

Kuala Lumpur – Kampung in the Context of a Global City

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Overview | Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur with ○ Landmark Sites and ● Kampung

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Thanks to all residents of urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur for welcoming a nosy German guy with a lot of questions.

Above all, I would like to thank my wife Suhasini for her support and patience and who introduced me to KL many years ago.

Abstract

The multi-ethnic urban society of Kuala Lumpur resides in high-rise buildings, low-rise neighbourhoods and small-scale quarters. The local, regional and global relations of this vast urban landscape is constantly stressed and recast. In this context, questions of spatial evolution and spatial quality gain relevance beyond simple matters of quantitative urban growth.

My dissertation takes a close look at spatially and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods called *kampungs*. I witnessed a specific quality in these quarters that was reflected in both, the built environment and the contentment of residents. Spatial quality seems to be a key—hitherto untold—feature of urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur. My dissertation wants to discover if a combination of applied theory, historic analysis, and assessment of urban and social characteristics will lead to an understanding of spatial qualities.

The study is structured in three parts. The first part sets forth the urban evolution of Kuala Lumpur. This detailed historic account reveals the spatial and social conception of kampungs. To understand the present context, the focus is extended to the current political situation in Malaysia, the question of ethnicity within a multiracial society, and an explanation of land and ownership laws. The second part consists of detailed field studies of six kampungs. The present situation of each kampung and its residents is described and the spatial and morphologic pattern is analysed in qualitative and quantitative measures. A critical assessment of qualities concludes this part. The third part highlights recommendations for a further development of kampungs in Kuala Lumpur. In order to do this, I included a contextual view of the city at large thus transcending beyond the sole examination of individual kampungs.

My dissertation concludes with the notion that the strong contextual qualities of kampungs must be acknowledged more than before. Since its inception, kampungs and city have entered a

symbiotic relationship. Only profound knowledge and earnest recognition of this relationship will safeguard the survival of urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur and thus maintaining quality for its residents.

Zusammenfassung

Die multiethnische Stadtgesellschaft Kuala Lumpurs lebt in verdichteten Hochhausquartieren, horizontal verdichteten Stadtteilen und kleinteiligen Quartieren. Die lokalen, regionalen und globalen Beziehungen dieser ausufernden Stadtlandschaft sind einer konstanten Spannung und Veränderung ausgesetzt. In diesem Zusammenhang bekommen Fragen der räumlichen Entwicklung und Qualität eine zentrale Bedeutung. Sie reichen über die alleinige Bewältigung von quantitativem Wachstum weit hinaus.

Gegenstand meiner Dissertation sind räumlich und ethnisch diverse Quartiere, sogenannte Kampungs. In diesen beobachtete ich eine spezifische Qualität die sowohl von der räumlichen Zusammensetzung als auch von der hohen Zufriedenheit ihrer Bewohner herrührt. Die räumliche Qualität urbaner Kampungs scheint dabei eine zentrale Rolle zu spielen, auch wenn sie bislang kaum zum Gegenstand einer (wissenschaftlichen) Untersuchung gemacht wurde. Meine Dissertation stellt sich der Frage, ob eine Kombination von angewandter Theoriebildung, detaillierter historischer Analyse und Bewertung von urbanen und sozialen Charakteristiken zu einem tieferen Verständnis von räumlicher Qualität in Kampungs führt.

Die Arbeit gliedert sich in drei Teile. Im ersten Teil wird die Entwicklung Kuala Lumpurs anhand der historischen Genese der Kampungs dargelegt. Diese detaillierte Untersuchung entschlüsselt die räumliche und soziale Konzeption der Quartiere. Um den heutigen Kontext zu verstehen wird der Fokus auf die aktuelle politische Situation in Malaysia, die Frage von Ethnizität in einer multiethnischen Stadtgesellschaft und die Darlegung von Land- und Eigentumsrecht erweitert. Der zweite Teil beinhaltet detaillierte Feldstudien von sechs Kampungs. Der Zustand der Quartiere und der Alltag ihrer Bewohner wird ausführlich beschrieben und die räumliche und morphologische Struktur wird anhand quantitativer und qualitativer Parameter analysiert. Eine kritische Bewertung der ermittelten Qualität schliesst diesen Teil ab. Der dritte Teil gibt konkrete Empfehlungen für den Fortbestand der Quartiere. Dies beinhaltet einen kontextuellen Blick auf die Gesamtstadt und geht damit weit über die alleinige Betrachtung individueller Kampungs hinaus.

Die Konklusion der Arbeit besagt, dass die starke kontextuelle Qualität der Kampungs eine grösseren Anerkennung erfahren muss. Seit ihrer Entstehung bilden Kampungs und Stadt eine symbiotische Beziehung. Nur die profunde Kenntnis und tiefgreifende Anerkennung dieser Beziehung wird das Überleben der urbanen Kampungs in Kuala Lumpur gewährleisten und somit die Qualität für ihre Bewohner erhalten können.

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Introduction

I. Why Kampung?

Kuala Lumpur, founded in 1857 by Chinese tin miners as a jungle outpost has grown into a city of 1.98 million inhabitants covering an area of 243 square kilometres.¹ The capital of Malaysia consists of a multi-ethnic urban society residing in high-rise buildings, neighbourhoods made up of terraced houses or small-scale quarters. The juxtaposition of dense high-rise and sparse low-rise areas with patches of lush forest greens in between is considered typical for a Southeast Asian metropolis in the tropics. Kuala Lumpur, called KL by locals, is still developing without mercy and features a downtown area with global appeal and lifestyle.

Greater Kuala Lumpur, a metropolitan area including the entire Klang Valley, has 8.46 million inhabitants covering an area of 3,483 square kilometres.² It is among the fastest growing metropolitan regions in Southeast Asia, both in terms of population and economic development. The local, regional and global relations of this vast urban landscape is constantly stressed and recast. In this context, questions of spatial evolution and spatial quality gain relevance beyond simple matters of quantitative growth. After all, the city is habitat to a huge number of residents. How did this habitat evolve? What kind of qualities does it provide?

I became familiar with KL through numerous visits since the early 2000s and my particular interest in areas off the beaten track was caused by irritation. When walking through KL, my well developed sense for orientation was challenged to the point of confusion. The diversity of built form, the complex topography, the all separating traffic arteries and the absence or abundance of landmarks made the urban environment difficult to read. Moreover, it was challenging to understand the rationale and logic of the city's built form. I decided to take a closer look at various areas and shortly after, I was drawn to spatially and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods called *kampungs*.

