in Kuala Lumpur. Staying on the site while doing the fieldwork enabled me to observe and also take part in daily activities and events that took place in these areas.

I took the chance to get involved and participated in most community activities that were happening in the vicinity where I stayed. I went to weddings and took part in communal activities outside the house, both in the kampung in Yan and joined activities that I was invited to at respondents’ houses in the city of Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur. During these activities, I wrote down notes, making observations of the social activities that took place in the space. I took photos and short video recordings using my digital camera. I also sketched maps of space usage in the events that I attended to determine the crucial part of the spatial practices in the social events in kampung.
6.4.2 Photo Elicitation

I started my interview sessions with the rural-urban migrants using a visual prompt or ‘photo-elicitation’. Douglas Harper (1994) terms it as a form of new ethnography, involving some modification to open-ended interview using images to initiate discussions (Harper, 1994). By showing a familiar image to a person, the photo-elicitation technique was an attempt to decrease gaps in communication between researcher and respondent (Denzin, 1989).

I prepared photographs of kampung scenes that included various themes such as landscapes, people, buildings, houses, compounds and activities held in kampung as prompts. In order to avoid steering people to talk about the kampung in certain ways, for example using only scenic views may steer people to talk about aesthetic aspects of kampung, I chose to present a wide variety of typical kampung scene photos, focusing on the everyday landscape and activities (all photos used are in Appendix II). Photos were printed in 4R size (4” x 6”) and kept in an album for easy viewing by respondents.

To break the ice, I showed the photo album to my respondents at the start of the interviews. I asked them to tell me what came to their minds when they looked at the pictures. While they were looking at the photos, I kept track of the pages they looked at. I kept a numbered response form with me to record their responses when looking at the numbered photos in the album. The photo elicitation technique, in my research however, received mixed responses from my respondents. Although the photos did not initiate elaborate responses, some respondents clearly showed interest and seemed excited when looking at photos while some others browsed quickly without much say. They showed some facial expressions (smiling, frown, non-response) and comments made were very short and some hardly commented. For some of them, instead of commenting on the content of the photo, were asking me questions about the photography technics and complimented the photos taken. This technique did not prove particularly useful in gaining their insights on kampung but was effective in building rapport between an interviewer and a respondent.
6.4.3 In-depth Interview

The next step was to ask respondents about the kampung and their rural-urban migration experience. The questions were categorized under themes, but not asked in a particular order as I wanted the conversation to flow according to respondents’ answers. The subjects were:
1. Life history, how they came to city
2. Memories of kampung, what they remember about it
3. Current life condition in city – physically, socially
4. Future plan – city life or kampung
5. Idea of ideal life in city

The purpose of the interviews was to get the participant’s interpretation of the kampung landscape and to have participants reflect on their experience adapting and living in urban areas. It also allowed me to discuss the landscape changes in detail. The interviews, which also contained the life story of the respondents from their kampung life to urban life, allowed me to trace the differences in the participant’s life within the different landscape setting as how the participants express it. I was particularly interested in how they adapt (or how they find it hard to adapt) to an urban setting, the way they remembered the physical, social and spatial elements of kampung in their accounts of events, and the meanings they assigned to the kampung elements and characters that they mentioned. Within the interview, I also asked them to make suggestions how their life in urban areas can be improved, and what they aspired to see in the urban landscape.

6.4.4 Mental Mapping with Models

Landscape is a spatial framework, a setting within people act while driving changes and at the same time influenced by the physical environment. Hence, when talking about the kampung, connecting the social memories of kampung to the physical elements in a kampung is rather tough to accomplish through words only. I therefore requested my respondents to draw a mental map to put their stories about the physical elements in kampung into a spatial context.
The mental mapping technique has primarily been used in studies on urban environments in which the results are useful for planning purposes (Soini, 2001).

“A mental map is the spatially organised preferences, or distorted egocentric images, of place, mentally sorted by individuals and drawn upon as resources in their interpretations of spatial desirability, their organisation of spatial routines, and their decision-making transactions as satisfying agents… Mental maps are an amalgam of information and interpretation reflecting not only what an agent knows about places but also how he or she feels about them,” (Johnston et al., 1986, p.432).

Whyte (1977) describes mental mapping as a “technique for finding out the images of spatial relationships and environmental characteristics that people carry about in their heads and the attitudes they hold towards them” (1977, p.55). This view is also shared by behaviourists who claim that the schematisation of graphics in a mental map is often corresponding to the schematisation of the mind (Soini, 2001). Mental maps might also indicate “individuals’ spatial inclinations, the meaning of and attachment to a place” (Soini, 2001). Closer to the study of kampung and landschaft, Corner (1999) likens how the image of landschaft is constructed with the mental mapping process. Corner (1999, p.161) explains,

“... in landschaft the formation of synaesthetic, cognitive images forges a collective sense of place and relationship evolved through work. This latter phenomenon can be likened to a kind of mental map, or diagram, a spatio-organizational image that is not necessarily picturable but is nonetheless laconic and communicable” (Corner, 1999, p.161).

During my earlier pilot study, I asked respondents to draw mental maps (or sketch maps) of the kampung, drawn by free-hand using a pencil on a blank sheet of A3 sized paper to complement the verbal descriptions given by the respondents during the interview. The process of asking respondents to draw and making a map of the elements they remember of the kampung landscapes on a blank sheet of paper did not work because not all respondents are able or willing to draw. Only four out of ten were willing to draw and the rest refused. Respondents’ abilities varied, and the number of elements drawn on maps was very different among respondents. In some cases, a few squares were drawn while some respondents refused to draw anything at all.
Having experienced that most respondents don’t feel at ease drawing, and noting the elements that were found in pilot study map, during the actual fieldwork I experimented using models. I prepared models of houses at the size of children’s Lego® building blocks. During the pilot interview, homes of respondents and neighbours’ houses were noted as the central elements found in drawings done by pilot study respondents. The elements in focus were man made buildings: houses and mosques. The models I used were colour coded: respondent’s house (red and yellow), close relatives house (green), distant relatives (red) and neighbours without blood ties (blue), and a few other blocks to represent public structure in kampung. This time around I found that respondents were more willing to arrange the models, and draw the other elements to fill the spaces between it. The respondents were more open to talk about their memories that had connection with the spaces, structures and elements they showed in the map compared to having to draw them on blank sheet of paper.
While respondents arranged models and made a map, I asked questions and took notes of the drawing sequence made by the respondents. Photos of the completed model and mental mapping by respondents are taken on the spot to keep the original arrangement of the models by respondents. Most respondents drew the maps with pencils although I provided coloured markers and they followed the lines with markers afterwards. Photos of mental maps presented in the thesis have gone through little editing which includes the placing of labels according to respondents’ explanations and removing of names and addresses from some maps to protect respondents’ anonymity.

In summary, I used complementary ethnographic methods – photo elicitation, interviews, mental mapping using models, and participant observations – in these fieldwork settings, the rural kampung, the urban centre of Alor Star, and the city of Kuala Lumpur. These provided a rich descriptive basis for analysis of meanings of kampung.
7 Analysis: Rural-urban Migrant Respondents

This section discusses the profiles of my respondents, and summarises the results of the photo elicitation and model mapping process.

7.1 Relationships Between Respondents

Twenty rural-urban migrants from Yan, Kedah were interviewed in Kuala Lumpur while seventeen respondents were interviewed in Alor Star. The following chart (Fig. 7.1) shows relationships between respondents in the same city and some relations between respondents, within a city and across the two cities. Connectors between the pseudonyms represent relationships that include either blood relatives, kampung neighbours or friends.

From the chart, there are more connections shown between respondents in Kuala Lumpur. However, this does not suggest in any way that in Kuala Lumpur the respondents were more connected with their migrant kampung friends or relatives compared to those in Alor Star. Recruiting respondents through known contacts was crucial in Kuala Lumpur as attempts to arrange for interviews with a list of contacts from relatives in kampung were, more often than not, futile. Getting contacts from co-migrants proved to be more fruitful in recruiting respondents in Kuala Lumpur. Respondents in Alor Star appeared to be more willing to participate in the interviews.
Figure 7-1 Relationship between respondents
7.2 Rural-urban Migrant Respondent Categories

Analyzing the data, I found a general trend according to age patterns that allowed me to classify my respondents into groups with some similarities in experience, expectations and views on kampung and their current living. These groupings were also made in combination between the two cities. Although there are similarities, there were also differing views within the same group. I classified them into five groups, A, B, C, D and E (Fig 6.2). These groups were not pre-classified and were a result of patterns found in participants’ responses.
Group A involves five respondents from the age twenty three to thirty four years old and I labelled them ‘Young Explorers’. These respondents were mobile and prioritised their career advancing and enjoyed the opportunities and challenges that they had to face in city. Two respondents were single at the time of interviews, one had just married, and two were engaged. They lived in their respective rented apartment units. They were not yet ‘settled down’ in their current living and were looking forward to their next step in life, either for a career change or a marital decision. Kampung is still their immediate ‘home’ as they consider their current living environment as temporary, just ‘a place to go back, take shower, eat and rest’ after work. Respondents in this group either had very low to almost no involvement in residential activities in their current living community, and their main connections were families back in kampung and relatives who lived in the same city. All respondents from this group left home for the first time for education, either to boarding school at early teenage years or to college in their later teens. They changed places a few times in the same city and had no problem moving again as long as they would get easy access to their work place.

Group B consists of twelve ‘Working Parents’. All of them have full time jobs. Eight of them had spouses working full time, two with spouses working part time as tailors, and the other two had home maker wives. Financial and educational needs for children and family security were the main concerns for this group of respondents. All of them have children and expressed concern about their children’s growth and safety in the cities. Parents in this group have familial considerations in choosing their living space and cite ‘kampung characters’ as one of the elements they look for when making decision on where to live. They take part in community activities in their current homes. Some were proactive and initiated their resident association or became the head of community activities. Migration reasons varied from pursuing education to job seeking.

Group C consists of ten women who are home makers. Seven out of eleven housewives moved to the city either to look for a job, to study or a change of job while four others moved to the city only after they got married, following their husbands. These housewives who moved to follow their husbands shared some similar issues when they first moved to cities. Home makers spent more time at home, hence they invest more effort in their living space. Regardless of the main intention of moving, spending most of their time at home in the city has given them some similar issues to deal with including raising children and education,
privacy, isolation and safety. This group of respondents was also found to be highly attached to the kampung “character”.

I chose the age fifty and above to be grouped as ‘Senior Migrants’. The ‘Senior Migrants’ in my research could be divided into two groups. Seven of them are in **Group D** which I labelled as ‘**Stayers**’, who decided to remain in the city, although they love the idea of living in kampung while the other group – Group E, ‘**Returnees**’, had made a clear decision of going back and already had their returning plan sorted out.

The Stayers shared interests and fond memories of kampung living, yet they had obstacles that deterred them from returning. Some reasons were personal and some depended on the state of their current dwelling in the city landscape. Locally induced improvements to physical and social surroundings to create ‘kampung-like’ atmosphere in their current living supported and helped them to achieve the lifestyle they hope for in the city. Stayers can also be divided into two groups: those who have no choice but to stay and those who have choices but found that they can cope with city life and that this is more beneficial than returning to kampung. Those who chose to stay claim that their current living landscapes have become just like in kampung.

Another group of “Senior Migrants” share similarities in their view about city and kampung and have strong feelings about the idea of going home. They feel that there were things that they could not get in the city and could only find it in kampung. Although they have lived in the city for quite sometime, they keep feeling that the city is just a temporary place that you stay before you move on or return. These ‘Returnees’ also found that lifestyle and environment in the city do not suit their age group and do not meet their expectations for their retirement years.
7.3 **Photo Elicitation**

I showed a collection of photos of kampung (refer Appendix II) to respondents at the start of my interview in order to break the ice and just to see their reaction and interest when they looked at the photos. The photos were put in an album and respondents took their time to open and look at the photos at their own pace. I only gave one instruction “tell me what you think or feel when you look at the photos”. Informal photo elicitation process gave freedom for respondents to look at photos and their responses appeared to be a good start for deeper discussion on kampung.

Excitement about kampung could be seen in some respondents who called upon their children to join them to look at the kampung images after they have browsed through it for the first time. Jamilah bt. Said and Aisyah bt. Zain in Alor Star and in Kuala Lumpur, Habsah bt Yaakob, Azman b Osman, Siti bt Khalid, Naimah bt. Endut and Fatihah bt Sarip showed the images to their children and gave their children some insights on how things were when they were back in kampung. The children, however, were not included in my interviews.

Overall, I received mixed responses which include:

- respondents kept in total silence while they browsed the whole album,
- respondents asked questions not related to research (for example the photography technique, types of camera used),
- respondents asked questions on locations of the photos taken,
- respondents commented on photos of activities that they consider ‘seronok’⁴ and gave their version of description of experience in such activities,
- respondents commented on similarities and differences of their kampung with the images in photos

---

⁴ Seronok: enjoyable, fun, joyful, happy, blissful, content, pleased
The following table shows the photo themes that received the most responses from respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo Number</th>
<th>Photo Theme</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Man and women working in rice field</td>
<td>- Work that they and their parents used to do, - hardships of kampung life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Wedding, kenduri and gotong royong preparing food</td>
<td>- 'seronok' preparing for feasts and weddings together with family and friends - joy of getting together at kenduri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Kampung house</td>
<td>- ‘seronok’ living in kampung house - describes joy and ‘freedom’ of having a house with a compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 11, &amp; 12</td>
<td>Elements in compound: - clean swept compound - a pelenggar (bench), hammock, chicken coop - jelapang (rice barn)</td>
<td>- recalled activities they did around their kampung house - comments on jelapang usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 &amp; 14</td>
<td>River and fishing</td>
<td>- stories of river activities - fishing - childhood memory in with river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mosque</td>
<td>- ‘seronok’ celebrating Ramadhan(^5) and Hari Raya(^6) in kampung mosques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Children playing</td>
<td>- Joy of simple kampung childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 &amp; 23</td>
<td>View of rice fields in different planting season</td>
<td>- Expressed preference of the views - Stories of experience working in ricefields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Harvesting machine on rice field</td>
<td>- Changes in rice planting methods - machine use and manual labour, detachment and attachment to ricefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rubber trees</td>
<td>- Parents used to plant rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 &amp; 30</td>
<td>Rivermouth &amp; Seaside</td>
<td>- Preference for activities near seaside – fishing, sightseeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7-1 Photo elicitation: photos with most responses**

During photo-elicitations activities most respondents showed interests in the photos. Those who responded to photos described of how the photos make them feel; recall things and events; provided experiential descriptions: description of activities, description of feelings, of their carefree childhood play, the joy of participating in activities and feasts, descriptions of hardships in rural life and description of seasons and changes. However, none of them describe kampung with with words that related to the descriptions of beauty, or ‘aesthetics’ reference. The Malays usually use words like cantik, indah, or menarik to describe the beauty of a subject, but none of these words were used. This suggests that they see kampung landscape as experiential, integrated and inclusive with their everyday activities.

---

\(^5\) Ramadhan: fasting month for Muslims, mainly celebrated with religious activities during both day and night

\(^6\) Hari Raya: Eid, the first day of Syawal, the end of fasting month (Ramadhan)
7.4 Results from Model Mapping

This section explains the gist of analysis of model maps that I made, further analysis of the interviews while the model maps were drawn are demonstrated in the next two chapters. It is important to note that these maps first and foremost were made to help respondent recall and demonstrate their ideas and memories of kampung and the connection with the physical aspects of the kampung.

Model maps drawn or done by respondents in Kuala Lumpur and Alor Star showed little difference between the two cities. Differences are rather found between individual respondents regardless of the city that they migrated to. Using models proved to help respondents to recall their kampung memories and gave me their insights about their kampung experience. Discussions and narrative of kampung vary as some respondents were talkative while some respondents were rather quiet and deep in their own thoughts while moving the models and drawing on the paper. By drawing the mental maps, it was possible to acquire respondent’s responses to physical landscape, non-physical elements in kampung and the acts and connection between the physical and non-physical elements.

Model maps drawn by respondents showed diverse arrangements and organization of built elements in kampung. Houses were arranged in many different ways with general patterns as the following:

i. Houses arranged in linear form along main road, river or along the seaside
ii. Houses close together in a cluster
iii. Combination of both linear and cluster.

There is a high number of respondents who had close relatives\(^7\) living right next to their homes (29 out of 36 respondents had close relatives as immediate neighbours), as it is common for those from the same family live close to one another in a kampung. I anticipated that respondents who spoke dearly of their kampung homes and the close relationships with neighbours had actually lived among close relatives. However, that is not always the case.

\(^7\) Close relatives in this case refer to immediate (and in-law) siblings, parents, uncles, aunts and first cousins.
There are those who explained in detail and expressed their affinity towards their kampung like Habsah bt Yaakob, Taufik b Mahmud, Karim b Anuar, and Naimah bt. Endut from Kuala Lumpur, together with Hasbullah b Rahmat and Aisyah bt. Zain, who actually had their homes separated from close relatives. Ilias b Rani, another example, spoke lovingly of his kampung, family and his childhood years, however none of his close relative or even distant relatives lived close to his family home. He, however considered those neighbours *macam saudara* (just like family).

### 7.4.1 Physical Landscape in Kampung

Respondents were aware of the physical landscape elements around their kampung, both natural and man-made, showing their affinity towards elements of landscapes in kampung. Rivers, hills and trees are important part of their memory of kampung. Some even specifically name all the trees that they had around their parents’ homes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Frequency (n=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampung road</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice field</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampung path</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main roads</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque/ <em>surau</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water channel</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree clumps (unspecified)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House compound boundary</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchard</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelenggar/pangkin</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber trees</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7-2 Physical landscape elements drawn on in model maps (most frequent)*
From the maps drawn by respondents, there is a noticeable absence of any reference to ‘public open space’ like playing fields or any social platforms. Only one respondent made a reference to an open field in drawing, referring to a playing field he used to play in during his childhood.

Kampung, as drawn by respondents does not seem to place importance on designated public space for the dwellers. Respondents claim that although they are very close to neighbours and in essence a community, they did not need a specified ‘public’ place to get together as most of the activities that need community participation are being held at their respective homes. Availability of space around their houses allows social and religious functions or feasts to take place while the absence of fences facilitate the sharing of house compounds between one family with another when the need arise. From my visits to kampung, community halls were available in most kampung but these halls were being used only for activities arranged by Village Development and Security Committee, a committee handling kampung affairs that is linked to a Ministry of Rural Development in the Government.

While drawing the maps, twenty respondents clearly made reference, either drawn or verbally, to the direction from their kampung to the nearest town and also to the nearest city (Alor Star). This indicates that they acknowledge the connection of their kampung to the urban centres.

### 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter described the general groupings of respondents and the analysis of methods during the interviews with respondents. The next two chapters present detailed analysis of the interviews with rural-urban migrants that include further discussion that came out from photo elicitation and mental mapping.
8 Rural Urban Migrants’ Experience of the City

8.1 Rural Migrants Dealing with Urban Spaces

This section discusses one of the umbrella themes from my fieldwork analysis, the issue of space. Rural urban migrants from kampung faced major changes in the physical and social character of their living space when they moved to the city. Rural-urban migration involves the movement from a lower density space to a higher one, and in the interviews, observation and conversations, the issues of spatial character and social use of space appeared repeatedly. Indeed the availability of social and private living spaces are one of the most crucial concerns of migrants in the urban areas, which they typically compare unfavourably with kampung living. This section describes the recurring problems faced by migrants and the adaptation that they make to suit their ‘kampung needs’ in an urban area.

When moving to a new place, there would be expectations of the new place, and time is needed for a person to get used and adapt to their surrounding. Respondents have different views at different stages of life. Some felt that the shift to the city had negative impacts while others embraced the challenge of city life and have proven to improve their standards of living. In the following sections I describe the views and feelings of rural urban migrants about the spatial character of the city. I identify several themes: privacy and noise; isolation and individuality, safety and security, socialised space and boundaries. In most of these there is a dominant view, and also an alternative view which I also report. I also comment upon the profile of the respondents that express the different perspectives.

8.2 Noise, Silence, Isolation and Privacy

The first issue I identified was the question of noise and privacy. When speaking of the character of their living spaces in cities, a number of respondents complained about a lack of privacy, noise and inadequacy of private spaces.
City ‘ambiance’ is seen differently by respondents of different age groups. Khamis b. Hadi, 56, a ‘senior migrant’ has a negative tone in his views of urban oriented lifestyle and places. Although he himself has his own business, a happy family and a comfortable house, Khamis has a lot to complain about in urban life and spaces. He has never lived in a low-cost apartment but when he narrates about life in city, he narrates his experience visiting relatives who live in one:

*City apartments are not suitable for family life. Most of the apartments are noisy all the time. Noisy until the morning... some of the people there work on shifts, so around the clock, there are people who make noise at the early hours of the morning. Unlike back in the kampung, after ten at night, you get total silence. Nothing more going on. Like the place I live now, things are not so bad, you still get the silence at night... but not a total peace and silence like you get in kampung. Years ago when I started to live here... it was peaceful.* Khamis b. Hadi, 56, Kuala Lumpur

To Khamis, a state of peace and silence like he had in kampung is crucial. He himself chose to buy the current house in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur for the less hectic surrounding. At the time when he bought the house, there was a green pocket right in front of the house which now has turned into townhouse blocks. He lamented that he missed the peaceful silence like he used to experience in kampung. Khamis echoed the powerful hostile associations between city and country as described Raymond Williams (1973), showing the ambivalent relationship between the silent kampung and the noisy city life

Not having much chance to make new friends and the feeling of detachment from friends and families in kampung, ‘migrant housewives’ that moved to the city had their own difficulties in getting used to a city setting when they first moved. Those who work outside the home get better opportunities to form new bonds with new friends at their workplaces, unlike the housewives. Naimah bt. Endut, a housewife living in a four-storey walk-up apartment, recalls how she experienced isolation in her new abode on her first week of settling in Kuala Lumpur,

*When I first came to live here, I think I had a hard time going through the day [indoors]. I was bored. I don’t know how to explain it. My eldest child was only two years old...I did not mix with anyone at that time. I did not really know anyone.... God knows how dreary it was to live here [at that time]. Even when my mother came months later, she told me that she could not stay here, she felt sick... The first few days here I felt like I was living with just walls. Thank God I had my child with me. If not, I do not know [how to get through it]. My husband went out to work. In kampung, if you go to visit anyone, the door is open to welcome you. Here, even if you wanted to check and see if any of your neighbours were around, you only get to see closed doors*
[so you don’t know if anyone was around] ... but now I’ve gotten used to it and I also do the same now (by closing the door).
Naimah Endut, 43, Kuala Lumpur.