Within the vast urban fabric of KL they appeared to me like islands. I immediately noticed that most of these low-rise quarters contain a richness of activity. The residents I spoke to clearly identified with their kampung and most of them seemed persistently consonant with their environment. Above and beyond they hailed from all walks of life. I noticed that some kampungs are spatially complex, others are easy to grasp. They are neither informal settlements nor mere temporary urban phenomena. When I was back for a visit, I often met the same residents occupied with the same chores. This was a clear indication that many of the quarters were much more established as one would expect. Over the years, I noticed a lot of change, too. Houses were renovated or got upgrades, structures were replaced with other structures and new pieces of infrastructures appeared out of nowhere. Much to my dismay, some kampungs even disappeared

¹ Malaysia (2022). *Population and Housing Census Malaysia 2020*. Putrajaya

² Ibid.

completely.^{3,4} But in summary, I witnessed a specific quality in the quarters that was reflected in both, the built environment and the contentment of the residents.

Observing the contemporary urban condition of kampungs spurred a first set of important questions. Where do they come from? What is their history? Is it possible that some of the qualities are already engrained in the built form of the quarters? How does one assess spatial qualities in kampungs? Finally, if the rest of the city develops all but compassionately, why are most of these kampungs still around? If I manage to answer these questions, I will be able to understand the logic of KL and eventually regain my orientation.

II. Current State of Research

When I started my research, I realised that the complex legacy of kampungs in KL is barely discussed in scholarly analyses. Some people I met along my research told me that there is nothing 'special' about them and that the quarters might be of little value. There is hardly any approach or investigation in practise, planning or research that relates the specific historical evolution with the spatial qualities of the quarters. I was also not able to find an approach that highlighted any of the specific qualities that I observed. Surprisingly, the immense potential of such an approach is completely overlooked.

- Historical research primarily focuses on the general development of Malaysia,⁵ Kuala Lumpur^{6,7} or the Malay nation state.⁸ These valuable, numerous and detailed accounts often dismiss the importance of local residential quarters. In addition, historic research often put emphasis on colonial⁹ or post-colonial¹⁰ questions exclusively. This is unfortunate as a *coherent* narration to the present-day might discover different findings. For example, contemporary phenomena might be rooted in the historic geneses of kampungs.

- I found very detailed and immensely valuable socio-economic studies^{11,12,13} that focus on the development of various kampungs in Malaysia. Unfortunately, these studies omit questions

³ Low, Christina (2007). *Goodbye to Another Urban Kampung*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 31 July 2007

⁴ Zurairi, A.R. (2014). *In final plea, KL mayor tells Chubadak folk to move out, not squat*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 17 June 2014

⁵ Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge

⁶ Gullick, John Michael (2000). *A History of Kuala Lumpur 1856-1939*. Kuala Lumpur

⁷ Gullick, John Michael (1956). *The Story of Early Kuala Lumpur*. Singapore

⁸ Cheah, Boon Kheng (2002). *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*. Singapore

⁹ Home, Robert (1997). *Of Planting and Planning - The Making of British Colonial Cities*. London

¹⁰ Bishop, Ryan and Phillips, John and Yeo, Wei-Wei (ed.) (2003). *Postcolonial Urbanism - Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes*. New York

¹¹ Wilson, Peter J. (1967). *A Malay Village and Malaysia*. New Haven

¹² Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

¹³ Voon, Phin Keong (1978). *Evolution of Ethnic Patterns of Rural Land Ownership in Peninsular Malaysia: A Case Study*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 15, Number 4

concerning the built environment. Therefore, these studies miss a spatial view or expertise.

- There exists a profound body of contemporary cultural research but rarely an approach which includes questions from the fields of urban or spatial planning.^{14,15,16}

- Socio-geographic research rightfully highlights problematic living conditions in urban quarters and dwells on questions regarding ethnicity and equality.^{17,18,19} However, these analyses often conclude in singular solutions of singular problems. They rarely take into account a contextual approach eg, the relationship of kampungs with their surroundings. Or, they miss an approach of spatial urban analysis.²⁰

- Some of the geographical analysis I came across is very profound, but outdated.^{21,22,23}

- Architectural research is mostly focused on single buildings or building typologies. Often, the urban context and characteristics are neglected, thus missing a potential reference for spatial quality.^{24,25,26,27}

Consequently, we are missing a *spatial-urban view* that combines the specific historic development of urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur with the comprehensive assessment of potential qualities. My research aims to close this gap.

III. Hypothesis and Research Questions

Spatial quality seems to be a key—hitherto untold—feature of urban kampungs in KL. My dissertation wants to discover if a combination of applied theory, historic analysis, and assessment

14 Sardar, Ziauddin (2000). *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*. London

15 Kahn, Joel S. (2006). *Other Malays - Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World*. Singapore

16 Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York

17 Bunnell, Tim and Parthasarathy, D. and Thompson, Eric C. (eds.) (2013). *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia*. Dordrecht

18 Harun, Minah (2007). *Malay-Chinese Interethnic Communication in Malaysia: An Analysis of Sensemaking in Everyday Experiences*. Dissertation, Ohio University

19 Yat, Ming Loo (2013). *Architecture and Urban Form in Kuala Lumpur - Race and Chinese Spaces in a Postcolonial City*. Farnham

20 Bunnell, Tim (2002). *Kampung Rules: Landscape and the Contested Government of Urban(e) Malayness*. *Urban Studies*, Volume 39, Number 9

21 Tsou, Pao-Chun (1967). *Urban Landscape of Kuala Lumpur - A Geographical Survey*. Singapore

22 McTaggart, W. D. and McEachern, R. (1969). *Kampong Pandan: A Study of a Malay Kampong in Kuala Lumpur*. In: Dwyer D. J. (ed.) (1972). *The City as a Center of Change in Asia*. Hong Kong

23 Kuchiba, Masuo and Tsubouchi, Yoshihiro (1967). *Paddy Farming and Social Structure in a Malay Village*. *The Developing Economies*, Volume 5, Issue 3

24 Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) (1976). *Guide to Kuala Lumpur Notable Buildings*. Petaling Jaya

25 Nasir, Abdul Halim and Teh, Wan Hashim Wan (1996). *The Traditional Malay House*. Oxford

26 Yaacob, Naziaty Mohd and Shah, Megat Ariff (2007). *Finding Form and Missing Space: Malaysian Architecture Identity*. Paper presented at ACAU Workshop, Kuala Lumpur

27 Lim, Jee Yuan (1991). *The Malay House*. Penang

of urban and social characteristics will lead to an understanding of spatial qualities of kampungs in Kuala Lumpur.