The feeling described by Naimah is the sense of feeling of being separated or alienated from place, which Relph (1976) called outsideness. Relph explained that existential outsideness is a sense of strangeness and alienation that is often felt by newcomers to a new place. In Naimah’s case, the character of the modern apartment building contributed to her feeling of outsideness. Closed doors and windows appeared hostile to her. Having to live in confined spaces with her views blocked and with the absence of sound and sight of fellow neighbours made her feel isolated. According to Naimah, the willingness of the people to let doors and windows open is a welcoming sign and presents evidence of life inside, something she experienced in kampung but can no longer find in the place she currently lives. The feeling is also shared by other home-maker women. Fatihah bt. Sarip, a mother of four, currently lives in terrace housing in Kuala Lumpur. Fatihah recalls that:

*When I was in kampung, we kept all doors and windows open during the day. If you see closed doors and windows, that means no one is around. Hmm... perhaps we could do that (opening doors and windows) because our neighbours were our families.*
Fatihah bt Sarip, 36, KL.

According to Yuan (1987) doors in kampung are usually open to welcome visitors. The hot and humid climate of the tropics requires huge openings for proper ventilation. At the same time it allows dwellers to be aware of the going-ons outside of the house. This, however, is not always the case in kampung today as kampung living is already much affected by ‘modern’ and ‘urban’ lifestyles. Earlier, Fatihah made the point that she could possibly have her doors and windows open in kampung because her neighbours were families. That was in part true as based on observation during my fieldwork, leaving doors open is practised only in certain parts of a kampung when the areas around the house are considered ‘private’ or ‘semi private’ and the compounds and small roads are being shared with relatives and long time neighbours. Certain surveillance arrangements could also help maintain security. For example, where some houses face streets with a clump of houses facing one another, hence one person from one house could simply see their house surroundings and take charge of the safety of the neighbouring houses.
Suriyah bt Ali, 46, followed her husband to Kuala Lumpur after she got married. Suriyah used to live in a squatter ‘kampung’ settlement in Pantai Dalam when she first arrived in Kuala Lumpur; then her whole family was resettled to a temporary low cost apartment. At the time of the interview, she has been living in a cramped low cost apartment with seven children and her husband for about two years. About nine months before the interview, Suriyah and her husband were involved in an accident that left her husband paralysed.

Suriyah comments,

*In my old [squatter] kampung, life was ‘seronok’*. Unlike here, I feel trapped... [when we lived] in squatter kampung we could see other people. Here [we are] caged in the house. We have to go out [if we want] to see people. There [in the squatters] we had a compound. So I could go out [to the house compound]. Here I have to use the lift to go down. I don’t get to step on the earth. If I don’t go out, I don’t get to see other people at all. *If I don’t go to kenduri*, no one would know me.

Suriyah Ali, 46, Kuala Lumpur.

---

8 Seronok: enjoyable, fun, joyful, happy, blissful, content, pleased
9 Kenduri: feasts, usually in conjunction with wedding, thanksgiving or special prayer.
Suriyah uses a single word ‘seronok’ to describe her life in kampung. As with many other respondents, the word seronok appears frequently in respondents’ descriptions of kampung. Seronok brings various meanings that describe positive feeling of happiness, pleasure, fulfilling and content. It can also be used to describe something fun, enjoyable, amusing, and exciting. Put in the context of their description, in most narratives of kampung by the respondents, the word seronok is used to describe the former rather than latter. Seronok in their narratives is shown to have been a long lasting effect on their lives in which seronok brings out a memorable experience.

Plate 8-2 Open windows provide ventilation and natural lighting in kampung houses, difference in level keeps the privacy of the interiors.
Suriyah also stressed the need for having a house compound as a functional extension of the house. She had a compound when she lived in her kampung. When she was living in the squatter settlement her compound was the space for her to get connected with those living next door and where she got the chance to ‘step on earth’ which now she refers to as a luxury that she could not afford in the city.

City living is harder for Suriyah at the time of interview compared to the days when she lived in squatter kampung. She has to endure both the ‘caged’ and trapped feelings as there is hardly any space outside her door that she can use as she likes and at the same time there is very little space for her and her family to live comfortably inside the apartment. Her husband needs her full attention after the accident while she has to juggle housework and care for her family of seven children. She turned her living room into a care area for her husband. Her husband lies on a bed at one side of the small living room, opposite a lounge settee for visiting guests and where her children sit and do their homework. The space constraint forced her to turn the living room into a multi-use space, in which privacy has to be negotiated every time a visitor comes.

Plate 8-3 Houses built right next to narrow roads in Kg. Kerinchi. Some respondents prefer to live in squatters than living in ‘pigeonhole’ flats and apartments.
In these three accounts from home-maker women, the character of modern city housing, the apartments that they live in and used to live in, reduce the chances for them to communicate and socialise the way they did in kampung. Having permanent barriers and confined spaces do not only put a constraint on their needs for physical spaces, but also reduce the chances for them to have social contacts with those living around them. They lament not being able to see or know what is happening around them and not being able to see other people. Women who worked outside their homes did not comment as much on opportunities for socialising as most of them refer to their work colleagues as their main social circle.

Another respondent, Mariam bt Yusof, 49, also a housewife, left her apartment door wide open after I arrived for an interview. Two neighbours walked past, stopped and exchanged greetings and news with her from outside, right in front of her door. Minutes later, another neighbour came to get keys that Mariam kept while her neighbour was away on a holiday. Many others walked along the corridor past her opened door later on, she then decided to close the door as she made a remark,
...when I keep the door opened, I get to know and meet others... but I’m not comfortable if too many people pass by and look into [my house]. I have to dress properly. If in kampung there’ll be no problem to keep doors and windows wide open. Mariam bt Yusof, 49, KL.

Mariam’s apartment unit is closest to a staircase with a long stretch of narrow corridors. Hence many staircase users would walk past her door daily. By dressing properly, she meant that she had to keep her **aurat** covered, including wearing a headscarf in her own living room. This shows the ambivalence on privacy issues in modern living among the Malays, especially among the rural migrants. By closing doors and windows, the apartment units provide them with adequate visual privacy by keeping the dwellers and their life indoors, away from visual intrusion, however, respondents claim it separates them from the world outside, even from those living next door. They repeatedly compare their current living spaces

---

10 Aurat: (Arabic) parts of the body which cannot be exposed according to Islamic rules
to their past in kampung which to them provided adequate privacy yet at the same time enabled them to have meaningful social engagement.

As explained in an earlier chapter, traditional Malay kampung houses are built on stilts and have huge open windows for ventilation. When visiting a house in a kampung, one would have to walk across the halaman or the front compound and stand at the bottom of the steps leading to the house where one would utter the salam or greeting. One would only go up the stairs once greeted and invited by the host. No unintended intrusion of privacy would take place as visitors would not get to see the inside of the house unless they are invited to go up the stairs and into the house. Difference of height between the eye level of people passing on foot on the kampung paths and the house openings provide adequate privacy for house dwellers. In this, the definition of private and public space is clear in the kampung.

Rural kampung houses are commonly built separated from one another. Although the separation gives some distance that provides privacy between neighbours, the houses are ‘connected’ with one another by unobstructed views between clumps of trees. Azida bt. Saad describes,

\textit{In between our house [and our neighbours’] we had fruit trees. Mangosteen, rambutans and durians. So many trees in my kampung that it actually looked like an orchard. So many varieties. My home compound is quite big, but it was cleanly swept. I could see... I could see the other houses clearly. Let's say, if I stood up in my house at the window, I could see my neighbour at her window, and we could speak out to each other although it was quite a distance...well the kampung was quiet, so when you speak out, it was not hard to catch what my neighbours were saying. There wasn't any noise from the television on those days.}

Azida bt. Saad, 55, Alor Star.

Azida loves the ‘closeness with a distance’ that she used to have with her neighbours in kampung that she then compared with her current life in the city, which, in her words, \textit{“we share the same wall now [with our neighbours] but we feel a little distant”}. She further explains that she likes the house compound (halaman) in her kampung because the halaman makes a home feel ‘complete’.

Rosli Embong, 41, (the only respondent whom I got to interview in English), has lived in different places in different types of housing ever since he came to Kuala Lumpur. He has experienced what he described as ‘the lowest time of his life’ when he literally lived in the
back room of a small photocopy shop where he worked after finishing high school and later moved to three different terrace houses, one after another when he changed jobs. Rosli is now a professional engineer and he leads a good life with his family in a double storey semi-detached house in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. Rosli explained his house-type preference,

[I chose this house because] this is relatively quiet compared to central KL... At least you have life here. At least... Good neighbourhood. [The area is] reasonably clean. So this is the best I can get. The other day my friend said to me.. hey, lets go and buy that [big piece of land with] bungalow lot over there. I told him I’m a social animal. I have to live with people. If I live there, I’ll be spending so much more money renovating my house. If I live there, I’ll die neighbourless! I’m a social animal. I cannot live in a place like that.
Rosli b. Embong, 41, KL.

Rosli says that although he may want to have a certain amount of quietness in his surroundings, he also needs to keep physically connected with people living around him.

Not all respondents found the relative loss of privacy and the pervading noise of the city a problem. Khamis expressed a positive response to the background sound of the city,

I kind of like living here... [there are] more people [here] so it is not too quiet, I don’t feel lonely. If in kampung, I could enjoy the daytime, but at night, it’s all quiet. Khalid b. Johari, 38, Kuala Lumpur.

Khalid likes the fact that the city remains alive at night. When he was still single, moderate city sounds in the form of people talking, music from neighbour house and sounds from vehicle on roads would deter him from thinking of home and feeling lonely and melancholic in the city.

Nazirah, the youngest respondent seeks rest in crowded parks in the city. She loves to have the best of both worlds: the sounds of the crowd and places where she could enjoy sitting under the shade of green trees and sound of water that reminds her of the river at her kampung.
Plate 8-6  KLCC Park

Plate 8-7  Titiwangsa Lake Garden
I usually go out on weekends. Sometimes I go shopping.. in places like SOGO\(^\text{11}\) ... or sometimes to KLCC\(^\text{12}\). I don’t really shop there in KLCC though, I like to spend my time out there in KLCC Park. I find it relaxing, watching the fountains... the children playing. Hmm.. I like that. I like parks with a crowd. I would not enjoy it if the park is too quiet. I also go to Titiwangsa Lake Garden at times.


While Nazirah enjoys spending her time outside on weekends, Zarina prefers spending her time in her flat but sounds from the neighbours’ flats kept her feeling ‘accompanied’. Zarina bt Rashid lives alone on the fourth floor of a flat in Alor Star. She insists that she would not want to live in an apartment on a higher level because on her weekends or public holidays when she did not go back to kampung, she loved to hear sounds of children playing in the open area on the ground floor.

*It is good that the place is only four storeys high. I can still hear kids playing out there. That way, I could feel that there are people around me. Not just me alone. Like in kampung, children could play everywhere, those sounds kept me company.*

Zarina bt. Rashid, 33, Alor Star.

Respondents who reacted negatively to the loss of privacy and the night time noise are older, aged more than forty years old. The younger generation, aged below 40 years old appreciate the calm and silence in kampung but at the same time they would rather have a little ‘noise’, especially moderate lively ‘noise’ involving humans, which shows signs of life and indicates that there are living beings within the buildings that they live in. These reinforce the importance of individual life stage and experience in shaping thinking about kampung. As the younger generation embraces the city lifestyes, the older generations have issues with privacy.

Such problems of isolation, lack of privacy, and gender related issues described by respondents in dealing with their city living could fit the condition that Relph (1976) describes as *placelessness*, the loss of sense of place. Relph argues that placelessness is "the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that resulted from insensitivity to the significance of place" (Relph, 1976, preface). Relph suggests that placelessness is developed from *kitsch*, “an attitude of inauthenticity in which places are treated as things from which man is largely alienated” (Relph, 1976, p.83). Such condition is shown in the mass production of highrise housing in cities, especially for those of the lower income group, in which very little consideration is taken for the local culture.

---

\(^{11}\) SOGO : a shopping mall  
\(^{12}\) KLCC: Kuala Lumpur City Centre, mainly in context refers to the Suria KLCC Shopping Mall
8.3 Social spaces and individuality

“City life makes people change”, says Khamis b Hadi, 56, a retired government officer turned businessman. To him, kampung could be just the same as the city;

Kampung is a place where we live, where we make a living, where we mix with other people. It’s the same, just as same [as the city]. The only difference is the lifestyle. The goals are the same. We stay in city just to earn money to live. If we stay in kampung, we also have to earn money. To make a living

He further adds what he thinks would differentiate kampung and city,

…the main difference is, in the city, people mind their own business, (they are) individualistic.
Khamis b Hadi, 56, Kuala Lumpur.

Noraini bt. Ghafar, a nurse in Alor Star shares the same sentiment with Khamis,

The people in kampung are more... they care more about people around them, I think. Now that I live in city, I know. Here people just mind their own business.. These people around me don’t really care about what I do. I have people living on my right and left but I just feel like we are alone.

Ilias b. Rani, 32, a designer with a property development company, has the same opinion and blames the modernist multi-storey apartment building as the form that separates people and makes them turn ‘individualistic’,

This is the living.. we call it rumah pangsaa. ‘Panga’ means we cut and separate. That’s what makes us prone towards being individualistic. If I have the chance to choose, I never want to live in a house with fenced territories. Some people would say the richer you are, the more you need fences for security. I don’t want that at all... because... why do we need fences? [It’s] suffocating!
Ilias b. Rani, 32, Alor Star.

Physical constrains in the city influence how people function socially. Modern houses and living spaces have characters different from the vernacular ones in kampung. Ilias, who is currently living on the top floor of a 4-storey walk up apartment made a clear statement of his disfavour of apartment living and fenced houses. He prefers to live in places without too
many imposed physical boundaries. To him fences and high walls are intimidating and separate people, causing them to be self-centred and individualistic. He maintains the idea that absence of barriers would help connect people and that negotiating ‘invisible boundaries’ would train people to respect and tolerate. This correlates to the spatial concept in the Malay culture and Malay kampung that give less priority to physical boundaries and individuality.

Plate 8-8 Fallen coconut trunk used as boundary marker between these two houses in kampung

In western society, boundaries are an important element of a daily landscape. Jackson (1984) quotes Robert Frost’s Mending Fences: “good fences makes good neighbours”. From the views of the respondents it proved to be different. Twenty out of thirty-seven respondents made clear uninitiated remarks during interviews or while making mental maps that they prefer the absence of fences in their kampung.

Khamis b Hadi, supports Ilias’s strong aversion towards high rise living,

_Apartments are useless. It does not suit the kind of living we have in Malaysia. If we want to have a caring society, you cannot create it in apartments. It is not our culture._
It may suit the singles, but for families, it is not suitable at all. That’s not the kind of place people should live in.
Khamis b Hadi, 56, Kuala Lumpur.

Besides individualism and incompatibility with the Malay culture as described by Khamis, the issues of freedom of spatial use and freedom of living were also raised. Karim b. Anuar, 55, a retired soldier, chose to build a house and live in a squatter kampung in the city although the status of the land is unclear. To him the squatter kampung gives him more spatial freedom and a chance for a kampung-like living. He’d rather live in the ‘urban pioneer’ kampung with a risk of eviction than having to live in an apartment.

They offered me an apartment with a special price for retiring army... just before my retirement. I refused to take it... because if I live in an apartment, there will be no freedom. Living in an apartment is like living in a box. I’ve had that experience before when I lived in army quarters. So I know how it feels.
Karim b. Anuar, 55, Kuala Lumpur.

Plate 8-9 Karim’s house compound in a ‘pioneer kampung’ in Kuala Lumpur
Karim and another respondent, Suriyah bt Ali are first cousins. Karim expressed that he feels sorry that Suriyah has to live in a small low cost apartment after being resettled from a squatter settlement.

Over there [at Suriyah’s place] you hardly get enough space to even park a car. [It is] very crowded. We need living spaces that give us peace and comfort. We don’t just want to live [in a house] for a year or two. We need the house until we die but with that kind of crammed space, we’d probably die sooner. Maybe in the past the government did not really look into these. High rise apartments would give you no freedom at all. It’s like pigeonholes. At least pigeons get to fly.
Karim b. Anuar, 55, Kuala Lumpur.

Ismail b. Rahman, 58, a retired officer used to live in a flat in Kuala Lumpur before returning to Kedah and living in Alor Star. He compares the two cities,

If I want to compare here (Alor Star) with Kuala Lumpur, things are much better here. I know many neighbours here and have grown quite close to them. If in Kuala Lumpur, you mind your own business and I do mine. [When we bump into them] we just raise our hands and say ‘hi’. After that everyone proceeds to their respective houses. Not much communication there.
Ismail b. Rahman, 58, Alor Star.
Except Ilias, a designer who is very well aware of shortcomings in the modern apartment designs, other ‘young explorer’ respondents did not make any unfavourable comments about the architectural and physical characters of apartments they live in. The other ‘young explorers’ are singles who share their apartment with other singles. This supports Khamis b Hadi’s view that apartment living may only be suitable for the singles.

A different view on high rise and ‘individualistic’ city living was voiced by Taufik b Mahmud, 39, who lives in an apartment and sees the different attitudes people develop when they move to cities and live in apartments in a positive light. He sees it as part of adaptation to a demanding city life.

*It is not so bad here... quite okay actually. We also have gotong royong\(^{14}\) sometimes and things work fine. But sometimes if you invite your neighbours for a feast, not everyone will come. In kampung, if you get invited, it is almost obligatory for you to go. You cannot ‘not go’ if you get invited in kampung. It doesn’t work the same here. In kampung, if you already have plans (with your family) then you get invited for an occasion, most likely you have to cancel your own plans. But here, if they already have plans with their family, let’s say... they already promised to bring their children out for a day on Sunday, and suddenly a neighbour calls and invites them for a thanksgiving kenduri, they will not accept that invitation. People hardly have time to spend with their family anyway. That’s the difference here, people put high priority on their immediate family, the priority is different. I’d do the same too.*
Taufik b Mahmud, 39, Kuala Lumpur.

This sentiment shows the change in his attitude to suit the life he has in city. The lack of time to spend with family due to work demands him to prioritize his own family first and the community he lives in comes second. To him, the importance of community over individual or family solidarity is practical in kampung but not where he lives in the city. City living with just a nuclear family in each dwelling unit allows such practice. Where as in kampung, extended families are still living close to one another, holding one to the obligations to maintain the family ties and community spirit. Among the respondents, Taufik was one of the migrants who has shown that he has adapted well to the city landscape and city living. Taufik went through hardship of being a poor new migrant in the city when he moved for the second time after taking a break in his kampung. He gave his account of living in squatters with his wife and first child without the simplest basic facility like electricity. His family endured the hardships and he successfully found his own financial stability and now lives in an upmarket

\(^{14}\) Gotong royong: Communal help
condominium. With the change of economic level, Taufik’s life in the city had also improved and he claimed that he no longer has much to complain about his living landscape.

Khamis’s earlier description of kampung as a place to “live,…make a living [and] mix with other people” is almost synonymous with J.B. Jackson’s landscape ideas that landscape is “a place for living and working in” and “not something to look at but to live in, and to live in with other people” (Meinig, 1979, p.228). From the migrants’ explanation, kampung and city differ in terms of the social interaction among the people. There is a strong pastoral ideal of the ‘close knit’ rural community and a varied perception of ‘individualistic city’.

In this section, it is shown that sentiments towards kampung also depend on respondent’s current living spaces and marital status. There are differences between the needs and preferences of respondents who own a family and the singles in terms of living spaces. The family mostly prefers spaces that allows community interactions and promotes community living where as the singles prefer to have their own privacy and individual space.

8.4 Defensible Space and Moral Safety

 Locked gates, closed doors, closed windows or steel grilled windows are common views in the houses I visited in the city. Safety is a significant concern among female respondents. Most respondents in Kuala Lumpur I met had to open at least two locks before I could gain entry to their houses, commonly the door lock and the door grill lock. All lady home-maker respondents informed me that they would have not let me in if I did not call and make prior arrangements for the interviews and if I had not mentioned people they know that had given me their contacts.
Habsah bt Yaakob, 43, who lives in a low-cost apartment comments,

\[
\text{It’s a bit worrying. One of my next door neighbour’s house was burglarized... and we also have people coming for scratch and win scam\textsuperscript{15}. These people are con men and they come right to our door. They have easy way of making money.}
\]
Habsah bt Yaakob, 43, Kuala Lumpur.

Living in a low-cost apartment, there is no security provision at the building entrance. Access to their apartment building is made public. This leaves them being sceptical to any strangers they see near their apartment unit. After living in the apartment for about eight years, Habsah knows the neighbours in her apartment block quite well, and is always wary of strangers who wander on her floor.

Naimah bt. Endut, living in the same housing area with Habsah says that she prefers to have her door open for better natural lighting and ventilation in the hot and humid weather but safety issues led her to keep it closed unless when her family sits in the living room. With her apartment unit situated right next to a staircase, Naimah expresses her concern,

\[
\text{It’s not like I know everyone who goes up and down the stairs. Those who I know... I know a few that look familiar to me, or those who I really know. Sometimes I don’t know whether they’re someone’s relatives or visitors. It’s not like I have the time to really observe them. In kampung, if we see those unfamiliar faces, we tend to ask who they are, where they’re going to.. like they’re lost or something... but here, if I ask too much, people would think that I’m nosy. But isn’t it good if I ask?}
\]
Naimah bt. Endut, Kuala Lumpur.