The **Hypothesis** of the dissertation postulates that

- (1) The spatial and social conception of kampungs can be reconstructed by understanding the specific historic origin of different kampung types.
- (2) The spatial quality of each kampung can be detected, described, and assessed by building up a spatial ontology.
- (3) The relation of the resident's social values and the kampung's urban form equates to the current condition of kampungs in Kuala Lumpur.
- (4) The interpretation of (1) to (3) permits an outlook on strategies for the survival of kampungs in the context of Kuala Lumpur.

Following this hypothesis, a number of **Research Questions** must be asked.

- (1) How is an urban kampung conceptualised in the context of Kuala Lumpur?
- (2) Where do different kampung types originate from?
- (3) How can urban kampung space and its use be conceptualised?
- (4) Can spatial patterns and regularities be recognised?
- (5) What are the specific characteristics of each kampung?
- (6) How is spatial quality conceptualised and assessed?
- (7) Which qualities do kampungs offer to its residents?
- (8) Which characteristics allow kampungs to withstand urban development in KL?

Hypothesis and research questions relate to a *Theoretical Discourse*. Its objective is (a) to conceptualise key ideas in regard to urban kampungs, (b) to review key literature, (c) to place my research into a broader scientific context. The *Theoretical Discourse* comprises of three chapters entitled Kampung, Everyday and Quality.

IV. Structure

My dissertation is structured in three main parts.

The first part sets forth the urban evolution of Kuala Lumpur. Three consecutive chapters narrate the historic origins of different kampung types. These are *Traditional Kampung*, *Malay Reservation Areas* and *New Villages*. This categorisation is necessary because the different types originated at different times and in different contexts. Traditional Kampung (Chapter 1.2.1.) are formerly emergent rural patterns that became residential quarters over time. Malay Reservation Areas (Chapter 1.2.2.) have been established during the years of the rubber boom and reserved for the indigenous Malay people. New Villages (Chapter 1.2.3.) are former resettlement areas established by the British military in the 1950s and are almost exclusively inhabited by Chinese people. This detailed historic account reveals the spatial and social conception of kampungs. To understand the

present context, the focus is extended to the current political situation in Malaysia, the question of ethnicity within a multiracial society, and an explanation of land and ownership laws.

The second part consists of detailed field studies of six kampungs. The present situation of each kampung is described and the spatial and morphologic pattern is analysed in qualitative and quantitative measures. A *Spatial Ontology*, in which key characteristics are outlined, serves as a guideline and framework. Detailed maps and photographic documentation support the research. Each field study concludes with a critical assessment of the kampung's qualities.

The third part highlights recommendations for a further development of kampungs in KL. The findings of the urban evolution from the first part are assessed in combination with the spatial and social analysis from the second part. This approach will reveal that the relation of the residents' values and the kampungs' urban form is a key component in defining urban quality. My dissertation concludes with the notion that the strong contextual qualities of kampungs must be acknowledged more than before. Only profound knowledge and earnest recognition will safeguard the survival of urban kampungs in KL and thus maintaining quality for its residents.

V. Delimitation and Method

Over the years, I have visited and assessed all 22 kampungs within the city limits of Kuala Lumpur and eight more within Greater Kuala Lumpur. Such a large number of kampungs spread over several hundred square kilometres can only be assessed cursorily. In order to begin a thorough study, I concluded that a strict geographical as well as quantitative delimitation is necessary.

My research is limited to kampungs within *Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur* (DBKL), the city's administrative boundary which occupies an area of 243 square kilometres^{28,29,30} DBKL corresponds to the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. This limitation is useful because kampungs within DBKL are exposed to a similar urban context. Quarters within Greater Kuala Lumpur eg, in the Klang Valley, differ significantly in context and structure. Many of these quarters have been transformed beyond recognition because of extensive suburbanisation in the 1970s and 1980s. For that reason, a joint assessment of kampungs within DBKL and kampungs within Greater Kuala Lumpur appeared to be not meaningful. A further limitation is the physical boundary of kampungs. DBKL acknowledges 22 kampungs in KL.^{31,32} Unfortunately, it turned out that this is a rather arbitrary count, motivated by administrative boundaries instead of proper

²⁸ Malaysia (1982a). *Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 (Act 267)*

²⁹ Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³⁰ Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³¹ Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³² Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

historic analysis. Many small kampungs have simply been cumulated into larger areas. For example, DBKL designates Segambut and Gombak as individual kampungs.³³ This is incorrect because both areas boast several small kampungs³⁴ within this administrative jurisdiction. Therefore, the individual character, size and specific context of kampungs is withheld. Consequently, I try to refrain from administrative boundaries. Instead, I relate to the historic context when defining the border of an individual quarter. The other limitation is the quantity of kampungs. For the final field studies I choose two kampungs of each type, six kampungs in total. I intentionally chose kampungs that show a certain variation in size, population, density and condition. My aim was to make the selection as representative as possible. Geographically, the six kampungs chosen are spread over the entire city and not just located in one area.

During numerous visits to Malaysia I noticed a big discrepancy between the actual living conditions of kampung residents and views spread in local newspapers, social media, scholarly writing or by authorities. One cannot help to conclude that kampungs and their residents represent a contested topic in Malaysia and that many biased views obscure fact and fiction. From my observation, the reporting is very often biased towards certain religious or ethnic groups. There are also voices that are clearly biased in favour of certain political parties or groups. This observation has strengthened my standpoint to (a) cross-reference all findings with bibliographic data and (b) only allow findings that are based on multiple resources or voices.

I am very well aware that my research cannot be separated from my Western background. My value system and perception is very different from locals. The reason is cultural and personal filters^{35,36} that let different humans perceive and experience the real world in different ways. This fact can only be met with heightened sensitivity but otherwise needs to be accepted.

My language skills in Bahasa Malay, Bahasa Indonesia or any Chinese dialect for that matter are close to non-existent. Nevertheless, it is no problem to get in close contact with local people. For most of them, English is their second language. For the rare occasions when a translation was necessary, a local resident was able to provide it. Sometimes, taxi drivers were useful translators. Therefore, it was never a problem to communicate and ask questions. I would even make the claim that my outsidership as a foreign observer helped to open doors as I am not suspicious of any agenda. Many residents are aware of the biased views that circle the local media. For that reason they are often careful and sometimes even suspicious of other locals, especially towards representatives of DBKL.