Naimah recalls that she naturally could recognize strangers coming into her kampung. She claims that she did not know everyone in the kampung but it was not hard to detect unfamiliar faces. To her, the spaces in her kampung were not public and familiarity among the people could be translated into security.

I found the informal habit of keeping strangers “in-checked” is still practised in certain parts of Alor Star. When I went to find Zarina bt. Rashid in a low-cost flat, two old ladies and a man who sat on a bench close to a staircase of the walk-up flat greeted me and asked who I was looking for. They clearly noticed that I was not a resident there. Zarina describes that the

\textsuperscript{15} Scratch and win scam: a scam where representatives from a company present customers with coupons to scratch and upon scratching, customer would ‘win’ lucky draw and would be asked to pay certain amount of fee (processing fee/ registration) to claim the prize. Most of the time customers end up losing money or paying huge sums of money for some cheap low quality gadgets.
closeness and high-familiarity among the flat residents are partly due to the high population of older persons above 60 who were relocated to the flat from urban kampung which were removed for urban development. Some of the older neighbours were the first generation of urban kampung dwellers relocated to the flats. Zarina’s neighbours created a kampung of their own where Zarina claims that makes her feel safe although she lives alone in her rented flat.

Plate 8-11 A bench (pelenggar or pangkin) used as a meeting spot for older residents

Khamis b Hadi also raised his concerns about how people have grown to be unresponsive to people and one’s surroundings in the city,

*Here in city, people are too busy, each and every day. People are busy chasing time and become indifferent to things that happen around them. People show no concern... [It is different] in kampung, if you suddenly hear a commotion, everyone would come out to check what happened. I think here in city people would not even care.*

Khamis b Hadi, Kuala Lumpur.

Khamis stressed the need for being responsive to others, insisting that in kampung people respond to their surroundings. City people have gotten used to having so many things going on around them. The act of constantly ‘chasing time’ has left people oblivious to their surroundings and could not care less of others around them. This, according to him makes the
city an unsafer place compared to kampung. ‘Care’ is another term that appears repeatedly when respondents discuss the safety of their living space.

Fatiyah bt Sarip narrates what happened in her neighbourhood,

*I think my house is probably safer because my gate is quite high. Those neighbours with lower gates... someone jumped over [their gates] and went into their house compound, stealing their shoes. Those with the front door opened sometimes found things in their living room missing.*

Fatiyah bt Sarip, 36, Kuala Lumpur.

Fatiyah justifies that the act of opening doors and windows in kampung depends on familiarity and she can not do the same in Kuala Lumpur without safety precautions. In the current terrace house she is living in, she keeps her louvers window and front door open but makes sure her front gate is locked. Fatiyah expresses her preference for living in her terrace house compared to her previous residence in an apartment.

*I like it here (in terrace housing)... because in (my previous) apartment, I kept my door closed (for safety reason). I kept the rear windows and the door to balcony open. The problem was I could not notice what happened outside my front door... there was a time when the house opposite my front door caught fire, and I didn’t even notice it.*

Fatiyah bt Sarip, 36, Kuala Lumpur.
Fatihah regards that the urban living space is designed in such a way of providing too much privacy that led her to be oblivious to things that take place in her surroundings. She asserts that rigid barriers could even be dangerous. She further added,

*Back then [in kampung].. our house was made of wood, we could listen to everything. People speak, people shout, all you can hear. Whatever happens out there, we know. I could see everything from my windows on all sides.*

Fatihah bt Sarip, 36, Kuala Lumpur.

Fatihah loved her kampung house which had the view of a vast rice field. Even after moving to the city, Fatihah prefers to have views which give the feeling of having spacious compound and ‘connection’ to the world outside her home. She therefore often leaves her front door open but for safety reasons she has to keep her steel gates locked. By doing this she can still greet or catch up with her neighbours when they are around. With the recent petty crimes that took place in her neighbourhood, she retains that by keeping her door open when she is at home, she could keep a vigilant watch for the safety of her neighbours’ properties.
The same view is shared by Ilias,

*Individualistic is one thing and... quality of life is not so good [here]. Life quality is quite bad, I think. ...how to say it... those who always have to move into flats, apartments are those people with low income. That’s what I see. I work with building developers and they develop a lot of this kind of homes. This is what we call as the factor to social problems. It contributes to the whole [social problems]. There’s a need to look at that. There isn’t any open space for the young and old, some place where the adults can keep an eye on the young. The children play somewhere else while the mother lives up on 20th floor. No one monitors them. It is not like that they do not want to monitor [their children], but the place separates them. Teenagers have nowhere to go but outside. That leads to so many problems. It is no longer within their [parents’] control.*

Ilias further compared the situation with his childhood in kampung.

*[In kampung] parents get the chance to monitor their children and kids play somewhere parents could see. If my friends in the neighbourhood came to play near my house, about ten of them in the group, my mother kept an eye on all of us. If I went to play near another friend’s house, [it was] still within the kampung, their mother could watch over me and they could tell my mom of my whereabouts. They can inform of any mischief I do. Now, neighbours hardly know any neighbour’s child’s name.*

The view raised by Ilias b Rani reflects the popular idea that it takes a village to raise a child. The idea of safety and surveillance here also shows that community spirit is crucial to ensure a safe and comfortable living environment and peace of mind. While some comments and complaints about safety issues involved protected spaces that were clearly bounded and belonged to the owners, other respondents commented on the spaces just outside their ‘clearly bounded living space’, outside their house compounds.

Right in front of Ramli b. Hamdan’s house in Alor Star is a playing field with defunct playground equipment. Groups of truant teenagers and youths gather on the field regularly, sometimes on bikes during school hours and behaving noisily during *Maghrib*\(^{16}\) or late at night.

---

\(^{16}\) For the Malay muslims in Malaysia, *maghrib*, the time when the sun sets is the time to go home, be with family and get ready for *maghrib* prayers. It is deemed improper to be hanging outdoor during *maghrib*.  

124
I find it hard to advise them. I did a few times already... but they just ignored what I said. Sometimes I feel [unsafe] .... You know.. when you want to speak to a group like that, when they gather, they have this group behaviour [that could be dangerous]... anything can happen. I don’t know their parents. I don’t know where they come from. They make noise as if there’s nobody around them.
Ramli b. Hamdan, 46, Alor Star.

The concern about *Maghrib*, reflects a ‘belief of the unseen’ among the Malays who consider Maghrib a time when satans and evil spirits roam free. Partly, the ‘curfew’ during Maghrib time is believed to protect one from getting troubled by the roaming spirits. On the other hand, in Islamic norms, Maghrib is the time when one should be home and get ready for their prayers. Ramli further commented that he felt nothing much he could do to change the youth and things would be different in kampung where he knows the parents of most youths. He believes that he could help prevent such unhealthy activities if he knows the teenagers’ families.

*It would be different in the kampung. They also have problem teenagers there... many of them dropouts. But one thing when you live in kampung, those teenagers spare people my age some respect because we know their parents.*
Ramli b. Hamdan, Alor Star.

The sentiment is shared by Hasbullah b Rahmat who lives in another housing area in Alor Star and sees the danger of having problem youth around in his area.

*Sometimes we as the elders cannot give advice... (to drug addicts and problem youths), because we’d have to think of our own safety. These youngsters were not taught what is wrong or right and as if they do not know that such and such cannot be done in our religion. They are not educated that way. They gather in numbers.. they could do anything... they could even get us killed. *
Hasbullah b Rahmat, 60, Alor Star.

Hasbullah asserts that the ill-behaviour of youth around his house is due to the lack of moral and religious education. Traditional Malays tend to blame the responsibility on parents when their children do anything wrong. When youth are involved in crime, they are described as ‘kurang ajar’ which means ‘insufficiently taught’ and the blame is mainly on the parents and elders for not teaching them well.
Mariam Yusof in Kuala Lumpur is very concerned about raising her children in city surroundings which she considers not safe (tak selamat). She considers the city as tak selamat because of her fear of crime and also in terms of moral safety, stating that “there is too much bad influence”. She claims that she does not like to go out often as she “does not like to see the way city people act and dress, especially the adolescents”. Mariam sent her teenage son to a religious boarding school in Yan as one of her steps to ensure that her son will get a quality religious education and to ‘protect’ him from getting involved with truant teenagers and influenced by ‘western’ culture.
8.5 Creating Personalised and Social Spaces

The migrants need to socialise and adapt to new surroundings when they move to the city. They create their own social space or even kampung-like spaces if they have the resources. Commonly for newcomers to city, they had to go through a familiarisation and getting to know people around them to make themselves ‘at home’.

When discussing their living spaces in cities, respondents repeatedly describe their living unit with the basic indoor spaces. Very few mention the spaces outside their front door except those who choose to find places in the city which also have kampung ambiance, like Khalid b Johari and Karim b Anuar who live in ‘urban kampung’. In contrast when they speak of their house in kampung the description of their ‘home’ would usually be complemented with some reference to spaces outside the house, the compound, the social uses of the spaces and the kampung environment.

Living in the city requires respondents to abide by city rules and regulation. Those living in apartments are subjected to rules outlined by building management, these rules limit their freedom of personalising their living spaces. Migrants living in small apartments would often need to use the spaces outside their door for many different purposes. Mariam bt Yusof expressed concern over the rules that have been circulated by the apartment management when she first moved into her apartment with her family. The rules stated that no laundry is to be hung outside house units, no potted plants and no personal belongings are allowed to be positioned in corridors. Mariam broke some rules by drying big blankets out in the airy and sun-lighted corridor and while doing it, she was able to catch up with fellow neighbours who pass by.
Plate 8-14 Drying laundry at corridors of low-cost apartment

Plate 8-15 Inadequate and poorly ventilated laundry spaces lead residents to hang clothes from windows and corridors
Norita bt Amir, a single respondent in Kuala Lumpur also informed me that she first got to know her neighbour when she met her outside hanging up clothes at the corridor. Simple daily routines done outside of their apartment unit allowed informal contacts between dwellers, hence, showing the importance of having spaces outside of one’s living unit be used as ‘activity area’.

This echoes what Azida bt. Saad described of her experience of knowing her fellow kampung neighbours while simply doing her daily routines,

*I didn’t visit my neighbours often. I just stayed at home ... I didn’t do that [when I was in kampung] but when they walked by in front of my house, or at the back, I would greet them, ask how they are... [while] I swept dry leaves on my compound, or when I checked on my potted plants. I just greeted them. I just stayed at home and did my things, but I got [the chance] to know them just like that. May be because there, when we do [daily] things, we get to see others.. neighbours, relatives... [I was] not just confined in the house.*

Azida bt. Saad, Alor Star.

Hence, in the lives of the urban migrants living in high-rise housing, corridors, balconies and lift lobbies replace the compound setting of a kampung house, where one meets, greets and gets to know neighbours and strangers. The lack of activities in and functionality of these urban spaces reduces the chance of informal contacts between dwellers. The design and orientation of the modern living tends to keep dwellers indoors and does not provide them with opportunities to be outside and encounter the people who live around them. Finding time to set aside, specifically for leisure and socialising, is not possible for most respondents as they have chores and family obligations to fulfil.

When I was on the way to meet Suriyah bt Ali on the second floor of an apartment, I met a group of three women sitting and chatting in a staircase. The women told me that they sometimes meet up to chat in the staircase as it is convenient for them. Two of the women live on the same floor and one was from the third floor. Meeting up in the staircase with good natural lighting and good ventilation during the day is a preferable choice for them rather than going down to the public area in between the apartment buildings or meeting up in any of their apartment units.
Plate 8-16 Balcony and lift lobby are informal nodes of interaction for apartment dwellers

Plate 8-17 Staircase became one of the nodes for apartment dwellers to meet informally
One of the women informed me that they would rather spend their time together on the staircase rather than going down to the open area on the ground floor. The provision of the playground caters for the needs of young children only. She asserts that it would be too hot in the open, and most of the seats under shade at the playground would be occupied by late afternoon. Meeting and chatting in any of their apartments would take up space in their already small homes.

All three women originally came from outside of Kuala Lumpur: two from Melaka and one from Perak. The woman from Perak was holding a baby boy at that time. Spending their time together at the staircase gives them more privacy, time and space with people they are familiar with. The lady from Perak commented, “If [we were] in kampung we could have sat and chatted under a tree or at a verandah, with evening breeze. Here we could just do with this, on a staircase”. The only setback for them is the maintenance of the area, which is not well cleaned.

I told Suriyah of my encounter with the women at the staircase. She knows their names but never had the chance to get to know them better. Having to do chores and taking care of her children and her ailing husband, Suriyah claims that she does not have time to spend on leisure. She goes out of the house only to buy daily groceries at a grocery shop on the ground floor and that is the only time she has for her daily encounter with neighbours, strangers and sellers at the shops she goes to. The only other chance to meet others is when she receives kenduri invitations. Again, in this matter, Suriyah keeps recalling her life in kampung and in squatters where she felt that she had more social connection with people living around her house.

From the descriptions by the women in this section, they clearly express the crucial need for social spaces outside their dwelling units. Jackson (1984) suggests that individual dwelling is ‘the primary landscape element’ and landscape is where humans live in socially. In the kampung houses are linked by meandering paths and compound clearings. Views towards one’s halaman and the neighbour’s halaman are usually unblocked, allowing mothers to observe children playing in the compound, identify people who passes by and even talk to neighbours whenever they like. The opportunity to interact with people outside one’s house is open. Shade tree on a house compound with a pelenggar underneath often become a node for
people to stop, greet and interact. The complaints given by the women dwellers in my interview showed that their units of landscape element are ‘disconnected’ and hardly any conducive spaces are available for social interaction. However, they keep trying and in adapting and ‘place making’, they make their own effort to connect the social links of the ‘landscape’ by creating their own social spaces outside their dwelling units.
8.6 Negotiating Space in the City

For some migrants, ‘kampung spirit’ is something that they can bring to cities by keeping ‘kampung culture’ in practice. Daud b Musa, 55, a ‘senior migrant’ has just retired a few weeks before my interview. He decided to remain in Alor Star and not to go back to his kampung. Daud believes that one can just live anywhere and get the feeling as if he is living in kampung by keeping kampung practices alive. Fluidity of spatial boundaries and use can be clearly seen practised by migrants when they carry out ‘kampung activities’ in their urban setting, mainly when they work together to prepare food for feasts.

During my visits to meet respondents, I coincidentally got to see respondents or their spouses getting involved in communal activities in their housing area that alter the usual designated space use in the the urban housing area. On the day I visited Daud for an interview, four women in the neighbourhood came about half an hour after I started my interview. Daud’s wife then brought out her cooking utensils and her portable gas stove and put it in the front porch. The ladies who came brought ingredients in plastic jars. In no time they turned the front porch into a makeshift kitchen and started cooking fried noodles in a large wok (plate 8-18). Daud’s wife is an active member of the Muslim Women Association in their housing areas. The noodles were prepared to be served at the ladies’ group meeting later on that afternoon.

In Daud’s neighbourhood, they often have community activities, especially the one based at their surau17. Daud himself is a committee member for the mosque closest to his place and actively involved in residential group activities. To him it is just like doing things voluntarily for a kampung community, mentioning that he wants his housing to have kampung-like community spirit as it will be the ‘kampung’ for his children. Daud was planning to renovate his house with the money from his retirement bonus. He is happy with the place he lives in now and plans to remain in the city,

I don’t need to go back to kampung anymore to have a life like in kampung. Here everything is like kampung already. This is my kampung now.
Daud, b. Musa, 55, Alor Star.

---

17 Surau: small prayer hall
Plate 8-18 Ladies using front porch as a kitchen to cook together

Plate 8-19 Men and women together making 'bubur asyura'
Daud claims that his ‘changes’ and adaptation to the city living spaces was not hard because most of his neighbours also came from kampong and brought along their ‘kampung values’ which Daud recited as ‘the ability to do things together and help each other out whenever need arise’.

When I arrived to meet Kamariah bt. Nasir, 40, a housewife in Alor Star, she was outside in front of the gate of her neighbour’s house, together with a few other neighbours, men and women, cooking *bubur asyura*\(^{18}\) (asyura porridge) in a big pot (plate 8-19). Kamariah informed me that the tradition of making *bubur asyura* together has been carried out annually by the neighbours from her lane for the past six years. In Kamariah’s housing area, the event was planned early and printed copies of information about the event and requests for donations were distributed to all neighbours. Kamariah had no complains about her living landscape in Alor Star as she found it almost similar to her kampung life. The only difference she mentioned was that the people she is close to are not blood relatives but good neighbours and friends.

At Kamariah’s house, she had her side fence cut opened to create a small gate to her neighbour’s compound. The same goes for most her other neighbours who make openings on the fences between their houses and their neighbours’ just to make it easier for them to go from one compound to another, especially when a *kenduri*\(^{19}\) is held.

---

\(^{18}\) *Asyura porridge*: a Malay custom of making porridge on the tenth day of Muharram, first months on Muslim Calendar to mark the day when Prophet Noah and his followers were saved from the great flood.

\(^{19}\) *Kenduri*: feast that accompanies an occasion.
In Kuala Lumpur, I encountered a similar alteration of space use by Abdullah b. Hamid’s family members. Abdullah’s daughters and his next door neighbour got together to prepare *bubur asyura* at the back of their ground floor apartment unit. The occasion was more private as it involved members from only three families but there were changes to norms of ‘urban space use’ in Kuala Lumpur. The practice of making *bubur asyura* used to be handled by Abdullah’s late wife, Aini, also from Kedah. Aini used to be the one to collect money from her neighbours for the event and gather the help in the preparation of *bubur asyura*. Aini passed away three years before the interview. Abdullah’s neighbours requested that other members of Abdullah’s family will ‘inherit’ Aini’s position of being in charge of small informal community event like the *bubur asyura* making. Hence, Abdullah’s daughter-in-law stepped in to take charge and conducted a small *bubur asyura* making that involves only a small group of residents. Living on the ground floor enabled them to utilize the empty space outside their apartment (plate 8-20).

Abdullah’s youngest daughter recalled,

*Many more [neighbours] wanted to join. But those who said so are older members of the neighbourhood. They [are too old and] don’t have enough energy to help anymore. We cannot have them to help, they can’t. So we made a lot less than in previous years. We’ll send some to them later on.*

Abdullah and his late wife Aini have shown that they brought along the kampung practice of doing things together and have instilled that same community-centred practice in their children. Their children, who were brought up in the city keep the community practice alive.
Plate 8-20 Ladies got together to make *bubur asyura* in Kuala Lumpur

Plate 8-21 Getting a flat unit on the ground floor is an advantage for urban dwellers like Abdullah
I attended and took part in feasts and celebration near the place I stayed in Yan and in Alor Star. Boundaries of houses and private spaces change during special functions that call for bigger space usage and more participation.

The photo above was taken at Hasbullah b. Rahmat’s house. It shows the use of space immediately outside his house by ladies preparing spices and ingredients to cook for the wedding reception of a neighbour’s daughter (plate 8-22). The *kenduri kahwin* was handled in the spirit of *gotong royong* (communal help) where neighbours took part in the whole process starting with organising, then preparing the food up until all the feast related jobs were done. The house of the bride was immediately opposite Hasbullah’s house (the top part of photo shows the house on the opposite side). Gates of both houses were wide open and ‘actors’ in the preparation moved freely between the two houses’ compound and some closest
neighbours had the liberty to step into the respondent’s kitchen to pick up containers and kitchen utensil. One family’s occasion and preparation spilled across a house boundary.

I revisited Hasbullah and his wife a week later and there was a difference in the space use during my second visit. The front and rear gates were closed and no neighbours were seen around. The closed gates showed a protection of his private space when there is no need for space sharing. I was told that during his son’s wedding, Hasbullah also received cooperation from other neighbours to use their house compounds. The limited space in Hasbullah’s compound to organize and run big feasts for special occasions like weddings were augmented by spaces in neighbours’ gated compounds.

Hasbullah comments,

It is easy to do things like we did in kampung here.. [because] I get full cooperation from my neighbours. It is just like in kampung here, very much like kampung. These people are from kampung too, so they still practice pakat20 ...but like I said, they too are getting old. They are my generation. I’m not sure whether the next generation would do the same. I don’t know whether my children [would keep it going]... I see many of them... their children stop doing what their parents did.
Hasbullah b. Rahmat, Alor Star.

The same practice was observed at the residence of another respondent, Ismail b. Rahman. Ismail organized his daughter’s wedding reception and kenduri at his own house, a semi-detached single storey house in Alor Star. The wedding utilised the inner compound of four other houses as the station for food services and handling and also for guests’ dining area. A tent was set up on the stretch of lane in between eight houses to serve as the guests’ dining area. The lane was closed to motor traffic for the whole day. Permissions to close the road were requested from all residents on the lane before hand. Ismail’s neighbours voluntarily offered their compounds for the setting up of the kenduri.

---

20 Pakat: a cooperation for feasts and celebration rites of passage.
Plate 8-23 Four house compounds/ front porches were used in the handling of a wedding feast for Ismail’s daughter

Plate 8-24 Male guests’ feast tent in front of Ismail’s house: guests’ seating were gender segregated
Ismail used catering services to supply food for the feast. The jobs of food handling and becoming *penanggah* or serving assistants at wedding feast were done by Ismail’s family members, relatives and neighbours. Just like Hasbullah, Ismail had no problem getting cooperation from his neighbours although he lives in a multi-cultural area. Figure 8.1 shows a comparison of defensible space hierarchy at Hasbullah’s house on two different days. The first on the left shows the hierarchy of space on normal days while the second shows the changed space privacy when a special occasion like a wedding feast took place.