These experiences are the main reason why I decided to refrain from standardised interviews during fieldwork. The colloquial talk at a local *kedai* (shop) or the discussions with family

³³ Table 16.1. In: Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³⁴ See Chapter 2.1.1.

³⁵ Rapoport, Amos (1977). *Human Aspects of Urban Form, Towards a Man-Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*. Oxford : 38

³⁶ Warr, Peter and Knapper, Christopher (1968) *The Perception of People and Events*. London

members in their living room proved to be much more informative and revealing. This method follows the concept of *Active Interview* by James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium.³⁷ With the information obtained, I was able to add further contextual information and interpretation to my analysis of urban space, urban use and urban quality. This method follows the concept of *Thick Description* by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who did his research mainly in the Southeast Asian context.^{38,39}

During my fieldwork, I systematically put key findings in a catalogue called *Spatial Ontology*. This allowed me to sort particulars like structures, elements and values for each of the six kampungs. Furthermore, I was able to extract and examine resulting characteristics for their qualities. This step by step process is comprehensible for any reader and safeguards an unbiased view. Of course, the professional terminology used by a planner and designer will not be understood by a kampung resident. As a consequence, I had to find vocabulary that was colloquial enough to enable informal conversation, yet specific enough to draw conclusions for my research. Kevin Lynch states that theory should be "sufficiently simple, flexible, and divisible that it can be used in rapid, partial decisions, with imperfect information, by lay persons who are the direct users of the places in question."⁴⁰ This notion is reflected in the terminology used for the Spatial Ontology.

A final remark on topicality. I had visited all kampungs in KL as early as March 2008, although I had not started with a proper research. Field studies of the six chosen kampungs only began in 2015 and continued in 2017 through 2019. The last time I visited all six kampungs was in December 2022.

VI. Spatial Ontology

A cursory look at kampungs in KL might not reveal anything interesting. From an architectural point of view there seems not a single structure or space that would make the news. Let alone an architectural guidebook. Everything is simple and at best functional. The sociological outlook appears not overly exciting either. Seen from afar, most residents live on the edge of society, seemingly far away from the dynamics of a modern, urban life. In short, kampungs don't seem to meet any of the standards one would associate with a "World-Class City".⁴¹ Clearly, such a superficial view will lead to marginalisation or, worse, ignorance. This must be avoided. Therefore, kampungs in KL deserve a closer look and especially an acknowledgement of everyday life.

My research shows that the quarters are neither rootless nor isolated objects. Since generations, its

³⁷ Holstein, James and Gubrium, Jaber (2004). *The Active Interview*. In: Silverman, David (ed.) (2004). *Qualitative Research*. London : 143

³⁸ Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York

³⁹ Geertz, Clifford (1983). *Local Knowledge*. New York

⁴⁰ Lynch, Kevin (1981). *A Theory of Good City Form*. Cambridge : 50

⁴¹ Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

residents are an integral part of the dynamic urban evolution of Kuala Lumpur. Most importantly, this evolution is ongoing. The present condition of urban kampungs cannot be derived from theoretical considerations or abstract concepts alone. It requires the analysis of specific examples. Thus, six concrete field studies have been identified to comprehend the present situation and to unveil similarities and differences. The aim of the field studies is to detect, describe and assess spatial qualities in urban kampungs. Such qualities are contextual, meaning they are bound to time and place. They always depend on concrete situations. Urban quality is difficult to measure or quantify. But it can be detected by building up precise observations, assessments and conclusions. For that reason, I developed a comprehensive and transparent framework for the field studies called *Spatial Ontology*. It allowed me to document and describe my observations of concrete situations, reflect on conversations with residents and draw conclusions based on the interpretation of findings. This is achieved by setting out a narrative of the existing elements and values in order to detect specific characteristics and finally understand the unique qualities of each kampung. The Spatial Ontology is my framework for the field studies. It is structured along three main categories, *Structure*, *Potential* and *Appropriation*.

1 Structure

Observations

- 1.1 Spatial Structure
Surrounding, Topography, Settlement Pattern
- 1.2 Scale of Elements
Buildings, Streets, Open Space, Coherent Clusters

Characteristics

- 1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity
Conciseness, Balance or Imbalance of Structure and Elements, Readability
- 1.4 Atmosphere
Relationship of Subject and Object

2 Potential

Observations

- 2.1 Predominant Building Typology
Condition, Use, Occupancy
- 2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants
Ethnicity, Income, Cohesion

Characteristics

- 2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants
Social Network and Social Mobility, Sense of Belonging
- 2.4 Space of Opportunities
Surprise and Unpredictability, Transformation, Coincidence, Accessibility

3 Appropriation

Observations

- 3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

Use, Coherent Clusters, Transitional Space

3.2 Ambivalence

External and Internal Conflict, Tolerance and Intolerance

Characteristics

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

Efficient Use, Sustainable Practise, Everyday

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

Participation, Coexistence

Structure contains a detailed description of the kampung's spatial composition. How is it embedded in the city? Is there a formal pattern? Is the quarter visually simple or complex? How are structure and elements related with each other? What is the perceived atmosphere?

Potential links the built environment with the residents. What types of buildings and what kind of people can be found? What is the level of integration and how do residents interact with their environment? What kind of features are unique and which ones prove to be a hindrance?

Appropriation traces how spaces and elements are used within the daily routine of residents. What kind of interaction can be observed? Are there conflicting issues? How do residents associate with formal and informal space? What is the level of activity in the kampung?

Because of their dynamic nature, a narrow separation of these categories is not desired. Some items might be described in greater detail than others, allowing for a nuanced observation within a specific context. Each category begins with unbiased *observations* eg, the scale of elements, the building typology or the description of open space. Then, my focus shifts to the *characteristics* of the kampung eg, the visual complexity, the atmosphere, the level of activity or inactivity. A brief summary concludes each field study.

The Spatial Ontology is not intended to be an exercise of completeness or quantitative perfection. It is a rather austere eyewitness report. The focus is on the spatial reality of the kampung, not on the abstraction of eg, a map. Of course, site plans, figure-ground plans and photographs are necessary to complete the description of kampung space. These items are referenced and compiled in an addendum called *Atlas*. It is recommended to use it in parallel to reading the text.