From the examples of participant observations I described in this chapter, there is clearly a change in definition of private and public space that took place during social gatherings and when feasts and ceremonies are held. Negotiations of privacy and boundaries are practiced to accommodate their cultural needs. What these examples illustrate very well is how low rise kampung style living – whether in the rural area or in urban settings - can allow spaces to be adapted to a variety of functions over time. They can create privacy, but also allow connections, they can be public and private, at different times. The problem that many respondents appeared to find in the high rise apartments is that they are so inflexible in their function. The attempt to create efficient and rational spaces has also created inflexible boundaries and made it difficult for people to negotiate a range of social relationships, at different times.
Defensible space hierarchy in everyday life

**Private area, strictly for family members**
- Bedrooms
- Hall / kitchen
- House compound
- Lane (serving 8 houses)
- Street

**Semi Private area**
- Fenced & gated space

**Semi Public area**
- Dead end lane for the use of eight houses
- Main streets remain for public use

Defensible space hierarchy during special occasion

**Private area, strictly for family members except bride’s room during the kenduri which guests may enter to meet the bride**
- Bedrooms
- Hall / kitchen
- House compound
- Lane (serving 8 houses)
- Street

**Semi Private area**
- Family/friends helping out with any food preparation/decorating, guests may enter hall to see wedding dais

**Semi Public area**
- Bridal meal, food handling helpers, guests may enter freely

**Public area**
- Lane turned into feast area. Nearby lanes became parking areas
- Main streets remain for public use

Figure 8-1 Hierarchy of defensible space at Ismail b. Rahman’s house, Alor Star

Eg: Wedding reception
8.7 Spaces of Cultural Differences

Kampung people who used to stay among the mainly Malay populated kampung sometimes
find problems in living in multicultural housing. Cultural differences between neighbours also
became an issue to them. The city landscape has higher number of residents from different
ethnicities. Noraini complained,

One thing that I do not like about living here is that I don’t have neighbours. Not
‘seronok’. Sometimes I feel like moving to another place with more Malay neighbours.
A place with a community. It is not seronok living here sometimes. When I go home
after work,[I feel like] nobody cares.

It is rather ironic that Noraini does not regard the non-Malays who live around her as
neighbours. Later when she drew her mental map, she mentioned that one of her immediate
neighbours back in kampung was a Chinese family that she was close to. When I enquired,
Noraini stated that “…in kampung it is different, others (non-Malays) adapt to our culture
well when they live in kampung. They’re just like my Malay neighbours”.

Fatihah bt Sarip, 36, previously lived in an apartment with closed dark corridors. The mother
of her Taoist neighbour burnt incense for prayer every morning right opposite of Fatihah’s
door. Poor ventilation led the incense smoke and smell to linger into the adjacent units and
Fatihah found it disturbing. Fatihah did not do anything to react about her discomfort but she
asserts that from then on she would prefer to have neighbours from the same cultural
background. The current terrace house Fatihah lives in has an almost equal percentage of
residents from three main ethnicities, the Malays, Chinese and Indian but Fatihah found that
she could live comfortably although her non-Malay neighbours are all practicing their
religious rituals at their homes on daily basis. I asked what makes her feel good living at the
current terrace house compared to the old apartment, Fatihah said,

It could be the more space we have here. I have a small compound in front here. My
neighbours have their own spaces too. Everyone does their own thing, but we interact
well. It’s like... you don’t tread into someone else’s space. Unlike in the apartment. Whatever my neighbours did [back then], it was right in front of my door, at my face.
Aisyah bt. Zain, 45, on the other hand, felt the opposite. It was different for Aisyah who claims that her closest neighbour is an Indian lady who lives immediately behind her terrace house unit. Aisyah expresses that they both are close like sisters.

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with themes that involve issues faced by urban migrants concerning ‘spaces’ and how they go about creating their ‘place’ and lives in a city environment with kampungs as their point of reference. The issues they faced are mainly due to the differences of spatial characters that they used to have in kampung and the ones that the have in the city. In some cases, the character of the urban landscape spaces restrain them in doing their daily activities according to what they feel culturally and socially accepted. The ways respondents go about creating and negotiating the spaces in the urban landscape to suit their cultural practices were also shown. On the whole, this chapter has shown that respondents were involved in adjusting, adapting and at some points resisting the urban lifestyle and characters of the urban landscape by positioning kampung lifestyle as a point of reference to their life in the urban environment.
9 Rural Urban Migrants’ Place Attachment and Sense of Place

Rural-urban migrants form different levels of attachment to places, people and objects around them as they move from their home kampung to their new destinations. Some remain deeply attached to kampung although they have started to form a new sense of attachment to their new places, while others have loosened their ties to kampung as they have built up their foundation for a new life and fully adapted to the city. In both cases, these are elements of nostalgia; for some, a warm memory of past now left behind, for others a continuing sense of loss and dislocation.

9.1 Home, Roots and Returns

In Space and Place, Yi-Fu Tuan explained the concept of homeland as "an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man," (1977, pp.154). Rapport and Dawson (1998) state that the meanings of home and home place could intensify through absence as one moves from one’s home place to another. Home is also a feeling that has sense of belonging and security at its core (Tuan 1980). To most respondents, kampung remains their home and attachment to various elements that exist in kampung vary from person to person.

Some respondents have strong attachments to their birthplace in the kampung.

_I still remember [my kampung]. I love it. That’s my ‘tanah tumpah darah’ (birthplace)._
Habsah bt. Yaakob, 43. KL

The term _tanah tumpah darah_ literally means in Malay ‘the land where the blood spilled’ which refers to a place where one was born. The blood in the proverb refers to the blood spilled from a mother during the birth of a baby. Metaphorically, it signifies a tie between the baby and the land where he or she was born in.

Nazirah belongs to a younger generation of urban migrants. She left kampung in her teens to get vocational education. Nazirah was born in Penang, an urban island, not in Yan which she considers as her kampung. She relates that to the other meaning of kampung, that is “to
gather”. To Nazirah, the upmost important meaning of kampung is where people who give meanings to her life live. Kampung holds the venue, the social space where the people important to her dwell. Nazirah was not born in the place she refers to as her kampung; instead, she calls it kampung because that was dearer to her compared to where she was born. It is the place that people live and come ‘together’ that is most important to her.

_Kampung is a place for...ummmm.. a place where we were born. Actually I was not born in kampung, but I was brought up there. My parents and relatives all gathered there since I was small until I grew up. I went to school there. I mean we all live together there. I think that is what kampung is._

Nazirah bt. Shafie, 23, Kuala Lumpur

While Khalid agrees,

_My parents are not around anymore. My siblings are still in kampung, but not in the same kampung. We get together in kampung during festivals... my grandma is still in the old kampung, My aunts are still there. It is the place to gather us the whole family._

Khalid b. Johari, 38, Kuala Lumpur

Gathering, doing things and living ‘together’ is important to Nazirah while for Khalid, it is essential to bring together family members. One of the dictionary translations of the word _berkampung_ means ‘to stay together’ or ‘to come together’. Thus kampung holds the idea of togetherness and being collective with strong social ties. In other words, kampung works as a community.

Towards the end of the interview Nazirah added,

_I would still go back [to kampung] one day, if God permits. All my saudara (family) is there. People say _tempat jatuh lagi dikenang, ini pula tempat bermanja._

Nazirah bt. Shafie, 23, Kuala Lumpur

In the Malay culture there is an ideal that one ought to go back to where one came from. Many proverbs deals with the concept of remembering one’s roots and the place where one grew up, for example, Nazirah describes that her memory of kampung is strong by saying, ‘_tempat jatuh lagi dikenang, ini pula tempat bermanja_’ literally means ‘if you remember the place where you once fell and got hurt, of course you would remember the place where you were nurtured’. _Dikenang_ from the root word _kenang_ means remembering, reappearing in thoughts with the sense of absence or loss, especially for something that took place long ago or already out of sight. _Kenangan_, also from the word _kenang_ is the Malay version of
memories, or to an extent, nostalgia. The proverb presents the idea that memory of a place among the Malays involves both the bitter and sweet memories. The bad or hurtful one as described in the proverb-*tempat jatuh*, the place where someone falls and hurts while the good one-*tempat bermanja* – the place where someone is pampered, usually refers to growing up in the warmth of parental and family love, implying that one would remember not just the good ones, but also the bad, bitter and hurtful memories.

Migrant housewives Mariam, Naimah and Fatimah speak fondly of their memory of kampung and clearly express their hopes to return. Mariam cited a similar proverb to the one cited by Nazirah when she recalls her kampung memory;

*Kampung, when I was small... it was different. It is different from what I have now [in Kuala Lumpur]. Kampung is the place where I was born, the place where I grew up, people say that tempat jatuh lagi dikenang, ini pula tempat lahir (if you remember where you fell, you’ll remember more of the place where you were born). No matter where I go, I’d still remember my kampung.*
Mariam bt Yusof, 49, Kuala Lumpur

These two similar proverbs mentioned express the ubiquitous idea of remembering the past, especially of the place where one was born and bred, of the childhood, regardless how good or bad the memories are.

Naimah bt. Endut, 42, shares the same idea with Mariam;

*My husband and I once in a while talked about going back. My son is afraid he’ll lose his friends (if we go back and stay in kampung). I said if we go back there you’ll find new friends. People say, no matter how far a seluang*\(^{21}\) *goes out to sea, it would come back upstream (sejauh mana seluang melaut, balik jugak ke hulu).*
Naimah bt. Endut, 42, Kuala Lumpur.

The *seluang* fish became the metaphor of a migrant, the sea refers to a place away from home, and in seluang case, a place even totally different from seluang’s natural habitat of freshwater and the river upstream is the metaphor of home. Some other popular metaphors used to describe a return to roots that are used in Malay language are ‘*sirih pulang ke gagang*’, literally means ‘betel leaves that return to the stalks’ and ‘*belut pulang ke lumpur*’ which means ‘eels returning to the mud’.

\(^{21}\) *Rasbora sumatrana, a type of freshwater fish*
Mariam further suggested that the city is not a place where she belongs;

It is not a pleasure (seronok) to live in a place that belongs to others (‘tempat orang’). We’ll keep thinking of our place (‘tempat kita’). At our place we know every one, isn’t it? We know the people in kampung, eventhough [some of them are] not family... we know them because we were born there.. since we were young. When we moved here, we don’t have anyone...
Mariam bt Yusof, 49, Kuala Lumpur

After twenty years of living in Kuala Lumpur, Mariam bt Yusof, still regards the city she lives in as ‘tempat orang’, literally means a place that belongs to others as opposed to kampung that she referred to as ‘tempat kita’ which means our place. In kampung she felt a strong sense of community and belonging but in Kuala Lumpur, even after two decades, she does not yet feel that she belong there.

Living in the city is thus considered as an impermanent condition. Fatimah bt. Zainal, has also been living in the city for twenty years. She considers her city stay as temporary, a period of time in which one should carry out his or her task and upon completion one should return to where one came from.

Kampung is where I came from... my roots. Once I have completed what I need to do [here in city], I’d surely want to go back to kampung.

Not only ‘senior migrants’ started to have plans for a return. Younger respondents also voiced their wish to return to kampung but the idea seems to be far-fetched for them at the moment.

I do wish to go back and live in kampung one day. But as for now, it is too early to plan for that.
Ilias b. Rani, 31, Alor Star.

Some middle-aged group migrants have started planning their return.

I do want to go back to kampung. I already bought a house there, in Yan. [I] bought it about ten years ago. I had it planned long ago. No matter how long I work here, I’m not gonna stay here for good when my families are there. I have many relatives here in KL but all of them live in rented houses. When you rent, it shows that you don’t want to stay there for good.
Khalid b. Johari, 38, Kuala Lumpur.

---

22 KL: Acronym for Kuala Lumpur, commonly used by Malaysians.
Khalid called his plan as a plan to ‘balik kampung’\textsuperscript{23}, although the location that he planned to return to is not exactly the specific kampung he came from. He came from Kg. Sedaka while he bought a house in Kg. Yan, which is in the same district.

In general, respondents from all categories asserted that their parents and even other elderlies they know could hardly stay in the city whenever they come for visits.

> *My brother has gone to Pahang. So I’m the only one left… to take care of my mother. But you know the older people, they can’t stand living in the city. I bring my mom over here often. But whenever she’s here, if I make her stay close to a week, she’d be so restless. The most she can stay here is three to four days. If I come back from the office and look at her, I see that pitiful look. So I sent her home. My time will come to be that way too. Perhaps I will have to divide my time between the city and kampung so I don’t get bored. I’m still lucky though, because my kampung is not far from here. So I have activities to do. I do things. I get to the farm, I get to plant rice… you know, retiring.*

Ramli B. Hamdan, 55, Alor Star

Unlike in the days when he was young and excited with the idea of exploring life and career opportunities in the city, Ramli suggests that as he gets older, he becomes more attracted to the idea of returning and retiring in kampung. He asserts that he’s becoming more like his mother who never wants to stay in the city for long.

> *I’m turning 55 soon... even now I’ve started going back to kampung regularly. Every week I go back and there is always something to be done there. In my life, at the start everything seronok (feels good). It is just like climbing a hill. You get excited on your way up. In my career it is also like that. I think forty-five was my peak. Then comes the descending time. I think in five years time [I’m going back for good]. I already planned it. Even now there are times that I feel like going back immediately. Life in kampung is different.*

Ramli B. Hamdan, 55, Alor Star

Unlike Ramli, Daud b. Musa achieved a stage where he felt at home in the city. Daud claimed that ‘returning’ only caters for those who own land and property in kampung. Daud does not own anything in kampung, thus he felt like he has no purpose to return and feels that it is fine to live in the city when it already feels like a kampung.

---

\textsuperscript{23} Balik kampung: return to kampung, commonly used to refer to returning home.
9.2 Religious issues and moral conduct

An ‘ideal Malay’ would be a person who follows the rules and Malay moral conduct which includes abiding the Islamic rules and regulations. Religious and moral issues are repeatedly being raised by respondents in my interviews. A dichotomy between ‘social problems’ in the city and better moral conduct in kampung which is a common narrative among respondents, resonates a western pastoral view.

From the Malay outlook, life on earth is temporary and one has to be prepared to face life after death. It is a common idea that when one gets older, one has to be more spiritual, carrying out religious deeds or do the *ibadah*\(^{24}\) in earnest to prepare for the next life, as it is ruled in Islamic belief that one will get their due according to how one carries out his or her duty to God. Some Malays regard retirement years as bonus years giving one the chance to make up with the lack of *ibadah* when one was younger.

> *If God permits, I want to go back and live in kampung soon because in this life...the peace of mind that one needs to perform *ibadah* is better suited to kampung. There, it is easier to perform *ibadah*. If you want to go to the mosque, it is much easier there. No traffic jam. Here, it is hard to even cross the road.*
> Khamis b. Hadi, 56, Kuala Lumpur

Availability of religious institutions is mentioned as an important part in the discourses of ‘senior migrants’. Although not as much, it also has some weight in the responses by ‘working parents’ and ‘migrant housewives’. Religious institutions in the form of a mosque, masjid and a prayer hall, surau or madrasah, play an important part in Malay life, for migrants, as well as for those in the kampung.

\(^{24}\) *Ibadah*: religious duties
Surau (small prayer hall) and mosques act as one of socialising platforms for urban migrants. Ramli b. Hamdan tells of places where he went to first make contacts with people who live around him in Alor Star,

*I visited my neighbours’ houses, then we started meeting at surau... we meet in the market or at kenduri (feasts) or any function that they held here. This housing area is very loose, we don’t have a real resident group because there aren’t many of us in the taman. So for whatever activities, our focus is at the surau. So if I go to surau frequently, I’d be in contact with them, if I don’t I get left behind. Here if we want to have a good social contact with others, I have to frequent the surau. Here I can’t simply visit my neighbours as I like.*

Ramli b. Hamdan, 55, Alor Star.

Mosques and surau play more than just a prayer hall for both city and kampung. Most social gatherings or meetings among the Malays take place in surau or mosques if not at home. Malay males are required to go for Friday prayer at mosques every week, which is a compulsory prayer to attend. Hence mosques are important in not just religious life of the migrants, but for a new migrant, it is one of the easiest ways to get to know those who live in the same locality. For the Muslim Malays, it is crucial to keep up with two sets of relationships, first, relationships between man and God and the other is between man and man. The next section describes the attachment regarding the second type of relationship, man and man.
9.3 People-relation attachment

A sense of belonging is reinforced by the idea that kampung is a place that keeps family ties and a ‘container’ of memories of times shared with people and as a place that connects subject to the family members and friends. Strong attachment to immediate family members left in kampung are common among respondents. All respondents in Kuala Lumpur mentioned their parents and families are the ones that made them long for kampung at the earliest stage of their move. All those who left kampung to boarding school first mentioned they miss their parents the most when they leave kampung. This is a common sentiment amongst those leaving home for the first time.

Riduan b Akbar left kampung at the start of his teenage life to a boarding school. He claims that the attachment he has towards his family slowly lessened after he got used to life away from home.

> When I first left kampung to boarding school, I looked forward to going home every school holiday. I went home at every chance I had. Both my parents were still around at that time. I missed them and wanted to see them on holidays but I got a little weaned when I later went to university. You know, I focused more on career path. I did not go home that often after that.
> Riduan b Akbar, Alor Star

For Mariam, her first time leaving kampung was after she got married and followed her husband who works in Kuala Lumpur. That was her first journey of more than 400 miles away from her familiar kampung. For struggling urban migrants who do not have much to live off, living away from home positions them out of their comfort zone where help from family is available when needed.

> I felt tak seronok when I came here. I kept thinking of kampung. I was feeling uncomfortable. In kampung we live in separate houses. We have places to go. We had relatives. When we came here we felt that we have no one. I was thinking of going home and staying there. But what can I do? But...after sometime here... I started to have friends here after sometime.
> Mariam bt Yusof, Kuala Lumpur

---

25 tak seronok: unhappy
To Mariam, the kind of relationship with people that she has in the city cannot be as close as she had with family and friends in kampung.

...living here...people say that if we have problems, if we get sick or have monetary problems, if we don’t have a proper back-up plan, it will be hard, isn’t it. Lets say.. my neighbours, yes I can ask them for help in other forms but I don’t think I can ask for financial help from them. It is hard if we don’t have back-up savings. So financially, if things turn really bad and we need financial help, we have to get it from families. That is if we really need it. You know, if one day you get sick and hospitalised, if you need money, who do you turn to?
Mariam bt Yusof, Kuala Lumpur

For Hasbullah, besides the blood ties he has with his family members, he has a strong attachment to his friends. According to him, the friendship is much closer with those in kampung compared to with the friends he has in the city of Alor Star.

I don’t really miss other things in kampung... only one, I think, I kept thinking about family ties, with my mother, with my father, with friends who I grew up with. You know wherever I go.. I think of them. The fun times we had when we were young, playing with this and that. So until now, I can’t forget them. Kampung is always on my mind. I also remember that when I first came to the city. I had to go back once a week or once a fortnight.
Hasbullah b.Rahmat, Alor Star

Clearly there is a high attachment among migrants towards their family and friends in kampung. This feeling is rather universal for anyone leaving their homes and not unique to kampung migrants only. However, there is a strong sense of nostalgia in their description when mainly they claim that familial relationships and friendships in kampung are much closer compared to in cities.

### 9.4 Pastoral ideals & ‘Malay Pastoral’ sentiment

Pastoral ideals that govern the image of rural life in the west have some similarities and differences with the Malay pastoral sentiments as voiced by respondents. In the west, the Jeffersonian idea sees farming and agrarian culture as an ideal lifestyle. The traditional Malays were once mainly farmers. For the Malays, they call the act of farming as ‘berbudi pada tanah’, literally means sowing good deeds to the soil. Rice farming was once revered in
traditional Malay culture with elaborate rituals and belief in rice spirits but it has weaned today as the rituals and ceremonial rites that used to go with rice farming have ceased to exist. Migrant respondents in my study indicated their interest of getting closer to nature and down-to-earth life. Their descriptions are rather similar to the pastoral concepts of the west.

The pastoral life involves greater spontaneity and ease of life,

_In kampung, life is simple. The environment is uncomplicated. You see the houses... each house, each unit has their compound...you have freedom there.. They used to let cattle roam free. That, sometimes drives others mad. But unlike in the past [when they let their cattle roam free], now they raise cattle in feedlots within cages. That means they have learnt the good values [of modern farming]. So now people in kampung also know commercial values._

Ramli b. Hamdan, Alor Star

Ramli loves the simplicity and spontaneity of kampung life, yet, as an agricultural officer working in a government body, he is happy to see improvements in smallholders farming practices. Ramli commented on the social practices of the current kampung folks whom he meets everytime he goes back to kampung. To him, the bond of friendship among those living in kampung is closer compared to his friends in city.

_They still have spirits of togetherness in them although only the older generation keep the spirit alive. The young ones will follow the parents later. For now they are still in their twenties and they do not join the older...like those in the forties because of age gap. Sooner or later they will follow their father’s footsteps and do things just like their father did when the time comes for them to replace the older generation._

Ramli b. Hamdan, Alor Star

Ramli believes that the ‘spirit of togetherness’ would still be continued by future generation of kampung but he did not think so of the future generations in city. I have mentioned his complaints of the youngsters around his place in the city in the previous section.

Hasbullah is also as fortunate as Ramli, who has the chance to return to his kampung anytime he likes.

_I live here just to spend the remaining days of my lives. But the most ‘seronok’ place to live in is in kampung. The environment in kampung is not hectic (like in cities)... so it is better there. I think I feel seronok because I was born there. Maybe the way I was_
brought up made me prone to love kampung... I don’t feel ‘seronok’ (in city) like city people do. For those who are brought up here, if one day they have to live in kampung, they can’t. They’ll feel like it is too quiet. I (on the other hand) feel that I’d like a little bit of silence, so I could hear birds chirping, I could look at the vast open rice fields and see buffaloes and cows. Those ease my mind, those clear my mind. Just like whenever I have a hard week at work, I become stressed out but when I go back to kampung, I’d feel comfortable, feeling free. As if I’ve just paid my debts. So until now, I go back home regularly.
Hasbullah b Rahmat, Alor Star

Hasbullah expresses the need to return regularly to rejuvenate, indicates that he sees the city as the workplace while the kampung is the getaway, separating the two places as work place and leisure place, Hasbullah’s views of kampung have also changed from once a place where he used to help his father in rice field, a working and living landscape to a place where he goes to get rest and break away from the pressures of work and life in city.