Theoretical Discourse

1. Kampung

In the Malay language, kampung means *village* as physical and administrative entity, as well as *community* in a social sense. The word kampung has been elaborated widely, particularly from a pictorial, historical, etymological and urban planning perspective.

The first signification is pictorial. Kampung are made up of traditional wooden houses on stilts surrounded by fruit trees. Nearby is a surau—an Islamic prayer house—and paddy fields adjacent to a creek.⁴² The graphic novel 'Kampung Boy',⁴³ published since 1979 by Mohammed Nor Khalid (Lat) is a perfect example of this notion. In Malaysia, the widely published novel is very popular, especially as a cartoon and an animated TV series. Every child in Malaysia is growing up with this very notion of a kampung. Thus, the word kampung anticipates a specific *image*. The fact that this image does not always come close to reality is rather insignificant.

Historically, "the word kampung carries the impression of a rural settlement dominated by Malays and practicing a rural way of life in many social and economic aspects."⁴⁴ This historicised notion "include[s] owning land, practicing rural work such as growing rice or vegetables, tapping rubber, and keeping chickens and other farm-related work. Rural social values for Malays include kin related, close neighbourhood, gotong royong (working together), and tolong menolong (mutual help)."⁴⁵ Therefore, the kampung of the past is much more than just built form. It is a concept that is associated with a lifestyle guided by social values. Today, this notion is sometimes used to sociological excessiveness. "In a sense the kampung is the womb of the Malay body and soul that will always bring the Malays back home; to their kampung".⁴⁶

Although and undoubtedly a flowery exaggeration, this view points to the etymological meaning of kampung, which is 'grouping' or 'gathering together'. It is reflected in the commonly used Malay term 'balik kampung' which translates 'returning to the village'. The expression is colloquially used during religious festivals and vacation times to express that people travel back to their families or simply return to their home town. Over time, the term has lost its original meaning as people do not necessarily return to the countryside. Today, one does 'balik kampung' to visit parents or relatives anywhere in Malaysia, even in the city.

In the field of urban planning, the term kampung often equates to a village in a rural area. However, this can be misleading because there is evidence of countless urban kampungs. For

⁴² Jackson, James C. (1968). *Planters and Speculators. Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786-1921*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴³ Khalid, Mohammed Nor bin Mohammad (1979). *The Kampung Boy*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁴ Ghazali, Suriati (2012) *Sense of Place and the Politics of 'Insider-ness' in Villages Undergoing Transition: The Case of City Kampung on Penang Island*. In: Bunnell, Tim and Parthasarathy, D. and Thompson, Eric C. (eds.) (2013). *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia*. Dordrecht : 122

⁴⁵ Ibid. : 129

⁴⁶ Goneng, Awang (2007). *Growing up in Trengganu*. Singapore

example, it can be observed that all kampungs within Kuala Lumpur have matured to residential quarters that demonstrate urban characteristics. Kampungs are part of the urban network of the contemporary city and are distinctly different in form and character compared to other residential areas. Therefore, I strongly suggest to refrain from the general notion of using the terms kampung and village synonymously, especially in the context of KL.

In colloquial Malay, the term kampung has an underlying contestation. The adjective kampung is often used for something or somebody being local, of low esteem or simply remained behind. This connotation is an echo of Mohamad Mahathir's influential yet highly controversial book 'The Malay Dilemma',⁴⁷ first published in 1970. Initially, the book was banned in Malaysia and only available in Singapore. Today, it can be found in almost every bookstore in Malaysia. At the time of writing, Mahathir was a young ambitious politician who later became Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003 and again from 2018 to 2020. His book can be regarded as an early political agenda, arguing for the modernisation of the Malay people, who have been left behind since British colonisation. Mahathir sets off by differentiating between "town Malays" and "kampong Malays"⁴⁸ and therefore sees the kampung itself and its resident's backward lifestyle as a key reason that hinders Malays to catch up with economic and social development. More so, as cities are more "complex" in their organisation, they make "urban dwellers sharper and more knowledgeable."⁴⁹ A key component of Mahathir's political strategy in the 1970s and 1980s was to modernise and therefore urbanise the Malay society. "The aim should be not so much to employ them [the Malays] permanently, as to accustom them to do work other than planting padi and to urbanise them."⁵⁰ By this definition, living in a kampung was a hindrance for successful development. Without understanding its deeper characteristics, the kampung was stigmatised with "backwardness". The long lasting repercussions of such political exertion should not be underestimated. Regional, rural and urban planning agendas are strongly influenced by this. Incriminating evidence provides Suharto, former President of Indonesia, who ill-treated the term kampung (or *kampong*) in a similar fashion.⁵¹

Ronald Provencher, an anthropologist, had the courage for a more detailed look. His research of the social organisation of kampungs in Malaysia disproves Mahathir's constructed and virulent connotation of primitive kampung residents. Provencher's work was published at around the same time, in 1971, but went largely unnoticed. In his comparative research 'Two Malay Worlds: Interaction in Urban and Rural Settings'⁵² he contends that although Malay kampungs maintain several significant traditional values, they depend on an economic lifecycle that is "urban in

⁴⁷ Mahathir, bin Mohamad (1970). *The Malay Dilemma*. Singapore

⁴⁸ Ibid. : 40

⁴⁹ Ibid. : 105

⁵⁰ Ibid. : 138

⁵¹ King, Anthony D. (2004). *Spaces of Global Cultures - Architecture Urbanism Identity*. London : 61

⁵² Provencher, Ronald (1971). *Two Malay Worlds: Interaction in Urban and Rural Settings*. Berkeley

character".⁵³ Kampung, Provencher argues, have been urbanised all along, especially the ones in proximity of larger cities eg, Kuala Lumpur. Consequently, kampungs and their residents had been an active part of the urbanisation process. They are not primitive villages surrounded by urbanity but rather adapted and connected quarters within urbanised areas. This corresponds with my own findings on eg, Segambut Dalam or Datuk Keramat.

A research by sociologist Hans-Dieter Evers, published in 1977, discusses in great detail the difference between Malay and Chinese conceptions of space.⁵⁴ Evers points out that these different conceptions will be "difficult to alter even if the underlying socio-economic system changes. This poses a dilemma."⁵⁵ His findings clearly doubt Mahathir's straightforward modernisation-equals-urbanisation approach, especially if the attitude in urban planning is a simple copy and paste application of Western and Chinese planning models as done in Malaysia since independence. In his concluding argument Evers proposes the development of strategies "in which Malay conceptions of space are translated into urban planning".⁵⁶ Because the traditional Malay kampung is based on Malay conceptions of space, it is not the kampung that needs to subordinate to the urban modernisation process. The kampung rather bears potential for the future of the city. Unfortunately, in 1977, his proposition remained unheard.

The kampungs we see in today's cityscape differ in terms of development, location, size, occupancy, density and condition. But despite this variety, kampungs can be classified according to types. My research confirms that the specific historic origin defines three different types of kampungs. First, *Traditional Kampungs*, formerly emergent rural patterns that became residential quarters over time. Second, *Malay Reservation Areas*, established during the years of the rubber boom and reserved for the indigenous Malay people. Third, *Chinese New Villages*, former resettlement areas established by the British military in the 1950s and until today inhabited by Chinese people. It is surprising that my approach of narrating the urban evolution of KL with the help of kampungs was never done before. The idea of the specific historic origin frames the "in-situ urbanisation"⁵⁷ of kampungs to the present day. Clearly, kampungs within the KL conurbation cannot be separated from the waves of urbanisation. Some of them might be trapped in a tradition of Malay heritage and kinship⁵⁸ and some of them might have "the body of a village, the mind of a city".⁵⁹ But overall, they are crucial elements within the development of KL and they are in a state of perpetual transformation. It is important to stress that this transformation has not ended and will not end.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Evers, Hans-Dieter (1977). *The Culture of Malaysian Urbanization - Malay and Chinese Conceptions of Space*. Bielefeld

⁵⁵ Ibid. : 13

⁵⁶ Ibid. : 14

⁵⁷ Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - In-Situ Urbanization of Villages and their Land around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore

⁵⁸ Goh, Beng-Lan (2002). *Modern Dreams: An Inquiry into Power, Cultural Production and the Cityscape in Contemporary Urban Penang, Malaysia*. Ithaca

⁵⁹ Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - In-Situ Urbanization of Villages and their Land around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore : 157

Eric Thompson argues "Kampungs are socially urban spaces, in so far as the lived experience of their residents largely conforms to characteristics of social life typically figured as 'urban'."⁶⁰ This notion reflects the 'everyday life' in most kampungs in KL quite well. Similarly, Sophie Wolfrum and Alban Janson conclude "It is not only about the prestige spaces of an urban society and those intended for special events, but also about the spaces of everyday life."⁶¹ In order to further comprehend kampung space it is necessary to conceptualise the *everyday*.

2. Everyday

Michel de Certeau's treatise 'The Practice of Everyday Life'⁶² remains an inspirational edifice of ideas. Remarkable is his comprehension and observation of the "use" and "practice" of place. He begins by stating "the ordinary man becomes the narrator, when it is he who defines the (common) place of discourse and the (anonymous) space of its development."⁶³ De Certeau places the individual at the centre and develops his spatial theory from there. How is this space defined and developed?

One of de Certeau's primary concerns and basis for his observation on place and space is the differentiation between "strategies" of the producers of (urban) space and the "tactics" of the consumers of (urban) space. "A tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power."⁶⁴ In essence, this duality is about a power struggle in which strategies and tactics correspond, nevertheless depend on each other over time.

My dissertation shows that most kampungs have been established under the primacy of *strategic* considerations. This surprising outcome will be explained along the historic evolution of three different kampung types. For now, I will only give brief examples of such strategic considerations.

Most *Traditional Kampungs* were self-built agricultural communities. But the peasants were only allowed to dwell within the prescribed sphere of a local ruler's influence. Consequently, every community was depending on a ruler's strategic decision. *Malay Reservation Areas* were born out of a strategic form of land allocation. When the colonial government saw the need to overcome an imbalance in land ownership among different ethnic groups, it started to allocate land to ethnic Malays only. The strategic consideration for the allocation was to safeguard the supply of local food production in order to keep colonial power in checks. *Chinese New Villages* started off as resettlement areas planned by British army engineers during the period of Malay emergency.

⁶⁰ Thompson, Eric (2004). *Rural Villages as Socially Urban Spaces in Malaysia*. Urban Studies, Volume 41, Number 12

⁶¹ Wolfrum, Sophie and Janson, Alban (2019). *The City as Architecture*. Basel : 12

⁶² Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley

⁶³ Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : 5

⁶⁴ Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : 38

Their purpose was to isolate rural Chinese people from communist guerrilla fighters. Actually, New Villages were internment camps with tight entry and exit controls. Thus, the reason for resettlement was not finding homes for people but fighting an invisible enemy. In this regard, it becomes clear that most kampungs were formed by using a strategic model of "political, economic, and scientific rationality".⁶⁵

In contrast, everyday practices are *tactical* in character and are able to undermine the authority of the *strategic* producers of place. Applied to the context of urban kampungs one can detect that although the initial establishment of a place is based on dominance and power, it has continuously been undermined by the practiced or lived experience of its users. Today, some of the strategic foundations of different kampung types might not be valid anymore. But as part of the historic geneses these foundations are still relevant and real. For example, older residents of Chinese New Villages are very much aware of its troubled origin as internment camps. These memories are part of their everyday life and prevail in their routines.

Over the years, new strategies with new political agendas have been established. The tactical practices of residents with differing interests and desires demanded for adjustment. In perspective, this perpetual adjustment is a form of resilience and results in liveable spaces containing new connections inside and outside the kampung. Some practices are not enduring due to changing contexts. Others are lasting because they rely on formal economic or social structures. Local recycling businesses or schools are good examples of these lasting activities eg, in Air Panas.⁶⁶ In addition, new forms of media and communication reach beyond these local practises and offer entirely new experiences. Video-calls, online transfer of remittance, or mobility on demand are examples how the experience of the everyday is expanding continuously. This has especially changed the lives of expatriate workers, who keep contact with their families in eg, Indonesia, Myanmar or Bangladesh. A notion that Doreen Massey describes as the "global sense of place".⁶⁷

Within De Certeau's differentiation of strategy and tactic lies a further distinction. It is the differentiation between place (*lieu*) and space (*espace*). "A place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. [...]"

A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability."⁶⁸ Hence, place is characterised as a static, functional and representative framework. This rather rigid notion incorporates the opportunity to understand the fundamental idea of space. In contrast to place, "space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of

⁶⁵ Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : xix

⁶⁶ See: Chapter 2.3.2.