Plate 9-2 Green open rice fields that Hasbullah claims as 'rejuvenating view'
Respondents also share the ‘pastoral ideal’ of the rural place that promotes material sufficiency rather than the endless accumulation of wealth in cities. Khalid asserts that,

\[
\textit{Kampung is what everyone should have. Kampung ambiance (suasana) is not the same as in KL. The people, family ties, relation with neighbours. Everything is there in kampung except for wealth [that you can find] in Kuala Lumpur. If in kampung... if I go back (balik kampung), I don’t need to think of any problem at all. I don’t have to worry about putting food on the table. In kampung, although you live life modestly,[yet] you’ll feel content.}’
\]

Khalid b. Johari, Kuala Lumpur

There is a strong sense of nostalgia and idealization of the kampung past in Khalid’s discourse. It is a dream of retreat to get closer to nature and simple life, away from exploitation. The sentiment of treating kampung as a place of leisure have some similarities with the western pastoral ideal, as describe by Marx (1964).

### 9.4.1 Attachment to activities and physical environment in kampung

Kampung is not a passive ‘container’ of activities that happen on its surface. Hasbullah b. Rahmat gave me a lengthy account of how he spent his childhood helping out in rice fields in kampung and activities he did as a child in different rice planting seasons in those days when manual labour and animals were still used in rice fields. He speaks with pride of his farming past.

Those who were used to agricultural activities and close to farming surroundings since their childhood sometimes felt at loss when they moved to cities. Ramli, brought up in a landowner farming family is fond of agricultural activities. He himself went to study agriculture at university; a choice associated with his farming background. He spends his weekends going back to kampung and works on land around his mother’s house and pays other farmers to work on his rice plots.

\[
\textit{My parents were rice farmers. Now we still have our rice fields. No one (in my family) wants to work on it so on weekends I have to go home and check... I rent it out and pay others to work on it. My mother is old now. I also feel ‘seronok’ if I get to go home on weekends, and do some work to just to sweat out. It is different here. When I lived in Yan, if I want to do some weekend activities, I have the space. But not here.}
\]
Lucky my house is close to my kampung...so I still feel ‘seronok’...I go home on weekends. I bet it is different for those who live here with no home to go back to ... that would make me crazy.

Ramli b. Hamdan, Alor Star

Living in Alor Star gives Ramli b. Hamdan the chance to get the best of both worlds, city and kampung. Ramli clearly indicates that farming rewards him with satisfaction, which he describes as seronok. Mentioning that his agricultural activities are his main stress reliever, he indicated that he could “go crazy” if he would have not had the opportunity to return home and take care of his planted lands in kampung.

Different planting seasons influenced the lives of the people. Hasbullah gave clear details of seasonal plantings of rice, harvesting seasons, stories of migrating labourers from other states and the joy of earning a small amount of money by selling rice grains that he gathered from rice stalks that have been harvested once by farmers. Things have changed since and manual labour in kampung has been taken over by machines. Nonetheless, some seasonal activities continue to take place in the rice farming side of the kampung – during the wet season when farmers drain water from rice fields, kampung people flock to small rivers and water channels to fish. For some, it is a fun activity to do during their spare time in the evenings while to others who are really in need, the fishing season is an opportunity for a free source of protein near their house.

Fatimah bt. Zainal, 49, has fond memories of seasonal fishing activities. She tells,

When I lived in kampung we had a lot of vegetable and ulam.... now we don’t really see much of that. I could fish right in front of my house. Now when I go back to kampung... I look at kampung, I feel so good (seronok). Even now when I go back I’d still fish. Everytime I go back to kampung now, before I leave for KL, I would fish as much as I could... it’s fun, really fun.

26 ulam: herbs that are eaten raw with rice
My analysis of the model mapping during the interviews revealed that eleven respondents in Alor Star and fifteen respondents in Kuala Lumpur drew rivers in the maps (Plates 9-4 and 9-5). It was expected that they would include rivers in their maps as I have seen that they have rivers in most kampungs in Yan. It turns out they talked a lot more about rivers and how it has been a rather important element in their ‘growing up’ landscape. It is shown that those who have moved to the city keep an affinity towards water recreation or leisure. For example Nazirah bt. Shafie, 23, Kuala Lumpur, prefers to spend her time in Kuala Lumpur parks with
man-made water features. While those in Alor Star, find it easy for them to return regularly and refresh themselves in the kampung surroundings or taking weekend trips to picnic spots in Kedah and Pulau Pinang.

Abundance and a laid-back, easy lifestyle that underpin the pastoral sentiment are also present in kampung. The emotional richness and laidback lifestyle of rural in a pastoral sentimental way is also expressed in the availability of things that can be obtained ‘for free’ in kampung. The ulams that grows wild or easily planted in their kitchen garden are considered as ‘free’ things in kampung. They go fishing right in front of their house or nearby streams. It is seen as the bliss of kampung life where one can still get things without having to buy compared to a ‘material’ city where one gets nothing for free. In Fatimah’s description, she feels good when she “looks at kampung” - conveying that kampung is also an image that can be visualized. This is shared by Saleha who explains the vision of kampung in her mind.

Kampung to me is a suitable place to live. A peaceful place, serene... with trees, green hills. I always think of kampung. I can recall in my mind how my house looked like, close to hills. That’s what I look for when I go home. I climbed up the hills. Even as an adult, I took my children up the hills. I want them to feel and experience the kampung. Saleha bt. Yunus, Kuala Lumpur

Kehijauan kampung or ‘the greenness of kampung’ was frequently cited by respondents when asked to describe their mental picture of kampung. Zabidah bt Itam in Alor Star describes that kampung has “serene, calm and peaceful feeling. It is always green and shady. That’s kampung ambiance. Unlike here, we only have dwarf trees around here”. ‘Love the green’ attitude of respondents when talking about kampung also portrays the idea that kampung is imagined as a place where they lived close to nature.
Plate 9-4 Model Map by Hamid b. Abdullah, 74, Alor Star

Plate 9-5 Model map by Aishah bt. Zain, 45, Alor Star
Plate 9-6 Home garden in the compound of a house in Kg. Permatang Keramat, planted with a mix of ornamental and edible plants

Plate 9-7 Potted plants outside Naimah bt. Endut's flat unit
Some respondents keep up with their gardening hobby that they claimed they had acquired when they were young in kampung. Fatihah planted some vegetables in pots while Naimah was happy to have her potted ornamental plants outside her flat unit.

Shamsul b Hasan, 78, however, was unhappy that he does not get opportunities to grow fruit trees in city.

*My children are now living in ‘rumah taman’*. You can’t do anything in rumah taman. You can’t plant anything there. You can’t plant a tree. There is no chance for my son to taste fruits that he grows by himself at his own house. The house turned to just a place to go back to eat and sleep. In kampung you get to tend to your trees in the evenings. You get your fruits in fruit seasons…. In the city, you can only build a house. Nothing more than that. Not even a fruit tree. You may get a pokok pukul lima*. What’s the use?*

Shamsul b Hasan, 78, Alor Star.

In part Shamsul sees there is little value in planting ornamental trees. He prefers plants and trees that give consumable product. It is not surprising for him to have such sentiments as he was used to live in kampung with the house compounds that were heavily planted with fruit trees.

Rivers that run across kampung in Yan frequently appear in urban migrants’ discourse. Azida Saad shares her memories of the rivers that has also been mentioned by other respondents,

*Living in kampung was ‘seronok’. Living in Yan... the river was clean. Have you been there? There’s a place where you can go for picnic. That place is called Titi Hayun. The river flows to our kampung. The picnic area was up the river. We used to bathe and play in the river, downstream... with my siblings and friends. We didn’t have tap water then. We only started to have tap water when I was... ten, I think. I’ve grown quite a bit, then only we had tap water... yet we still bathe in the river (after we have tap water)... it was fun (seronok)!*

Azida bt. Saad, Alor Star.

---

27 rumah taman: literally means ‘garden house’ but in reality refer to terrace or link houses in housing development project.
28 Pokok pukul lima: Rain tree, *Samanea saman*
Plate 9-8 River is one of the most important natural landscape elements in the memory of rural-urban migrants

Plate 9-9 Titi Hayun river received visits from both kampung residents and outsiders
Certain rural activities like farming are also described as ‘kampung’, for example *kerja kampung* (*kampung jobs*) connotes agricultural activities such as rice farming, rubber tapping and fishing. Rosli b. Embong, 40, from a kampung near a seaside says that kampung is where he finds comfort and leisure and where he gets to do his favourite childhood activity; fishing.

*Kampung is where I go fishing. No fishing, no kampung to me. Farms... that’s my definition.*
Rosli b. Embong, 40, Kuala Lumpur.

These so-called *kampung* activities connect respondents to the physical attribute of the landscape- estuary and seaside, where their kampung is. Respondents that were used to ‘kampung activities’ would find a way to keep up with such activities. For example, Rosli Embong and Khalid Johari frequently visit fishing spots in the city outskirts to keep up with their fishing interest.

Rosli’s interest and attachment to rivers is also expressed in his choice of paintings that he bought on his working trip overseas. In the living room and the staircase area of his house, there were ten landscape paintings on display, and nine of them included water elements (Plate 9-10). His attachment to rivers in kampung is partly manifested in his taste; elements of his kampung past are expressed in the art he chooses to decorate his home walls with.
Plate 9-10 Six out of ten paintings displayed at Rosli’s house
These landscape attributes of rural kampung triggered nostalgic sentiments and the respondents recalled their interactions.

Ilias b Rani describes,

"My parent’s house is still there. We keep it well maintained. The best thing to do when I was small was to play in the river, bathe and later get in the mud. Then we went to catch fish. Oh it was so special to be doing that. But now the kids cannot have that anymore. Even fish cannot live in the water channel, river and ricefield anymore... they use fertilizers and chemicals in rice fields, those fish cannot live in there and they get to rivers too. There were so many species there, one could even get prawns (udang galah) in the water channel at the back, I could get lampam (javanese carp). Can’t get that anymore now. Now you get only the [hardy] ikan sepat, Then we played something like survivor, children used creativity to build up skills... we played everything. You, know like the ones you can see in Lat’s (Kampong Boy) book?"

Childhood exploration of kampung surroundings loom large in respondents’ memory and they keep comparing what they had with what children of the city today have to face. The vast open landscape of kampung provided them with so much to explore and discover, unlike the rather rigid, homogenically designed city spaces.

"The houses next to ours were about... sepelaung\textsuperscript{29}. You know that kind of distance? It is as far yet close enough for you to hear your neighbour shout at the other end. I guess about twenty metres. Not too far. We have screening of trees in between. Rubber trees, I think. Below the trees we had bushes of ‘bemban’. That plant, we used it in all sorts of games, according to our creativity. We made toyguns, walking sticks, even weaved baskets from it. Kids these days don’t have things like that anymore. Ilias b Rani, Alor Star."

Both Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur have a main river cutting across the city centre. In both cities, however, the rivers are not given much attention in terms of planning. Kedah river that runs through Alor Star is much wider than the narrow Klang and Gombak river that run through the heart of Kuala Lumpur and which almost go unnoticeable in the city.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Sepelaung}: Literally mean one shout away. Malay’s old archaic way of describing a distance that is as far and as close enough that one can hear the other person’s shout at the other end.
9.5 *Picturesque Kampung*

As the migrants have slowly distanced themselves from kampung, a new generation of city dwellers that are born and bred in the city emerge. Some of these new generation members also keep the iconic kampung as a better place to live and that they long to have.

Urban migrants, keep images that resemble their kampung image. Paintings of rural kampung scenes are found at several respondents’ houses. Although some of them like Jamilah bt. Said, explained that the choice of subject in the painting she bought is unintentional. Aisyah Zain informed that she purposely bought the painting on her wall because it resembles the river and houses in her kampung.

It is common to find framed decorations on the walls of respondents’ homes. They mainly have framed quranic verses in Arabic scripts, cross stich work, family photographs and also landscape paintings. What I found interesting was that most of the landscape paintings displayed on their wall included water elements and some had similarities to what they remember of their kampung view.

These paintings in respondents’ houses show that in a way, respondents have also transformed kampung as an iconic image with aesthetic character that they could keep in their own houses and living rooms.
Plate 9-11 Landscape paintings which include water elements at respondents’ homes in Alor Star


9.6 Pejorative view of kampung

Besides ‘championing’ kampung as a better place in their nostalgic past, respondents’ views of kampung are not always through rose tinted glass. In their description, they have both positive and negative views of kampung, sometimes they even contradict their views in the same sentence when they talk about kampung. Regardless of positive or negative connotation they might have, they demonstrated that kampung is very close in their thoughts, even to those who migrated for more than 30 years ago.

Taufik b Mahmud in Kuala Lumpur commented that when he returned to work in his kampung, he found that his friends in kampung were too complacent in handling their own work. Hence he suggested that the experience he had from living in the city has improved his abilities and paved his way to success. In his view, city life has made him more competitive in life.

Rosli b Embong related his kampung memory as one of hardship and poverty. Although connecting the happiness and ‘seronok’ he had in kampung, he related his childhood dream of living in a brick house, due to his hard childhood living in a small rickety wooden house with a leaking roof. He recalled how water dripped from leaks in the roof of his parent’s house. Kampung to him gave very limited chance of self growth and betterment of life, hence he left kampung to find a job in Kuala Lumpur.

Rosli’s view is supported by Azlina bt Omar, who feels that opportunities to improve one’s life is far better in the cities compared to kampung. Daud b Musa and Shamsul b Hasan lamented about all the jobs that they had tried to do in kampung to improve their life but only managed to do so when they moved to the city. The main complaints that they had about kampung was the lack of facilities and opportunities that one needs to develop and improve oneself.
According to Jamilah bt. Said and Azlina bt Omar, life in kampung should be good, and ‘seronok’ for those who ‘have’ and not for the ‘have nots’. They both claim that their parents were poor and landless and the chances to work to make ends meet depended on landowners. Although they do have fond memories of kampung, they prefer city living as they claim that they have more opportunities for improving their life in the city compared to staying in kampung.

It is shown in previous sections that the moral and nostalgic dimensions of kampung have significant parallels with rural-urban duality in the pastoral landscape tradition. In the conception of the pastoral, the country represents an ideal of “the good life” and directly parallels the way Malaysian respondents consider kampung life. Pastoral sentiment pertains more to an ideal than a reality. Kampung too has gone through a series of changes from a lived rural reality to a sentimental ideal. The use of rural imagery in advertisements for example illustrates the pastoral sentiment to an urban audience: kampung lifestyle and landscape is a sought after ideal just as has the pastoral sentiment. At the same time, it still carries a pejorative tag representing the opposite of progress and modernity.
9.7 Tale of Two Cities: Comparison Between Two Case Studies

At the initial stage of my analysis the data from respondents living in different cities were analyzed separately. This was done in order to compare and detect differences and similarities that exist due to the different characters of the two cities. On one level, relating to physical forms of their city dwelling unit and the city landscape in general, there are differences in respondents’ narratives of their living space in the city. On another level, in terms of the needs and hopes of respondents towards their living landscape in city, there are similarities across the cities, especially when they were grouped into the age and lifestyle categories.

Comparison between respondents in the two cities revealed some differences and similarities in respondent’s reaction towards their living landscapes. I anticipated the differences as I purposely chose two cities in different stages of urbanization, environmental characters and distance from the kampung where the respondents came from.

Different levels in urbanization, density, and characters of the city landscape have the impacts on rural-urban migrants’ lives and at the same time affected their views about kampung. Alor Star is a city that sprawls with low to medium density terrace or semi-detached housing development with the average population density estimated at 590 persons per square kilometers. Kuala Lumpur on the other hand has a much higher density at 6502 person per square kilometers. In Kuala Lumpur, land is a highly priced resource.

Differences between the two cities are clearly seen in terms of the size and availability of living spaces. Homes for those migrants in Kuala Lumpur are much smaller in size. Twelve out of twenty respondents in Kuala Lumpur were living in multi-storey apartments or flats at the time of the interview, while only two respondents in Alor Star lived in multi-storey flats. In Kuala Lumpur respondents hardly had semi-private outdoor spaces except for those who live in terrace and single storey houses whereas in Alor Star most respondents lived in low rise homes with some outdoor living spaces. Hence, respondents in Alor Star had more freedom in bringing and expressing kampung characters and practices in their living
landscapes. Problems faced by Kuala Lumpur respondents seem to be associated with the spatial opportunities and use.

A sense of ‘missing’, homesickness and longing for kampung is expressed more clearly by respondents in Kuala Lumpur as they do not get much chance to return or get reacquainted with their kampung regularly due to the distance between Kuala Lumpur and their kampung in Yan. Whereas those living in Alor Star, although some of them, for example Zarina Rashid and Aisyah Bt. Zain expressed their longing for the life in kampung, they nonetheless get to have themselves ‘doses’ of kampung reality weekly or even daily.

This is not surprising as people tend to long for things they can not get rather, than longing for something reachable. Nostalgic description of kampung memories and a lament of wanting to return to kampung are more noticeable in the narratives of Kuala Lumpur respondents. This is not to say that those in Alor Star do not want to return, but the fact that they could return as and when they needed, resulted in, the pressure to return is less. The longing for ‘home’ or ‘homesickness’ described by respondents, however, did not seem to be affected much by the distance but depended on their current living environment.

There is a certain level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction when respondents talk about their current living space that they connect to their kampung experience. In general, respondents in Alor Star have shown that they have more satisfaction from their city landscape compared to respondents in Kuala Lumpur. Problems faced by Kuala Lumpur respondents seem to be associated with the spatial opportunities and use.

Kuala Lumpur housewives had more issues in dealing with spaces of city living compared to those in Alor Star. Alor Star housewives have shown to be rather satisfied with their current city living and many of them are actively involved in women’s associations that provide them a platform to interact with other home makers and provide opportunities to take part and be part of a community where they feel they belong to.

Housewives in Alor Star also feel that there is not much contrast between living in Alor Star and the community in the kampung. Having neighbours mainly from kampung from all over northern Malaysia helped them communicate well as the people in the northern states share a basically similar dialect although there are some variations.
Respondents in Alor Star found their ‘city living’ a little toned down, lower in density, and to have rural character and style which kept them feeling rather ‘at home’, unlike the ‘hectic’ lifestyles respondents claimed they experienced in Kuala Lumpur.

There were a considerably higher number of complaints regarding spatial issues and more ‘pastoral ideal’ myths were repeated by respondents in Kuala Lumpur compared to those in Alor Star. The Malay pastoral longing is highly visible in Kuala Lumpur with respondents citing the noisy city, silent and peaceful kampung, high crime and unsafe city as opposed to the ‘much safer kampung’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Returning plan</th>
<th>Kuala Lumpur Respondents</th>
<th>Alor Star Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed to stay in city</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended to stay in city</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended to return to kampung</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed to return to kampung</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9-1 Number of respondents in two cities and their intention to return to kampung

The table above shows respondents’ future plan of whether they were going to remain in the city or have plans to return to their respective kampung. Kuala Lumpur respondents, regardless of age, expressed more interest in returning to live in kampung in the future compared to Alor Star respondent. In Alor Star, respondents do not feel so much need to return and live in kampung as most of them make regular visits to kampung because their kampung is just less than an hour road journey from Alor Star. Older Alor Star respondents feel that their living landscape in Alor Star includes most of the kampung character that they want in their life.

Respondents in Alor Star complained less about the city landscape they were living in. Hasbullah b. Rahmat, Ismail b. Rahman, Hamid b. Abdullah and Riduan b. Akbar spoke fondly of the place they live in the city although at the same time they appeared to be very attached and felt very strongly about their kampung. All four of them decided to remain in
Alor Star and were not planning to return to live in kampung. Jamilah bt. Said and Daud b. Musa both did not favour the idea of going back to live in kampung, yet they claimed that their current living suited them well because of the ‘kampung character’ that existed there. Shamsul b. Hassan did not favour living in a housing estate so he bought a small house in a squatter area in Alor Star. Shamsul asserted that the house he owns in city is enough to make him feel at home and is so convenient to him although he could build his own house on the land that he owned in kampung.

In all of the above names mentioned, the low density development and the inclusion of agricultural activities in Alor Star city itself has given a balanced image that respondents found to be appealing to their needs. For example, Riduan b Akbar who lives in Alor Star could see a wide rice field right from his back door while ample space in his compound enabled him to plant ornamental and edible plants. Riduan enjoyed spending sometime in the evening sitting on his porch when the wind was blowing from the open rice fields, providing him a kampung setting in the city itself.

The following table shows some general differences and similarities I could conclude in comparing respondents’ views in both case studies:
### Differences between the case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Kuala Lumpur</th>
<th>Alor Star</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pace</td>
<td>Respondents feel the city is too hectic at times and putting pressure on their life.</td>
<td>Respondents found the city is developing fast but feel that it does not bother them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living spaces</td>
<td>Spatial issues, limitations of living space both indoor and outdoor, no intermediate space between public and private. Respondents also take opportunities for limited spatial modifications. Respondents in multi-storey housing complained of not having a compound/intermediate spaces.</td>
<td>Limited outdoor (semi-private) spaces, a lot of modifications to include available spaces outside their designated living compounds. ‘Kampung’ activities actively took place around housing estates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leisure time</td>
<td>Respondents spend their leisure time with activities away from their homes. Lower income families do not easily have access to leisure activities outside their homes.</td>
<td>More than half of Alor Star respondents spend their weekends or day off by going back to their respective kampung.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halaman, the house compound</td>
<td>Respondents in multi-storey living complain of not having ‘intermediate space’ outside their living and ‘not being connected to the ground’.</td>
<td>Most respondents live in houses with small compounds and extend the use of the area to spaces available outside their bounded house compound (refer Plates 9-13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces outside the houses</td>
<td>Respondents hardly have semi-private outdoor spaces except for those who can afford to live in low-rise terrace and detached houses.</td>
<td>Respondents have more freedom in bringing and expressing kampung characters and practices in their living landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgic description</td>
<td>A sense of ‘missing’, homesickness and longing for kampung is expressed more clearly by respondents.</td>
<td>The longing for ‘home’ or ‘homesickness’ described by respondents, however, did not seem to be affected much by the distance but depended on their current living environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>Older respondents, especially in the retiree group found that the city is too noisy for them, both in terms of traffic and human noise.</td>
<td>Two retiree respondents complained of nuisances around their area of living while the others found it bearable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>The feeling of being isolated was only raised by housewives living in multi-storey apartments in Kuala Lumpur.</td>
<td>No feeling of isolation was expressed among Alor Star respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social spaces</td>
<td>Limited chance for spatial change. Rigid spatial boundaries.</td>
<td>Respondents find it easy to create and negotiate spaces where they could get together and carry out communal activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9-2 Differences in respondent's views in Alor Star and Kuala Lumpur
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities between both case studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Privacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>home, roots and returns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Malay Pastoral’ sentiment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachment to activities and physical environment in kampung</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral and religious landscape</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Green’ kampung</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Images of kampung</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pejorative view of kampung</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Changing kampung”</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9-3 Similarities in respondents views in two case studies
Plate 9-13 Fruit tree planted and pelenggar built on road reserve in front of Zabidah’s terrace house unit in Alor Star
10 Voices From Kampung

This chapter will discuss the view of kampung from the inside. In this part of the fieldwork, I wanted to understand how kampung people see their kampung. I focus on how they see life in the kampung – and what makes the landscape they live in different than the one in the city, what makes people return and what makes people stay and not want to leave. Interviews are done informally and questions were asked in casual conversations unlike the interview sessions with urban migrants where my respondents had to allocate at least an hour to go through the whole interview process.

10.1 Pastoral Ideal of Kampung and Rural Ambivalence

There is an element of ambivalence in many kampung dwellers’ views about the kampung they live in. On the one hand, they feel the need for youth to leave kampung and go out to cities to grab opportunities to be ‘successful’, especially in terms of education, getting good jobs and gaining material wealth. On the other hand, they lament the receding number of youths in kampung and complain about the dangerous and unhealthy influences in city that would affect the kampung youths.

Haji Ibrahim believes that for today’s youths, moving to the city is the best way for them to succeed,

*Those youth you see in kampung are the ones who cannot go anywhere. If they do well in their studies in school, they would not be here anymore. The good ones do not stay in kampung. What can they do here? Nothing. Opportunities are there in cities. Those who don’t do well would have to help their parents on rice fields.*

The notion that doing well in city means success is shared by many of kampung people. While I was gathering names of rural-urban migrants to recruit city respondents I met Pak Bakar who has three children in city. He refused to give any of his sons’ contacts as he explained that his children are not successful city migrants. He asserts that “city is a place for successful ones”, hence I should be asking those with children with high qualifications and highly paid jobs.
You go find others. My children live hard lives in city. They are not successful people. There’s nothing you can ask them about. If you want to interview, go find the successful ones. Over there, that house, the owner has successful children in KL.

Pak Bakar, Kampung Teroi, Yan.

Ironically, the idea of a good life in city is applied differently between the youths and the elderly. While youths are ‘supported’ to go to cities, the senior citizens are expected to return or remain in kampung. The elders in kampung insisted that life in kampung is much better than in cities. They reckon that living in kampung is ‘senang’ (plentiful, easy and simple) although one earns less and owns less than their counterparts in the city. Although less fortunate in material terms, they claim that they are very fortunate in terms of free time and ease of mind compared to those in city.

Haji30 Hamdan and Haji Kamil are two retired teachers who discussed about their wealthy friends who now live in Kuala Lumpur and Alor Star. Haji Kamil commented about his friends,

these people.. they are still chasing money at this age. They don’t even have the time. They rarely have time at home. It’s hard to even go and meet them in their office because they always have things to settle, seeing business people endlessly. That gives them headache... we are the lucky ones, we no longer have to think too much. By 9.30 pm we can already call it a day and go to bed. Unlike them, we in kampung don’t have to bear the headache.

While Haji Hamdan concurs, “Yes,... that makes us ‘orang senang’31, and they become ‘orang susah’32”.

After retiring, Pak Ali a retired general clerk who used to work in Kuala Lumpur came back to his kampung after spending two years of his retirement living with his children. He returned to live in a house he inherited from his late parents. Pak Ali also feels that living in kampung is much easier for him, especially in his ‘golden years’,

I can live in my own bigger house here. I inherited the land [and house] from my late parents. I can have a little compound, enough for me to plant a tree or two. If I stayed there in KL, I didn’t even own a square piece of ground to step on. We small salary-earners could never afford a house on a piece of land in the city. Although my two children are still there, I don’t want to live there forever. My son also lives on a small salary. He now has a family of his own and it is hard for them to rent. So when I retired,

---

30 Haji for males and Hajjah are honorary names informally given to Muslims who have performed Haj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
31 Orang senang: People who lead easy life, rich
32 Orang susah: People living in hardships, poor
I let him have the flat and I came back. I have a small piece of land. A small amount of pension can make ends meet here. Anyway, to live there (in city) at this age is not seronok anymore.

In kampung, the retired servicemen gave another reason why they return and why many of them are involved in kampung administration. “Partly… when I return here, of course because I want to rest. But it is also a time for me to give something back to the society. By joining VDSC, at least I can help in steps of developing my kampung” Hamdan Osman, 67.

10.2 Absence and Social spaces

Kampung has always been described as a serene and peaceful place, as favoured by city folks. Indeed, some kampung I visited in Yan proved to be very quiet and almost lifeless. Kampung that sit closer to a main state road are livelier with traffic and activities along the roads in Yan. Some kampung dwellers complained that they feel their kampung is too silent and monotonous. Kampungs at foothill like Kampung Acheh which was established by Malays from Acheh descents, only have few houses that are still being dwelled in. Many houses are empty while many plots of land have been ‘returned to nature’, taken over by secondary growth. Some land plots have regular returnees that take care of fruit trees and clean the land regularly. Kampung Acheh has been known to produce numerous successful national figures in various fields; most of which have migrated to cities and no longer return to live in their kampung. In my visit, I could also see that the kampung has become a place of the past, a complete history to some of the non-returning successful migrants.

From the view of kampung people, moving out of kampung for youths who have completed school is almost compulsory, and only a few would stay, either out of necessity, or due to family obligations. Kadri Yunus explained,

I had the wish to go and work outside when I was younger, but I’ve seen that all my siblings already have their ways. They went to school away [from kampung]. We have our lands to work on and there is no one to take care of [our] mother. I decided to stay and work here. I did think of going away. I did. But I decided [to stay]. At least I could handle the land we inherited though it is harder to toil the land compared to working in offices. But I’m happy that I get to be close to my mother. This is also the place where all my siblings would come together.
Kadri ended up being the only son in his family that remains in the kampung. Although he did not get to experience living outside of his kampung, he was happy that he could be the one that keeps his family together in kampung when all the other siblings balik kampung (return home) during holidays.

In the nearby kampung, Kampung Teluk Mat Acheh, I met Rahmah, when she was having afternoon tea with her sister-in-law and a neighbour on a pelenggar³³ under a cherry tree. Rahmah comments,

There are many houses around here but hardly any people living in it. Most houses have only one or two people living in them. Most of them are already old... The children are all away living outside, in cities and other states, some married those from outside while the single ones work in cities.

Many of Rahmah’s siblings and relatives have moved to Kuala Lumpur and Penang and the only time she could meet her siblings and relatives is during public and school holidays. Those are the times that she looks forward to, to get together with her family members who are away from home. Rahmah describes that the pelenggar she was sitting on is the ‘centre stage’ for her family activity when they are around.

When they come home, we spend almost around the clock on the pelenggar. We took our breakfast, lunch, tea... even dinner on warm nights. We spent time together under this cherry tree³⁴. It’s like the best thing to get together outside.
Rahmah, Kg. Teluk Mat Acheh, Yan.

On my visits to other kampung and other houses in kampung, pelenggar (plate 10-1 and 10-2) seemed to be one of the regular items on the compound of kampung houses. Earlier in section 4.8 I have shown how a simple bench like the pelenggar became a point of reference for an urban migrant’s memory of kampung. Pelenggar has now found a place in popular garden design using Malay kampung themes in urban areas.

³³ Pelenggar: bench, platform, usually for outdoor seating.
³⁴ Malay cherry: *Muntingia calabura*
Plate 10-1 Pelenggar, a common spot for interaction in kampung

Plate 10-2 Pelenggar in Kampung Raga
10.3 The Need to ‘Develop’

Kampung respondents described their kampung as still needing more development. Those with their own transport find that whatever they have is adequate as city facilities are just about forty minutes drive away. Azian returned to Yan after living in Kuala Lumpur and Penang for more than ten years. Azian however, complained that she could not get to the nearest city as frequently as she wanted to as she depends on public transportation. The bus service that connects her place to Alor Star city runs every hour.

I stayed at a grocery shopowner’s house during my visits to kampungs in Yan. My host gathered all her children to go and buy school needs just before a new school term starts. For a kampung with a distance not far from the main capital of the state, Yan dwellers, especially those with private transports do not have much of a problem getting access to city facilities.

My host had children ranging from 16 to 4 years old. Educational needs were not a problem in Yan as the schools in the area were well equipped with educational facilities. Yet, my host sent her son to a private Islamic boarding school. She believed that sending him away to boarding school would make him do better in his studies.

Within the last few decades, urban parents in Malaysia have gone into a new ‘culture’ of getting their children to excel by sending them to endless tuition classes after school to prepare them for school exams. Such behaviour also takes place in Yan. Parents drive their children to tuition centres in the nearby towns or even in Alor Star. It is not known however how much the tuition classes have helped their children.

During my stay in Yan the places I stayed in did not have access to internet. The closest public internet facilities were in the small town of Yan Besar or at another town at the other end of the district in Guar Chempedak. These computer centers in Yan were only open during the days, excluding Fridays and Saturdays. According to Ilias Rani’s view (in Alor Star), connection to the bigger ‘information highways’ is one crucial thing that kampungs needs.
10.4 Age and Kampung Living

Older kampung dwellers have the same idea as the urban migrants, that living in city hardly suits their way of life and does not suit their needs in their ‘golden age’.

Pak Ali, came back to his kampung after retiring from his clerical work in Kuala Lumpur.

*It’s not that I don’t want to stay there [in Kuala Lumpur]...but you know, I’m old now. I think I’ve reached the time that people call a time to reflect... [and get ready] for ‘hari senja’ (evening). It is time to get ready for the next life. If I come back here to kampung, I have more time to go to the mosque, [I can] go to religious events. I’m not saying we don’t have that chance in city, but to live there with my small pension is not going to be enough. In kampung I don’t need to spend so much... [and] not as often.*

Pak Ali’s view is also supported by Haji Hamid and Pak Hamzah, both are returning migrants. The availability of time in kampung allows them to focus on spending their old age with religious activities.

Haji Ibrahim has never stayed in the city for a long period, but on his frequent short visits to his children homes, he declares that he cannot stay for long in the city,

*When I went to Kuala Lumpur to visit my grandchildren, they always stay inside. They have those computer games to play. But the old me, what can I do there? I really feel like in a birdcage.*

Haji Ibrahim further explained how he always spent his days when he visit his children.

*When I’m still strong, I can visit them over there and stay for a few days. I don’t know how to go around (the city) anyway. If my daughter does not take me anywhere, I only stay in the house. What do you have there? Walls only. When I’m still strong, it is still manageable. What if I can’t walk? Their house does not have lifts. What can I see... if I sit by the window, there is nothing I could see over there.*

Hence, from the view of the older kampungfolk, the city does not provide them with convenient surroundings and facilities.

---

35 hari senja: evening, a metaphor for old age.
Just a little after sunrise marks quiet times in kampung when adults leave their houses to work while children go to school. These were times when the kampungs in Yan went quiet, except for the rumbling sounds of machines that are used on ricefields, not much different from the life schedules of those in cities. Technically in Yan too, youths are no longer working in agriculture, hence daily commuters drive away from kampungs in the morning and return in evenings and nights, leaving many of the kampung houses empty and vulnerable to theft.

10.5 Crime, Moral & Religious Conducts

Some rural-urban migrant respondents voiced issues of moral and religious conduct of people in the city and their fear of crime. Such issues also appeared in my conversation with kampung dwellers.

Pak Ali describes his return to kampung in his mission of spending his old days with religious and spiritual activities. When asked why he did not just spend his days in Kuala Lumpur, Pak Ali replied,

*In the city I also can [carry out my religious duties]... but in kampung I get to go to the mosque with the people just like me, of the same generation. Here, I could learn the Quran, the translation...and attend more lectures. The approach also suits my generation. You know, older ones. When I mix around with people my age, at least I no longer think of going out having fun like in my younger days. People would call me ‘buang tebiat’ if I do. In the city you can still ‘buang tebiat’ if you want to. People wouldn’t care less. Anyway I should be doing the right thing now. It is the time when people call it ‘rumah kata pergi, kubur kata mari’ (the home says go, the grave says welcome).*

Pak Ali also notices that it is mainly the older generation who make up the number of people living in kampung. Though he believes that kampung provides better opportunity for him to concentrate on his religious activities, he narrates a positive development that he saw in city.

*The good thing about the city nowadays is that more youths are going to mosques and attending religious lectures. In kampung we focus more on the Akhirat (afterlife). In the city, the religious lectures are more... what do we call that, modern? Is it? I meant*

---

36 Buang tebiat: acting out of character, sometimes against accepted norm
to say focusing on current issues... I think they call it contemporary. Is it? I don’t know what that really means.

In many discussions about the city and kampung, the issues of moral and social problems arise. Most of the time, it is associated with crime such as thefts and drug abuse. Other than that it involves mainly ‘problems’ dealing with acts or behaviour deemed against the normal Malay social morals. Both the city and kampung respondents feel that kampung living breeds better behaviour among youths while city life exposes them to more ‘western’ influences that are deemed negative.

Respondents also lament the changing values among those in kampung who have seen to be acting just as they do in city. Hamzah Dol, 60, returns to kampung after serving in the army in many places around the country. He previously planned to live in more urban Sungai Petani but his late parents advised him to come back to live on inherited land amongst his relatives in Kampung Raga. He complained that youths in his kampung are no longer interested or even available to participate in kampung activities.

The past might always be seen as a better time for most respondents but the spirit of voluntary works in keeping a common place beautiful and maintained is still kept alive in this kampung. During school holidays, the boys in Kampung Raga were requested to clean up and replant some shrubs around the area of their playing field. The boys diligently did as requested and when I went to see them, not a single adult was around helping them. Yet the work was done well, showing some social obligations are taken seriously by the young dwellers of the kampung (Plates 10-3 & 10-4).

All the kampung in Yan district are already equipped with an extensive web of home phone lines. During the days I spent in Yan, I could not get in contact with informers through home phone numbers because the phone cables to some of the kampungs were stolen. There were many cases of drug addicts stealing telecommunication cables to get the ‘scrap metal’ in the cables to be sold off. These cases in part indicate that the kampung area in Yan are also not free from crime, yet such crime takes place on the areas far from houses of kampung dwellers. The vast rice fields that lines along rural roads, where utility cables are spanned on one side, allow for opportunistic thieves to take their time to cut and steal phone cables.
Plate 10-3 Boys in Kampung Raga work together to maintain their field and playground

Plate 10-4 'Gotong royong' spirit among young boys of Kg. Raga
10.6 Surveillance and Defensible Space

As I drove along the narrow winding tarmac road I had to carefully swerve my car on one side to give way for oncoming cars or bikes. Pakcik (literally means uncles) on bikes asked where I was leading to with a friendly question in thick local accent ‘nak pi mana dik?’ (Where do you want to go, sister?) or ‘cari sapa?’ (who are you looking for?). While some asked friendly questions, some did not say a word but observed my entrance to their kampung with watchful eyes from the open windows of their houses.

Plate 10-5 Small tarmac kampung road, wide enough for a car to pass

When I walked on dirt paths in the hillside kampungs including Kampung Raga, Kampung Perigi and Kampung Setar, I was repeatedly greeted by women I met along the road. Some of them sweeping fallen leaves on the house compound, and some were just sitting on
*pelenggars* in their compound doing simple chores under fruit trees that lined the kampung road. I met Asmah, a lady in her fifties who told me that she could recognize outsiders who pass in front of her house as she already knows all the car owners in the kampung and is familiar with the cars of those living in kampungs placed further up on the foothill. Any unfamiliar car coming on the narrow road would attract her curiosity. The surveillance act made me aware that I was being watched, although it left me with a little discomfort, I knew that I was rather safe in that surrounding.

Those who greeted me in the kampung were of older age, from fifties and above. Children of primary schools and teenagers in high school could be seen in the evenings when school hours were over. I hardly met youths in their twenties and thirties in kampungs on weekdays but I saw many early twenties on their ‘kapcai’\(^{37}\) motorbikes on weekends\(^{38}\). Many of the youth I saw on weekends were not local and they came to the rivers in kampung in Yan. According to Asmah, ‘orang muda’ (youths) have either migrated to cities or commute to work in more urban Sungai Petani or the northern industrial hub in Kulim and Penang.

Familiarity among the kampung dwellers created a high level of surveillance in the kampungs further up the foothill of Gunung Jerai, especially when I made my way through the small roads that have clearance just enough for one car. Higher traffic frequency may have reduced the level of surveillance and familiarity along the main busy road of Guar Chempedak-Yan and Kuala Kedah – Yan.

Spatial use in kampung still had the ‘good’ character as described by city respondents. They have respect for private and public use of spaces without needing clear and imposed physical boundaries. Compounds for each house are generally large enough to cater for the owners’ needs. Even if more compound space is needed, space sharing is much easier as most houses in the inner kampung are unfenced. Between the houses, boundaries are marked with a small ditch, a row of low hedge, or simply any markings that would not stop or physically deter people from entering from one compound to another.

\(^{37}\) Low cc bikes. Probably getting the name from Honda’s model bike ‘honda cup’. With cup pronounced as ‘kap’.

\(^{38}\) Weekend in Kedah includes only Friday and Saturday.
Plate 10-6 A small bridge connecting two house compounds separated by a ditch

Plate 10-7 Low shrubs marks the boundary but do not block any circulation between two house compounds
10.7 The Changing Kampung

While respondents from cities spoke of what they observe changing during their seasonal returns, kampung people cited the changes that to them has two sides. They were content with physical improvements and infrastructure developments in kampung, citing the better road system enabled them to commute to cities easily. Far in comparison to the hardships they faced during their younger days. Respondents in their 50s and 60s narrated how they had to walk miles to school and how they had to take boats to get to Alor Star.

As described in Chapter 3, the traditional Malay way of life placed high respect to their surroundings due to the belief in spirits and various taboos and rituals that they have to follow (Skeat, 1900). Superstitious and ‘paranormal beliefs’ declined over time while Islamic teachings do not condone superstitious beliefs. Kampung people today have very little if not no beliefs in spirits. Rituals to start a planting season have long not been practised. Although agricultural activities remain as the main source of economy in the district of Yan, the agriculture is not ‘traditional’ in nature. The produce, especially rice is mainly for a wider market around the country. Farmers now rely on machines and the spirit of ‘jelapang’ rice storage is not needed as they no longer keep their harvest in bulk at home to feed the family until the next harvesting season. River and water channels are no longer their main source of obtaining fish for protein supply as the local market could supply sufficient fish and meats.

Beliefs about spirits of the wild in the jungle are hardly heard of as the hills and valleys have all been conquered by humans. Observing parental advice to their children, they are no longer laced with mythical stories or ‘threats’ from the ‘other world’. Despite this, children in kampung hardly venture into the wild; the ‘wild’ is no longer the unconquered wild.
During my stay in Yan, people have shown to be fairly modern minded, very different from those described by early colonial records, for example in Skeat’s Malay Magic (Skeat, 1900). Those who were sick were rushed to hospital. No medicine man was mentioned or seen over my stay and visits in kampungs in Yan.

Yan is linked to the urban development that takes place in the nearest city of Alor Star, industrial district of Gurun, and the rising urban district of Sungai Petani. Part of the district itself will be the place for a future refinery project to be known now as Kedah Hydrocarbon Industrial Area (previously named as Kedah Petrochemical Industrial Zone by former Barisan National led state government), which will involve a man-made island to be built off Yan’s coast.

Schools in the area are known to have good track records of producing a high percentage of passes and excellence in the national Malaysian Education Certificate. Most children in the kampung are no longer spending the days playing in bushes and rivers around the kampung. Children and teenagers, especially those in main examination years are in turn spending their afterschool time attending tuition classes either organized by schools or private ones.
Kadri b. Yunus works on rice fields and grows mix crops in his house area, but he never allowed his children to be involved in his agricultural business. According to Kadri, the image of children running on bunds in rice fields are images of the past and he feels his own children are not suitable for it as he wants the best for his children’s education. Kadri’s teenage daughter was sent to attend tuition classes together with her cousin in Sungai Petani during school holidays. This may not be the same for all families, listening to conversations among mothers during preparation of foods for kenduri, I noticed that children education and results were prominent in the conversation.

Khairul b. Idham is also a rice farmer. When I visited his house, his children were happily enjoying themselves playing and running along a rice barn, similar to photos of children playing in the field like the one on Petronas advertisement (Plate 4.1, p.58). Khairul prefers his children to have a real kampung childhood by letting them play in rivers and rice fields as he feels that it teaches his children to learn about nature and the environment and to him, children should be allowed to ‘be children’.

From Kadri’s and Khairul’s discourses, there are elements of ambivalence in their views about kampung life. Both of them want development in kampung. Kampung dwellers too have contradicting ideas of how they want life in kampung to be. Partly they want to be developed and ‘urbanized’ yet at the same time, they are afraid that the effect of urbanization and industrialization would destroy the kampung life that they claim as ‘peaceful’ and ‘free’.
Plate 10-9 Some kampung children still experience the 'kampung childhood'

Plate 10-10 Kampung children biking on small bund across a rice field
10.8 Between Kampung and City

My informal interviews with kampung residents proved that those who had never left kampung showed a strong sense of place and attachment to the kampung life. They mainly refused to experience changes in lifestyle and landscape setting. Some respondents expressed deep appreciation towards the kampung landscape. My host in Yan even paints kampung landscape scenery as a hobby, signifying that even kampung insiders have started to look at kampung with a new aesthetic view.

Deep respect, obligation to familial duty in the sense of filial piety kept some of the residents in kampung. While some ‘kampung stayers’ just did not see the city as attractive, some older respondents hold the idea that the successful ones would go to cities while those who were not that lucky would remain. This notion parallels the pastoral ambivalence that relates to the city as success and the country as backward.

Retiring migrants who return to kampung clearly consider kampung as a ‘retreat’. My analysis of perception between urban migrants and kampung residents shows that pastoral sentiment is pervasive in the minds of both rural people and urban migrants. While urban migrants long for the kampung living and surroundings, the kampung dwellers, especially the old ones consider traditional kampung of the past is better than the current kampung.
11 Findings and Conclusions

An analysis of rural-urban migrants’ views was presented in previous chapters. In this chapter I will reflect upon how my study on kampung meaning adds to a current body of landscape knowledge and discuss the theoretical implications of my work. These, will be followed by discussions of my findings and recommendations.

11.1 Reflections on Kampung

As seen in most rural-urban respondents’ views and narratives in Chapter 7, 8, and 9, kampung was used by respondents as the basis for a ‘critique’ of various aspects of their modern life in the city landscape. Seeing kampung through ‘landscape’ has helped me to unweave the intertwined layers of kampung meanings.

Kampung has previously been the subject of scrutiny in various fields of anthropology, history and sociology, and in this study, I explore kampung from the perspective of rural-urban migrants through landscape lens. I have argued in Chapter 5 that the multidimensional aspects of kampung parallel the ideas of landscape. The physical dimension of the kampung refers to a rural setting with vernacular characters of a working countryside, ‘a middle landscape’ (Marx, 1964), while in the social dimension, kampung defines a relationship between the people who live and work on the land, and at the same time is an expression of their cultural beliefs and social practices in space. Their cultural and social practices define the form of the land and the place, and thus define the landscape.

The idea of kampung is formed by a profound and intense mode of relationship not only between the built elements of homes and farms within the rural setting but also with economic patterns, work, activities and space, which are expressed by shared ideas and values; it is thus similar to the earliest meaning of the word landscape, the landschaft (Olwig, 2004). Kampung and landschaft also share some ideas related to the German word gemeinschaft, meaning a community (Corner, 1999; Tonnies, 1887). Both landschaft and kampung hold a strong sense
of custom and law that binds the people. In kampung-sense, the customary law is the *adat*, the unwritten traditional code regulating the life of the Malays which also includes religious rules.

The traditional Malay culture places importance on community above individual needs. Togetherness was seen as one of the virtues of kampung. In a kampung-sense, kinship, family ties and neighbourliness are among the key elements for the formation of kampung, indicating the vital need of “getting together” and to live socially. The kampung’s social practice is manifested in the spatial practice of rural-urban migrants. As shown in the forms of their Traditional Malay house where spaces are organic and multifunctional, permitting changeable functions, while at the same time protecting family privacy and gender separation.

My study has also shown the different levels of spatial constraints faced by rural migrants in their urban homes. The current design of high rise flats and apartments, especially for the low-cost groups does not give much freedom for dwellers to make changes and getting involved in social interaction with those who live around them. However, a lower density living, like those in Alor Star, has allowed people to negotiate spaces and make changes to accommodate their social and cultural needs. The importance of having an intermediate space such as the *halaman* in kampung acting as a transition between public and private space around a dwelling unit is time and again voiced by migrants.

The minimal use of visually and physically obstructive barriers to mark boundaries in kampung suggested that the community have to recognise the ‘invisible boundaries’ by conforming to cultural rules and norms. These also demonstrate the close connection between the physical configuration of kampung and its social relationships.

As time changed, kampung, like landscape, acquired new layers of meanings. Today it is also interpreted as an image, an icon and becoming a central element of nostalgia.

The versatility of kampung ideas enables the concept to be translated and adapted in an urban condition, contesting the notion that kampung, that commonly signifies rurality is a term that contradicts city life. If given the chance and space, some kampung ideas could be adapted and blended well in the city surroundings, hence, promoting the sense of place among the city dwellers who have migrated from kampung.
Rural-urban migrants, through their shared views see kampung as the model space for their cultural and social practices. The rural-urban migrants expressed some ‘imagined’ sentiments that parallel the pastoral ideals, a western cultural myth (Marx, 1964). They acknowledged the limitations of kampung but keep hoping to return to the ‘good life’. The ambivalent view on kampong and city found in this study parallels Raymond Williams’ model of city and country duality (Williams, 1973). Such views are tied to the pastoral and idyllic imagery of kampung. The positive and negative connotations related to the city and the kampung, illustrate that the labels associated with rural and city ideas are shared in Western and Eastern sentiment. Kampung fits in the Raymond Williams tags as the country with ‘a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue’, while the city became ‘an achieved center: of learning, communication, light’. On the other hand, the city is described as “a place of noise, worldliness, ambition”; while the kampung as “a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation" Williams (1973, p.1).

Freedom in spatial use is deemed vital by respondents of this study. The freedom to shape one’s living landscape according to one’s wish or have a say in things happening around one’s life within certain cultural norms is crucial as that helps instill a sense of belonging to a place. This explains why many rural-urban migrants chose to live in squatter settlement when they first move. Besides the lower cost of rental, the squatter settlement, they claimed, gave them more freedom of spatial use. The fluidity of the spaces enabled to maintain a kampung-like lifestyle: living in a close community and able to utilize available ground plots.

High rise living restricts spatial control while lower density housing in the city, in the form of terrace and semi-detached units, allows more freedom of spatial use. Freedom and control over one’s life space enhances one’s ability exercise their rights and carry out one’s responsibilities, enhancing one’s sense of place.

Home place attachment appeared to be very strong among respondents. The idea of roots and home are obvious in migrants’ discourse. Physical landscape elements of kampung, the ‘middle landscape’, ranging from the natural elements of rivers, hills and forests, and the man- modified landscapes of houses, farms, and lush green orchards appeared frequently in migrants’ discourses. Incorporating landscape elements that remind people of their childhood or beautiful pasts, helps make newcomers feel at home. Migrants chose places that they describe as resembling kampung (macam kampung) in terms of the physical landscape and the
ambiance. These include choosing the greenest and the closest they could get to ‘nature’. Hence, incorporating some of the kampung ‘physical’ elements could also mean bringing more elements of nature to the city.

Expressions of memories and experiential qualities were often described as *seronok*, a blanket term used to describe pleasurable and fulfilling experiences of kampung. Kampung is also defined by special events as well as the everyday routines. The experience of festivities and celebrations in kampung became one of the central features of respondents’ ideas of kampung. This, concurs Cosgrove’s explanation of a ‘working landscape’. Cosgrove (1984, p. 19) explains,

> [t]he visible forms [of the landscape] and their harmonious integration to the eye, may indeed be a constituent part of people’s relationship with the surroundings of their daily lives, but such considerations are subservient to other aspects of a working life with family and community. The composition of their landscape is much more integrated and inclusive with the diurnal course of life’s events— with birth, 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.

Hence, some migrants, especially those who look forward to return to kampung partly carry the sense of feeling that they still belong to the kampung that they left. Rural-urban migrants feel like they are the insiders even when they had left kampung. This sense of belonging is reinforced by their frequent visits to their kampung.

A sense of nostalgia for the past kampung landscape and lifestyle initiates different life responses to the city setting. Some migrants presented ‘restorative’ attempts to recover their past by ‘recreating’ the lost home, re-establishing past experience and by re-building the element and ‘reflective’ nostalgia: longing, contemplating, but did not attempt to bring back the past (Boym, 2001). Such restorative attempts have been noted in other studies among migrant populations, as shown by Hispanics migrants in Jeffrey S. Smith’s study of Hispanic rural-urban migrants (Smith, 2002).

Rural-urban migrants used kampung as a benchmark to comment on the aspects of the modern landscape and living environments. Looking back to rural kampung in order to find ways to enhance city living is an opportunity to ‘recover’ the landscape rather than a retreat to
“passive pastoralism” (Corner, 1999). The richness of the physical and experiential characteristics of kampung is evident in my respondents’ discourse. I hence suggest that my findings have the potential to augment the city landscape by building a design language and strategies in landscape architecture and therefore function as “an active instrument in the shaping of modern culture” (Corner, 1999, p.1).

11.1.1 Landscape Design Language

My study also shows that kampung is a rich concept that has potential to inspire a local landscape design language. As I had explained earlier in Chapter 5, the word *landskap* which is used to refer to the term landscape in Malay covers only the imported pictorial and aesthetic aspect of the word, while neglecting the human and social dimension of the term. From my experience of fieldwork, to most Malays, the word *landskap* is understood as everything that has to do with ornamental plants and tree planting. This is where kampung has the potential to add to and enrich the landscape language in the non-western landscape realm, particularly in the Malaysian context. The revealed concepts of kampung in context of the urban landscape could be of use to guide future culturally responsive and socially effective landscape design.

Landscape is an idea that transcends national boundaries, yet the concepts are not universally shared. Regional ideas and locally accepted design language need to be acknowledged because they better suit the local users. My study on kampung has shown that the conceptual structure and meanings of landscape extend into the non-western world. This also supports Bender’s idea that the language of landscape extends globally but it comes in different semblances (Bender, 1993).

My findings add to the pool of non-western landscape concepts that come from studies in parts of the world where there is no one single word that corresponds to ‘landscape’. An inquiry by Makhzoumi (2002) in the Middle East, and a study by Gehring and Kohsaka in Japan (2007) demonstrate the significance of identifying the suitable local terms and concepts that deal with landscape ideas. This could clarify meaning in the design arena and also in general terms (Makhzoumi, 2002). In short, my study has also strengthened the notion that
landscape concepts in different cultures have to be studied with regard to the local language and socio cultural context.

In the following sections, I consider the way in which my findings have answered the initial questions of the thesis, provide suggestions for future design, and finally, I consider directions for future research.

11.2 Rural-urban Migrants’ Interpretations of Kampung

My first question was ‘how migrants interpreted kampung’?

Rural urban migrants interpreted kampung in different ways as they went along living their life in the city landscape: arriving, adapting, settling and moving ahead. Corner explains that landscape, is a “‘medium of exchange’ that evolves with tangible and intangible elements in different societies in their own time, as they ascribe their own meanings to it without necessarily sharing the same standard or fixed meaning, values and characteristics” (Corner, 1999, p.5). The depth and emphasis of kampung meanings hence differ between respondents, and also vary in the various stages of their life, but they maintain certain key themes that they share among them (Figure 10.1). Responses from subjects in my research have identified both tangible and intangible elements of kampung that they considered important.
11.2.1 Cultural and Moral Landscape

Cultural and religious values are amongst the most important aspects of kampung interpretation, especially among the older respondents who observe the changes in the way people live and respond to their surroundings. Kampung is an ideal and also a place that has become the stronghold for Malay culture and its Islamic belief. As argued by respondent Khamis b Hadi, “kampung suits our culture and lifestyle”. In my research, I found that rural-
urban migrants shared an ideal view that sees kampung as the model space for cultural and religious practice to be carried out, a suitable setting where cultural norms and rites are followed by members of the community and where the spaces and physical attributes of the landscapes, cited as spacious and peaceful, are the most convenient.

Respondents also had nostalgic ideas of a “moral” kampung. A close knit community, where people knew one another, family ties were strong, where everyone followed the cultural norms and religious rules and the young held high respect for the elders.

Hence, the first role of kampung for rural-urban migrants is as a normative frame of reference for cultural and moral values. The memory of kampung – nostalgic though it may be – provides a moral point of reference for their life in the city.

11.2.2 Social and Spatial Practice

Rural urban migrants asserted that in kampung the people had more control over their life and had a better say in creating their own life spaces. The forms and functions of living spaces were not imposed on them. These, in respondents’ view contrasted with the city’s globalised, uniformed and hostile surroundings. They claimed that it was the living and the way of living that made a place a kampung, or at least made a place feel like one.

In my study respondents particularly recognised the importance of having close social relationships and good social interactions among members of a community, which to them, were found in their kampung. Kampung provided ambiguous, fluid and fairly open spaces where social activities were constructed and took place with the least spatial constraints. The traditional Malay culture places community value above individual importance. Kinship, family ties and neighbourliness are among the main key elements for the formation of kampung. As kampung also means “getting together”, collectiveness was seen as a virtue of kampung.

Rural-urban migrants therefore viewed kampung as the place to live socially, always in reciprocal contact with those that live amidst one’s surroundings. As such it allowed members
of a community to do things together. Neighbours and relatives were important in a kampung sense, and these social relationships were not bounded by physical location.

Most respondents migrated to cities such as Kuala Lumpur with their spouse or children (if they had any) at the point of migration, however, they kept close contact with other relatives who had migrated or planned to soon to migrate to the same city.

The kampung’s social practice is expressed in the spatial practice of the Malays through home design. The Malay vernacular houses are built with a spatial configuration that allows changes and fluidity of space, while protecting gender separation and family privacy. The specification and zoning of each house form permits space for changeable functions. Multi-functional usage of the spaces are also seen across the kampung spaces where private, semi-private and public spaces are interchangeable according to needs.

The absence or minimal use of fences and other visual and physically obstructive barriers or high walls in kampung presents a welcoming ambiance to visitors. At the same time, the absence of permanent physical barriers means that members of the community have to recognise the ‘invisible boundaries’, and this situated knowledge connects the people within a social network.

The second key feature of kampung memories is therefore a sense of the close and intimate connection between the physical configuration of kampung and its social relationships. The rural kampung has a multi-layered constitution of social space, which is continually adapted to different needs.

11.2.3 Pastoral Sentiments and Rural Ambivalence

The rural-urban migrants expressed some ‘imagined’ sentiments that parallel the pastoral ideals, a western cultural myth (Marx, 1964). They generally admired the rural lifestyle, in which they interpreted kampung and city as almost oppositional, with the common model of the ‘good rural kampung’ and the ‘bad city’.
The following table illustrates the oppositional characteristics of city and kampung, as mentioned by respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kampung</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent, peaceful</td>
<td>Noisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High surveillance, higher safety</td>
<td>Low surveillance, lower safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective/ community centred</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laid back lifestyle</td>
<td>Fast paced, hectic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to nature</td>
<td>Detached from nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral society</td>
<td>Material society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Vernacular living</td>
<td>Hegemonic lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11-1 Respondents’ description of kampung-city dichotomy

Having addressed the “good kampung life”, respondents have nevertheless demonstrated their ambivalence towards the rurality of kampung. They wished to go back and live the good life in kampung but at the same time they have become used to the benefits of modern city facilities and opportunities. Although they championed the good characteristics of the kampung, they admitted the setbacks of kampung life which they were aware of, these included:

- Lack of physical development and infrastructure
- A high level of poverty
- Limited employment opportunities
- Limited consumer goods
- Limited modern facilities (including communication, healthcare and education)

However, though they acknowledged the limitations of kampung, respondents in my interviews did not describe kampung the total opposite of development. They viewed their kampung as moving in the line of progress, albeit at a much slower pace. They acknowledged the changes they saw in kampung over the years where kampung had slowly adopted many of the modern and urban traits. These are clearly strong parallels between this duality of kampung and the city, similar to the characteristics of the duality of country and city in the western pastoral myth.
11.2.4 Changing Home Place and Place Attachment

The fourth theme to emerge is the experience of kampung as ‘home’. Remembering their ‘roots’ and attachment to their home places appeared to be very strong among respondents. Kampung as home is first and foremost explained very much in the form of houses and the compound, an extension of living space from a home, a landscape for living. Partly connected to the pastoral image of the kampung, rural-urban migrants also felt very strongly about the wider characteristics of the kampung landscape, mainly involving the tangible physical elements of the kampung environment. Physical landscape elements, ranging from the kampung setting, farms, rivers, hills and lush green orchards and forests underpinned interviewees’ discourse along with the intangible elements: the experiential qualities that they held in connection to the kampung landscapes.

Rural-urban migrants expressed affinity towards physical landscape elements in kampung, mainly the physical character of the countryside, both natural and man-made elements. Respondents highlighted their keenness of living closer to nature in kampung; recalling their love for shade of green trees (kehijauan kampung), streaming water in rivers, seaside lined with palm trees and mangroves and forested hills that they explored and enjoyed viewing from a distance. Respondents spoke fondly of simple traditional houses on stilts, the compounds without fences, mosques where they spent their Ramadhan prayers, the bridges across the rivers and the pelenggar (vernacular bench) where they enjoyed resting in evening breeze.

Expressions of memories of intangible, experiential qualities also reoccurred; for example memories of childhood play in post-harvested rice fields and hills, experiences during different planting seasons, feelings of being “close to nature”, playing and fishing in the rivers in kampung, as well as times spent outdoors together with family and friends. Respondents described these memories in kampung as seronok, a blanket term they used to describe pleasurable and fulfilling experiences. Another theme was a keen interest in agricultural activities and gardening for consumption and ornamental purposes. Finally, there was also a strong sense that kampung is defined by special events as well as the everyday practices.
 Respondents talked of the experience of festivities and celebrations in kampung as the central feature of their ideas of home.

Respondents, most of which have been visiting their kampung regularly, acknowledged changes they observed in their kampung, from the time they migrated and up to the interview.

11.2.5 Nostalgia

Finally, and not surprisingly, there are strong elements of nostalgia interlaced in rural-urban migrants’ interpretation of kampung. Most rural-urban migrants located their childhood memories and their mental image of kampung in the past as the main narratives of their kampung interpretation. Rural-urban migrants presented both forms of nostalgia of kampung: a ‘restorative’ attempts to recover a lost home, mythologising the past, seeking to re-establish a long gone experience, and ‘reflective’ nostalgia: longing, contemplating, and remembering without attempts to bring back the past (Boym, 2001). Some respondents were purely restorative, some were more reflective and some presented both restorative and reflective types of nostalgia.

Respondents with ‘restorative nostalgia’ tried to recreate their childhood experiences and introduce kampung to their children in the forms of stories, pictures and some even by reconstructing the elements of kampung that they longed for. Others acknowledged their nostalgia for kampung in a reflective way, allowing nostalgia to shape their way of thinking and feeling and help them explore their experiences and guide their perception of the present (Boym, 2001). Those who were fully adapted to the city life and wanted to remain in the city appeared to exhibit the reflective type of nostalgia of kampung, but that did not rule out the possibility of them becoming restorative. They were not trying to bring back the past, but the nostalgia of kampung helped them cope with adaptation to life in city.

Financial constraints and the inconvenience of living in the city landscape have made migrants express stronger nostalgia for kampung, whereas those with an improved economic position in the city have taken it as a memory that marks the difference of the life they left behind and the new phase that they are taking to move forward.
On the whole, respondents described kampung using the blanket term - seronok – which means enjoyable or pleasant; experiential expressions of fulfillment and happiness. Engaging in kampung activities was seronok, walking around kampung was seronok, getting together with family was seronok. In part these may be seen as their nostalgic expression of a longed for, a beautiful past but in essence these kampung elements can be translated into design elements that could enhance the city landscapes.

11.3 Rural-urban Migrants’ Adaptation to the Urban Environment

My second question addressed the way in which the migrants have adapted to the city. My fieldwork revealed that respondents reacted to city life in different ways, depending on the ‘travel routes’ to their city destinations. Those who went through different stages of migration by first moving to lesser populated cities such as Alor Star before moving to big cities like Kuala Lumpur, were better adjusted for city living. Those who first entered educational institutions in cities in their teens also found it easier to settle down in the city compared to those who moved directly from the kampung to the city in their adulthood. The educational institutions became an ‘acclimatisation’ stage for most young respondents. Migrants who moved directly from a rural kampung to Kuala Lumpur appeared to have more difficulties in adapting.

Not all respondents appear to have positively adapted to city living. Some adaptations had turned to ‘maladaptation’ in which the adjustment to the city landscape character inflicted restrictions and inconvenience on the respondent’s life. Figure 11.3 shows a general adaptation sequence faced by rural-urban migrants.
The young and mainly single respondents were the most mobile and easily adaptable to city surroundings while migrant housewives were the hardest hit by the change between kampung and city environment. Rural-urban migrants ‘adapted’ to the urban environment in several ways, which include:

- settling in places that resemble kampung;
- creating kampung-like communities;
- modification and negotiations to spatial use and physical boundaries;
- safety precautions and surveillance;
- recreating kampung-like physical character in the urban environment.

Locally induced improvements to physical and social surroundings to create ‘kampung-like’ atmosphere in their current living supported and helped them to achieve the lifestyle they hoped for in the city.

The adaptation strategies are considered in the following pages.
11.2.1 Settling in Places that Resemble Kampung Landscape Character

Rural-urban migrants who brought their family to the city searched to settle in places with the closest resemblance to the environmental, social and physical characters of their kampung. Respondents from middle class chose places that they describe as resembling kampung (macam kampung) in terms of the physical landscape and the ambiance. These include choosing the greenest, the least developed and the most ‘peaceful’ areas, besides making sure that the place is complete with city infrastructure.

Finding an affordable place to live in Kuala Lumpur, especially for a family unit with a tight budget was a struggle for most rural-urban migrants. Migrants in Alor Star did not find it as much of a problem as those in Kuala Lumpur. High rise living in low cost flats were not favourable to most rural-urban migrant families. Most respondents, especially those belonging to the working class who came to Kuala Lumpur in the 1970s and 1980s, had to resort to the cheapest available rented accommodation. Insufficient supply of housing and high cost of rental in housing estates drove them to rent in squatter houses, usually built low-rise and with inadequate infrastructure facilities. Besides the lower cost of rental, migrants chose to live in urban squatters because of the physical character which gave them more freedom of spatial use. Squatter settlement, they claimed, allowed them to maintain their kampung-like lifestyle of being close to people living around them and being able to utilize any small spaces of earth available around them.

11.2.2 Creation of ‘Kampung-like’ Communities

Kampung activities are being kept alive in the city to create ‘home’. Home making was expressed by coming together and creating a community that makes a kampung or feels kampung-like. Making friends with total strangers that live among them was deemed a challenge to the rural-urban migrants; they usually addressed this by creating their own ‘socialising’ platform. There were variations between intentional efforts such as trying to
make contacts to informal socialization. For example, purposeful attempts in getting to know other jemaah (congregators in a prayer) in a mosque or housewives joining women association or resident club activities. Indirect opportunities for women to socialise also existed through informal contacts while conducting house chores and running errands for their household. Single migrants in my study did not favour taking part in resident association activities, instead, they preferred to keep in touch with relatives who also migrated to the city.

Feasts organised in conjunction to special occasions like religious celebrations, thanksgiving (kenduri kesyukuran), weddings (kenduri kahwin), and other rites of passage became the niche for urban migrants to get to know others who live close to them. Older generation urban migrants tended to religiously keep up with Malay rites and cultural practices that call for community participation. The practice of preparing feasts in the spirit of communal help (gotong royong) further helped promote togetherness and closer ties between neighbours and supported a sense of having neighbours as close as kins (macam saudara) reminiscent of kampung lifestyle (rasa macam kampung). Some respondents maintained that by adopting ‘kampung spirit’ and keeping ‘kampung culture’ (budaya kampung) they are practising and recreating kampung culture in city environments. Kampung migrants who found others who shared an interest in keeping kampung culture utilised any available spaces to do things together.

11.2.3 Modification and Negotiations to Spatial Use and Physical Boundaries

Living spaces and properties in cities mainly have properly defined legal boundaries, that clearly separate one’s house and land ownership with the others. Unlike the fenceless kampung houses they used to live in, houses of respondents who lived in terrace houses in my research were all fenced.

Rural-urban migrants who lived in such housing negotiated their spatial boundaries with their neighbours whenever the need arose. Respondents tended to create reciprocal relationships with their neighbours. Having limited space in their homes and compounds did not deter respondents from organising feasts and community events in their own homes. Rural-urban
migrants negotiated spatial boundaries with their neighbours, whom were also mainly urban migrants. There were several examples of boundary crossings where they were willing to open up and share their semi-private and even some private spaces of their own homes to be used together with their neighbours when an occasion called for. In this practice, they did not allow the boundaries to act as separators but treated them as permeable and changeable borders, through which spatial use could flow from one bounded space to another. Some even worked together with neighbours to modify fences, by creating openings that could help allow easier flow between one’s compound to the neighbour’s compound. There was also ambivalence in such spatial use as not all rural-urban migrants had neighbours who were willing to have such spatial negotiations. Having neighbours that share the same spatial values was important to maintain such practice.

11.2.4 Surveillance for Physical and Moral Safety

In traditional kampung organisation, there is high familiarity among kampung dwellers. When a child misbehaves, he or she may be corrected by any adult. In such settings children could be allowed outside; with tight surveillance. They are thought to never be alone and are always watched by the adults. In a city block, there are not many adults available to watch the children due to the separation of space for living and working. Adults could hardly take time off from work to discipline a misbehaving child or provide moral guidance. Leaving children alone in the neighborhood, which might have been a traditional practice in the kampung, where the first generation of these rural-urban migrants were raised, could cause negative consequences in the cities.

Some of the ‘adaptation’ steps that they took hindered them from getting the most of the opportunities in the city, especially in improving their standard of living and using the facilities provided for city dwellers. Concerns about material and moral safety in the city led respondents to restrict their movements, locking themselves up in their small houses. Fear of city crime appeared high among migrant housewives and such fear kept the housewives and their children mostly indoors, limiting their freedom and chances to socialise. The housewives in lower density housings on the other hand, were always on the lookout to ensure their own safety and the safety of the neighbours’ properties when the others were off to work.
Most respondents in my research did not allow their children to go out and play in the playground unless accompanied by adults or teenage siblings. In most cases their children were restricted to play in corridors and balconies of high rise buildings or within fenced yards of terrace and town houses. Teenage children were also subject to restrictions at home to ensure they did not get involved with peers who were ‘too exposed to western influence’. Some parents tried to avoid such influences by sending their teenage children to boarding schools.

11.2.5 Reconstruction and Quest for Kampung-like Physical Characters

Attachment to physical elements in kampung setting appeared to be strong among respondents. Some respondents recreated and reconstructed elements that reminded them of kampung to make themselves feel more at home in the urban surroundings while others sought to spend time in places that hold kampung character.

Respondents in the middle class group who lived in more spacious housing in the city had the advantage of being able to reconstruct or recreate elements of kampung within their living spaces, such as artificial water landscape elements at home, planting fruit and coconut trees in compounds and outdoor furniture that resembled the old *pelenggar* in kampung and poultry pens.
Respondents living in low rise housing who did not have enough house and compound space in their own unit sought to utilise available spaces outside their house boundaries including road reserves and any vacant land they could make good use of. They planted small fruit trees, kitchen herbs and vines, setting places to rest outside and kept cages for poultry.

Those who did not have the means to use land-space had their pelenggar in balconies, constructed their own small ‘garden’ in corridors and kept paintings that reminded them of their physical kampung elements. During holidays and weekends, they sought places where they could find solace with their favourite kampung elements, for example enjoying a quiet weekend by rivers or other water elements in the park, or going fishing. Those who could afford to travel out of the city would spend their time in recreational places outside the city boundary.
11.2.6 Gender Dimensions and Privacy

Kampung settings with Malay traditional houses provide adequate privacy for women while a kampung lifestyle allows more freedom for the use of indoor and outdoor spaces, where spatial use flows between the two. Traditional houses built on stilts provide a difference in eye level between house dwellers and those who walk past by. Thus protecting privacy even though when windows of a house are wide open, allowing natural light and ventilation. Compounds around the kampung house also act as a buffer around the house where strangers and visitors coming could be seen from inside the house and women could take their time to properly cover up according to Islamic modesty (aurat) if they have visitors. Having family members as neighbours also gives more freedom of spatial use for women in kampung.

The case is different in the city, especially in high rise living when strangers could come close to or even walk right outside one’s door and windows. In such environments, female respondents had to be well dressed all the time if they wished to open up windows and doors for ventilation, light and social interaction with neighbours. Avoiding to do so, meant that they could only stay indoors restricting any opportunities for informal socialising. In some other cases, the need for greater security and privacy has led to modern city house designs which are more closed, thus reducing ventilation and blocking residents from seeing other occupants. These rigid and inflexible physical environments of city living had a significant impact on the quality of life of the women migrants, especially migrants who are housewives.
11.3 Design Recommendations and Strategies

Kampung in essence refer to rural landscape which is considered as traditional. Using kampung ideas to enhance and shape the modern city landscapes does not suggest a reverse approach to landscape or a revival of the traditional by reducing the kampung landscape ideas into a nostalgic image, instead the ideas could actively be integrated to shape modern landscape in the city. The design and orientation of modern city living, especially the high rise apartments tend to keep dwellers indoors and do not provide inhabitants with opportunities to enjoy spaces outside their dwelling unit and socialise with people who live around them. Finding time to set aside, specifically for leisure and socialising, was not possible for most respondents as they had chores and family obligations to fulfill. In the following section, I provide some suggestions that could enhance the city living landscape for the rural migrants. Some of these suggestions would also benefit urban dwellers in general.

11.3.1 Social Policy

The first strategy that I am suggesting to deal with urban-migrant problems has to do with a general social policy, with the following suggestions;

a. Recommendation for step by step migration

Promote migration by stages from rural kampung to state capital, regional center and later to a national centre. This is to enable stages of adaptation for those who come from remote and low density rural areas and allowing them to adapt through stages of urbanity levels and urban locality. This could be done by recommending job openings according to the background of the migrant and exposure that they might have had to urban life. Agencies dealing with the labour market could be able to monitor the transfer of labourers from one town to another urban centre, especially for mass transfer of rural-urban migrant labour for manufacturing companies. This could mitigate the hardships that are inflicted upon migrants when facing a
sudden contrast between a low density living lifestyle in rural areas and the direct shift to a spatially restricted urban living.

### 11.3.2 Urban Planning Policy

#### a. Prioritise low rise community housing

For a low density urban centre like Alor Star, a policy is needed to restrict future development of high rise housing. The current trend of low-rise housing in Alor Star could be maintained for the benefit of city dwellers. Examples in my research have illustrated how low rise city living could allow spaces to be adapted to a variety of functions over time.

Every house unit could be provided with unbuilt land-space, a house compound. Compound, or *halaman* is an essential element in the lives of the migrants. The existence of compound and land-space that serve as intermediate spaces between the privacy of a house and the public area are essential. Such intermediate space could create better chances for rural-urban migrants to connect to people around them, making them feel at home. This point is not trivial as my study has demonstrated that the qualities of a living landscape have direct and personal impact on the users’ culture and value system. Creating spatial configurations that are inspired and replicate the concept of *halaman*—a neighbourhood shared space, is one approach that urban designers could adopt.

### 11.3.3 Open Space and Landscape Design

Central to the needs of highly built up city landscapes are the open spaces. The current image of a city like Kuala Lumpur, strives on being portrayed as a ‘developed’ and ‘futuristic’ city. My respondents experienced this as sometimes sterile and somewhat distant from the culture of the people that live amidst the city landscape. Recommendations for open space and landscape design in the city are as follows;
a. **Urban agriculture**

Getting in touch with ‘nature’, gardening and agriculture came out clearly in the discourse of the rural-urban migrants in my study. Most of them expressed a love for gardening, either to beautify their dwelling unit or to cultivate edible kitchen plants in their city homes. Respondents, mostly of agricultural background showed an interest and an affinity towards agriculture and pastoral lifestyles. Those living in terrace, semi-detached, single storey and bungalows had the privilege of owning small plots of land in within their house boundaries which they turned into small home gardens, with edible plants and ornamentals species.

Those who lived in high-rise housing, however, did not have the same opportunities to replicate a kampung-like landscape. Hence, it would be beneficial for resident associations, housing management and city councils to work together to allow and support the use of any unused land space around apartment buildings to create community gardens. Current sustainable living practice supports the urban planting of food resources in cities for human well being (Sustainable Site Initiative)\(^39\). Rising food prices and the cost of living have hit lower income groups the hardest and rural-urban migrants in Malaysia were not reserved. Small scale gardening and food growing could also help those in lower income groups to reduce their spending by supplying part of their own food sources. Hence, community gardens could help to relieve financial hardships of urban migrants.

Community gardens have already been introduced and launched in concept and campaign in many Municipal Councils and City Councils in Malaysia including in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Putrajaya. However, they are yet to be seen as actively carried out in the areas where my respondents live. There were examples of individual attempts to create their own small edible gardens which could be encouraged, but more support could be given so many more would follow. Financial and guidance support from city councils is needed to encourage residents’ active participation. Green patches and community gardens have proven to be good platforms to foster social ties among neighbours who take part and improve community living. Glover (2004) illustrated in his study that a community garden cultivates community spirit, motivates

\(^{39}\) [http://www.sustainablesites.org/human.html](http://www.sustainablesites.org/human.html)
collective actions and helps bridge social differences. It can also heighten social awareness, better surveillance, more active community participation and promote sense of place and sense of belonging among participants and participants’ children (Armstrong, 2000).

The current building by-laws and high-rise living rules that restrict the use of public spaces and unused vacant lands for planting or even placing pots in corridors in apartments could be reconsidered to allow residents getting involved in urban agriculture. Better guidelines are also needed to promote the use of ‘idle’ high-rise spaces like rooftops, balconies and lobbies for cultivation of food sources. Landscape architects and urban designers could also contribute by designing open spaces and parks in and around residential areas that allow and welcomes residents’ participation in the planting and maintenance of vegetation around residential parks.

b. **Productive species in parks and housing area**

City greening and tree planting campaigns are actively being carried out in Malaysian cities and trees chosen for street plantings and in parks are mostly of the species that provide either good shade or attractive flowers. For certain sections of the society, aesthetic value is important, but for others, like most of working class rural-urban migrant respondents in my study, elements that are functional and provide them with the simple basic needs are more important than ‘aesthetics’. Some respondents viewed trees in the city that provided only shade and serve as ornamental purpose are of little value compared to trees that bear fruits, high utility and have cultural significance.

Fruit trees were amongst the main recurrent elements in the model map drawings by the respondents. Respondents felt that it was important to have the character of their rural kampung translated into their city living. Hence, more fruit bearing tree species could be introduced in parks and housing areas. Resident participation is crucial in order to ensure that the trees and plants that are planted around housing areas get proper care and protection from residents.
The current approach of landscaping for ‘beautification’ that is usually taken by developers in the form of planting hardy ornamental shrubs and low-maintenance shade trees provide a generic, typical ‘photocopied’ look of every residential area and renders them characterless. Having functional and meaningful soft scapes that cater for user’s needs are as important as keeping the city beautiful. Landscape architects could contribute to establishing planting schemes that combine beauty with functionality. A selection of edible plant species that needs the least maintenance could be introduced in urban areas.

c. Water elements

Rivers were the most frequently drawn and discussed landscape elements in the mental mapping process in my study, representing respondents’ vivid memories and attachment to rivers and water bodies. Enjoyment of water is a universal landscape phenomenon, and for kampung ex-residents who grew up with a daily engagement with water landscapes, an articulated use of water in the design of urban landscape could play an important role in creating sense of place and generating calming and revitalising effects.

Rivers in the city could be designed to become more accessible as recreational resources. In many locations in Kuala Lumpur and Alor Star, rivers have become an obscured feature in the urban landscapes with development of buildings and housing positioning the rivers as the ‘back lane’.

A stronger planning and design policy could be introduced to capitalise on rivers as a key landscape asset. This would highlight and give importance to a landscape element that appeals to most urban migrants. Landscape architects engaged in city planning will have opportunities to articulate river-front designs that will replicate a sense of kampung, therefore supporting a unique Malay Sense of Place.
d. Social spaces in parks

Urban migrants in the lower income group have difficulties in using public parks that are available in cities. While these parks, for example Titiwangsa Lake Garden and Taman Tasik Permaisuri in Kuala Lumpur have adequate public facilities and social spaces for the use of urban resident from all walks of life, those who do not own vehicles will find access to these parks difficult. Respondents found it hard to take the whole family in public transport for any family day out, and that forced them to stay at home. Hence, it is critical to have larger accessible opens spaces with recreational facilities in areas where migrants in the lower income group reside.

Selection of spots to promote social interaction is to ensure safety of users and suitability for different age groups. Landscape architects could be involved in the planning and design of a hierarchy of open spaces in the city, keeping in mind the needs of the underprivileged and their longing for kampung-like environments. There is much potential to use the kampung elements to create a unique sense of place in Malaysian cities.

11.3.4 Housing Design and Architectural Resolutions

a. Social spaces in access ways

Common lower medium to low cost modern housing in Malaysia cities have a similar design that either provides very little privacy or a total closure that blocks people off, allowing for few opportunities for dwellers to socialise when they want to.

By providing some basic facilities in the semi-public circulation areas on each floor of apartment buildings, there would be opportunities for dwellers to engage with others. This is especially critical for those who do not get to go out often to meet friends or family outside of their homes. Utilising the access ways such as floor corridors, lift lobby and stairs landings
would enable residents to be outside of their ‘walled’ units, and use the access way at their intermediate or semi private spaces.

Taking into account the examples found in flats in Alor Star, placing of public furniture at these access ways could act as nodes where urban dwellers could sit and socialize with their neighbours.

b. Gendered space

Privacy issues is one of the tricky subjects in city living. Rural-urban migrants respondents did not express privacy to be a problem in kampung living. In the city, however, keeping up with personal privacy is a major challenge.

According to Muslim *aurat* traditions women need to be properly covered in the presence of men who are not family members. The response is a rather rigid privacy measure. The women are shut behind walls without openings to protect their privacy in an alienated environment.

Some architectural resolutions could include providing setbacks to create transitional spaces in front of apartments or designing apartments in ways that openings are not directly exposed to access ways. Openings could be designed to allow an insider to see areas outside her house without being clearly visible to outsiders.

Provision of social spaces for women and children within the same floor is needed where women could multi-task. Multifunctional spatial character in rural Malay houses and compound allow flexibility for mothers to work and let children play within their surroundings.
c. Defensible space

There is an urgency to design spaces that will accommodate children’s needs to spend time outside their homes, while their mothers at home can still have eye contact with them to maintain surveillance and sense of security. The kampung lifestyle enabled children to enjoy outdoor activities while migrants’ children in city environments are deprived from the benefits of informal outdoor play that is important for children’s healthy development. In my study respondents expressed fear of allowing their children to roam outdoors.

An appropriate design that takes into consideration the needs of children and their parents could be considered. For example –having apartment kitchen and living room windows face an internal courtyard to facilitate surveillance.

d. Provide for extended family

Older generation migrants tend to keep up with Malay religious rites and cultural practices that call for community participation. For the Malay seniors that I interviewed, retiring also involved getting further in touch with religious and spiritual aspects. Another common theme expressed was that the elderly wanted to be close to their children and maintain family ties. Retirement homes are not a commonly accepted lifestyle for Malays; they would like to be taken care of by family members and to be visited frequently by their children. Homes of parents often become the centre of gathering for children, replicating the ‘kampung’ ambience. Rural-urban migrants also frequently need to host visiting family members from kampung. City homes however, hardly cater for extended families.

As expressed by respondents, Malay culture values extended family and living in proximity, mainly within the same compound to parents is common in kampung. Urbanisation and migration broke these extended families into nuclear units, ruining the old networks of social ties.
Architectural design needs to be flexible to address the requirements of extended families, both in providing spaces to host visiting family members as well as appropriate design for dwellings that accommodate larger families that may include three generations. An older generation could help foster the need for maintaining cultural rites in practice as well as “kampung morality” values.
11.4 Future Research

Upon completing this study, I foresee the need for further research in the following areas:

a. Policy options

The notion of kampung is not against or totally opposed to development. My study has shown that kampung has also prevailed in cities and have high potential to enrich life in cities. Further detail studies need to be conducted to find how current development policies could be tailored to have futuristic and world class standard cities to go hand in hand with traditional kampung characters and values.

b. Open space options

In depth study is needed to address ways to design more open space that is easily accessible to residents in high rise houses. Such design could allow city dwellers to enjoy recreational spaces based on kampung-like experiences.

c. Building design

Further studies are needed to design modern urban buildings that could provide better spatial characters that will promote a social and culturally sound environment. I would also recommend a detailed study for a building that could provide a safe, socially and culturally responsive building that could suit ageing rural-urban migrants.
d. Kampung conservation

The pervasive notion of kampung suggests that kampung landscapes might merit a landscape heritage status. Thus studies that document the architectural and landscape characteristics to guideline areas of landscape heritage conservation are needed.

More agricultural lands have been converted into modern housing schemes to accommodate the increasing population. In some areas of Malaysia, the traditional physical characters of the kampung landscape have gradually changed into a typical urban look. As urbanization is moving further into the kampung in rural heartlands, there is a need to study the measures that could be taken to mitigate deteriorating changes to the kampung landscape.
11.4 Conclusions

My study has explored the meaning of kampung, a vernacular landscape, through people who have experienced the landscape from both the inside and the outside. I have shown that kampung is a pervasive idea in Malaysia; it embodies Malay cultural and social customs expressed in spatial practices. Within governmental discourse, kampung is considered as the ‘opposite’ of the city (Bunnell, 2002). This study has contested this notion. The kampung concept appears to have extended across a rural-urban boundary and has been shaping Malays’ understanding and response to their city living landscape.

Seeing kampung through ‘landscape’ has enable me to draw out what rural-urban migrants value in their life, contesting the accepted notion that city life and city landscape should look ultra-modern, free of any rural imagery. I have displayed concepts and strategies that could help guide responsive planning in the urban landscape for the integration of rural people and rural lifestyles. In explaining kampung, I have also highlighted the connection between the idea of kampung and the current concepts of landscape.

In utilizing the kampung idea, landscape architects are relevant actors as place-makers who can help revitalize people’s confidence in bringing and keeping up with their traditional culture within a globalized city setting. What is shown by the people involved in this study is the hope that the city would become a liveable place that will enhance their lives but will not confine their cultural and social development.

The application of kampung ideas in an urban city landscape will not be successful if it appears only on the boards of design drawings. It would need a complex process of design, implementation and evaluation of feedback that will involve the planners, designers and the users. There are issues like isolation and displacement which could be clarified by learning more about how certain groups of people respond to actual places.

Landscape is dynamic. Place-making is at its best when it involves the conscious meeting and interchange of subject, the user, and the designed landscape spaces. Such an approach would
necessitate direct participation and feedback from the users involved in the project as it would continually be used and redefined by the users.

This study of kampung has shown that vernacular ideas, an approach that is closer to people, would better suit the cultural and social needs of landscape users. From a landscape architecture point of view, everyday needs of the users in a city landscape deserve attention especially for those in the lower income group. A designed landscape needs more than to be functional and pleasing to the eyes. It has to also be able to help develop a good and healthy lifestyle, promote good social networking and provide opportunities of use for every levels of the society. The landscape architecture field needs to develop a critical perception of the many roles of landscape design, especially in encouraging integration of newcomers to the city and creating opportunities for them to lead a physically, socially and emotionally healthy lifestyle in the city.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest a paradigm shift in landscape design, especially in Malaysia: to have more focus on the humanistic and social aspects of landscape design. Looking back on ideas of kampung and unweaving its landscape meanings could be a good platform to start recovering a Malaysian landscape.
Bibliography


232


Don't Forget Your Roots, Malay Corporate Citizens Told. (2004, Sep 24). BERNAMA.


Goh, R. B. H., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (Eds.). Theorizing the Southeast Asian city as text: urban landscapes, cultural documents, and interpretative experiences


Nordin, M. (2000, 29 December). It's the time for returning to one's roots. *New Straits Times*. 

240