⁶⁷ Massey, Doreen (1994). *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis

⁶⁸ Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : 117

conflictual programs or contractual proximities."⁶⁹ In this sense, space never exists by itself. It has to be created by the movement and actions of its users. The urban roam is a relationship of stationaries and practise.

The various mobile hawkers that populate the streets make good examples of this "spatial production".⁷⁰ It is interesting to observe that they engage in different ways. One group of hawkers can be found at the same location over time. In order to sell their foods, they rely on the movement and routine of their customers. Conversely, the customers rely on the hawkers to occupy the same location. Another group of hawkers is constantly moving around because the circumstances to sell foods eg, time of the day, type of offerings or traffic flow, continuously change. They expanded their range of activity because they cannot passively rely on the activity of their customers. Both groups of hawkers create their own space and in the end, all hawkers and all customers meet in a relational manner. All are engaged, although on different levels of activity. These practices show that there is not one single space but an infinite number, as "there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences."⁷¹

These dualities can be witnessed on several occasions. Entering a Malay Reservation Area, one is often surprised by the laid-back and mundane lifestyle of Malay residents. A superficial conclusion might draw this solely to the relaxed Malay culture. But from my experience, this would be a gross misinterpretation. The relaxed attitude is a result of 'strategic' cornerstones of the political reality. Malay Reservation Areas are protected by legal and administrative guardrails that allow for eg, guaranteed land allocation for Malay residents. This has a huge impact on the everyday. Simply put, it is relaxing to live in a protected environment because pressure from eg, the real estate market is taken away. However, it must be stressed that such 'protective' mechanisms are by no means exhaustive and only true for certain kampungs. In addition, kampung space is transformative and never safe from change. In most areas the everyday is not an effortless condition, it is rather a constant struggle that has to be fought for daily, once again. Kampungs are spaces in which "the revolutions of history, economic mutations, demographic mixtures lie in layers within it, and remain there, hidden in customs, rites, and spatial practices."⁷²

We can see now that the often invisible context of historic, political and economic relations has a strong impact on the practice of social space.⁷³ Similarly, human space does not just relate to physical space but is enriched with cultural or symbolic meaning. In summary, the notion of the everyday is securing the grounds for all human activities. It helps us to anticipate the resulting patterns of individual spatial practice. This practise can be documented and is as important as the analysis of buildings, streets or topographic conditions, to name a few. "An everyday urbanism has

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Lefebvre, Henri (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford

⁷¹ Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : 118

⁷² Certeau, Michel de (1984). *The Practise of Everyday Life*. Berkeley : 201

⁷³ Gottdiener, Mark (1985). *The Social Production of Urban Space*. Austin

to get into the intermesh between flesh and stone, humans and non-humans, fixtures and flows, emotions and practices."⁷⁴ This approach entails a final and important question. How do we qualitatively assess the multifarious conditions of kampung space?

3. Quality

Entering a kampung in KL by car, motorbike or on foot is a similar experience to entering any other neighbourhood. We come across streets and houses, small eateries and shops, all populated and used by folks of various social and ethnic backgrounds. However, there is a profound difference when having arrived, a phenomenon which is difficult to explain. Being inside a kampung feels different from being outside a kampung. Where does this distinction come from? And how can we concretise this rather indistinct observation?

On this view, Christian Norberg-Schulz' conception of the "concrete environmental character"⁷⁵ of place is a useful resource. He emphasises that "character is determined by how things are" and "gives our investigation a basis in the concrete phenomena of our everyday lifeworld."⁷⁶ Character is determined by two components. First, the composition of all elements of a place and second, our own actions. Thus, the determination of a place involves the question how we and everybody around us interact with the environment. Clearly, character is not an abstract idea, but the concrete *modus vivendi* that makes each place meaningful or special. Above all, "the character of a place is a function of time",⁷⁷ meaning it is subject to constant change and adaptation.

Norberg-Schulz continues "similar spatial organizations may possess very different characters according to the concrete treatment of the space-defining elements".⁷⁸ This evokes the individual treatment of the environment of which the diverse and colourful symbolism of Muslim-Malay, Confucian-Chinese and Hindu-Indian worship in Malaysia is a very powerful example. Architectural elements like mosques or temples display this symbolism clearly and visibly. The same is true for temporary street decorations during festivities that highlight the predominant confession of residents. But there are also less obvious elements that require more diligent attention. For example, most private houses display small altars for personal prayers or discreet pictorial elements that indicate a preferred deity or avatar. For people in the know, the small wood carving of Lord Ganesha above the entrance door marks a Hindu household.⁷⁹ Despite being personal intimations, these elements reach out to the public space and as a consequence, urban space is enriched with an all-embracing and distinct character. It is this very character that

⁷⁴ Amin, Ash and Thrift, Nigel (2002). *Cities - Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge : 9

⁷⁵ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 5

⁷⁶ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 10

⁷⁷ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 14

⁷⁸ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 11

⁷⁹ However, it is perfectly fine if a Bangladeshi father, a Muslim, enters the gate of a Hindu house. In Figure P-12-25 and Chapter 2.1.2., a detailed explanation will be given.

allows residents to *identify* with their environment. For an outsider, a Chinese New Village and a Malay Reservation Area might look very similar. But to its residents, their character is completely different. Norberg-Schulz expands this notion of character to "environmental quality"⁸⁰ and argues that the totality of characteristics of a place includes human values like identity. He proposes that "in our context identification means to become friends with a particular environment."⁸¹ Although we might not fully grasp the total character of a place we are able to sense its environmental quality. Or, nuances thereof. This explains why being inside a kampung feels different from being outside a kampung, even through Western eyes. However, in order to fully understand a place we need to dig further.

According to Kevin Lynch, the spatial qualities of a place are closely related to "the attributes of identity and structure".⁸² Both attributes give us a feeling of security, a characteristic that Lynch calls imageability or, plainly, legibility. I will add that without assessing the total character of a place we will not fully understand or detect its quality. This is not necessarily a bad thing because this notion prevents us from a rash predetermination of *desired* instead of *actual* urban quality.

The following example helps to illustrate. A common feature of kampungs is the overcrowded condition of some houses. There are two reasons for this. One, extended families living under one roof, and two, migrant workers sharing accommodation. In any textbook approach overcrowding would not be considered a quality. However, this condition is part of the total character of the kampung. In the first example, the cultural particulars of traditional families suggest a life under one roof until marriage. Living together is not only accepted but valued as a social norm. The condition is therefore not unusual nor unwanted. In the second example, a migrant worker might value the crowded condition of his accommodation because it offers social binding and economic opportunity.⁸³ Therefore, the *contextual* condition of crowdedness clearly belongs to the fundamental and actual qualities of a kampung. Lynch summarises this notion rather bluntly. "The acts and thoughts of human beings are the final ground for judging quality."⁸⁴ Thus, any judgement needs to consider human values and settlement form in a *relational* sense, an approach that I have been following in my field studies.

Urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur are fascinating study objects. They seem to rely on a continuous transformation and adaptation process in order to survive. This notion is reminiscent to 'strategic sites',⁸⁵ or global cities, that get tossed around by large forces. Similarly, kampungs are equally exposed to internal and external dynamics. Any intervention will affect the close-knit relations between structures, elements and values. This can go both ways. Changes of the built

⁸⁰ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 19f

⁸¹ Norberg-Schulz, Christian (1979). *Genius Loci - Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York : 21

⁸² Lynch, Kevin (1960). *The Image of the City*. Cambridge : 9

⁸³ See: Saunders, Doug (2010). *Arrival City*. New York, for a general overview on this topic.

⁸⁴ Lynch, Kevin (1981). *A Theory of Good City Form*. Cambridge : 49

⁸⁵ Sassen, Saskia (2000). *The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier*. American Studies, Volume 41, Number 2-3

form can cause drastic changes in the social structure of a place. The addition of modern market halls in some kampungs eg, Datuk Keramat, has clearly shown that the characteristics of the new building is unfit for its context.^{86,87} The *relationship* between residents and intervention, even a well-intended one, is lastingly disturbed. As a result, spatial quality is lost.

This proves that the quest for urban quality is of primary concern. Lynch calls for a *learning ecology*, a rather fragile elixir that needs constant nourishment in order to be effective. "The good city is one in which the continuity of this complex ecology is maintained while progressive change is permitted."⁸⁸ Therefore, it is crucial to understand which parts in this intricate puzzle safeguard continuity and which parts allow for change.

⁸⁶ Zhin, Choong Mek (2013). *Mini UTC for Keramat Mall Minister hopes it will bring crowd to new establishment*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 12 June 2013

⁸⁷ Augustin, Robert (2016). *Keramat Mall far from thriving*. Free Malaysia Today, 29 October 2016. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/10/29/keramat-mall-far-from-thriving

⁸⁸ Lynch, Kevin (1981). *A Theory of Good City Form*. Cambridge : 116

Part One

Urban Development of Kuala Lumpur

1.1. Context

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia contains the region east of India, south of China and north of Australia. The region subdivides in Mainland Southeast Asia and Maritime Southeast Asia and consists of the countries: Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Together, these countries have an area of close to 4.5 million square kilometres and a population of close to 656 million people.⁸⁹ The individual countries contain diverse geographical regions, ethnic compositions and cultural histories. Above all, urbanised areas contain heterogeneous communities with varied political, economic and social contexts.

Among their major differences are the forms of government (Republic, Parliamentary, Socialist, Monarchy, mostly a mix of these), religion (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and others), colonial background (British, Dutch, French, American or none), geography (mainland, maritime, island) and population size (from less than 500,000 in Brunei to 270 million in Indonesia). The countries differ substantially in their demographic composition and socio-economic status. The exemplary values of purchasing power parity (PPP) and population density are representative for this difference. For example, the PPP in US dollar for Cambodia is 4,422, Indonesia 12,073, Malaysia 27,924, Singapore 98,520, Thailand 18,233 and Vietnam 8,650. The population density in people per square kilometre of land area for Cambodia is 95, Indonesia 146, Malaysia 99, Singapore 8019, Thailand 137 and Vietnam 314.⁹⁰

The group of countries show similarities by containing multiracial and multi-religious societies. The dominance of few but very large urban centres eg, Bangkok in Thailand, Jakarta in Indonesia, Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam or Manila in the Philippines is another resemblance. One can also notice that *mega-urban regions*⁹¹ in between larger cities often spread over wide-ranging areas eg, on Java Island in Indonesia, the Mekong Delta in Vietnam or the Klang Valley in Malaysia. In recent decades, mega-urban regions have shown rapid urban growth, propelled by the mechanisms of globally connected economies. However, notwithstanding certain similarities, significant regional differences can be recognised. In order to understand the dynamism which lead to 'divergent patterns of urbanization'⁹² of Southeast Asia, I will outline (1) the historical background for the diverse regions, (2) the main dynamics of development during colonisation, (3) the background of fast urban growth after the colonial period and (4) the specific phenomenon of *desakota* regions.

⁸⁹ World Bank (2022). *Countries and Economies*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/country>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ McGee, T. G. and Robinson, Ira M. (eds.) (1995). *The Mega-Urban Regions of Southeast Asia*. Vancouver

⁹² Ginsburg, Norton and Koppel, Bruce (eds.) (1991). *The Extended Metropolis - Settlement Transition in Asia*. Honolulu

Diverse Regions

Early on, Southeast Asia was a critical part of global trade activities. Traders from Arabia, Africa, Persia and Southern India travelled through the region on their way to China. This resulted in a strong influence of Indian and Chinese cultural spheres before the 13th century CE. Aside from various indigenous belief systems, Hinduism and Buddhism were the main religious beliefs in the region.⁹³ The boundaries of states and empires were loosely defined and subject to constant change. There were political and cultural heartlands but not necessarily clearly defined state peripheries. Urbanisation was therefore an important indicator for the region's development and expansion of power. Funan and Champa, the mythical Buddhist and Hindu empires were such early powers, located in today's Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. At the same time evolved Salakanagara, a large Hindu empire in West Java. Intensifying trade relations between India and China were crucial in forming entrepôt city states which fell under different cultural and political influence over time.⁹⁴

Around 450 BCE, trade routes changed and the advancement of ship development and navigation enabled the rise of the Maritime states in Southeast Asia. "Malay seamen developed an all maritime route that bypassed both the Malay peninsula and Funan, slipping instead through the Strait of Melaka."⁹⁵ As a result, the empires of Mainland Southeast Asia suffered. Srivijaya, a Malay Buddhist empire based on the island of Sumatra, evolved as a dominant hegemonic power. In its prime it included areas of today's Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Weakened by invasions from Indian Chola tribes, Srivijaya declined and slowly broke down into regional kingdoms.

From the 10th century onwards, Arab maritime traders introduced Islam to many areas, especially to Sumatra and to the Malay archipelago. The king of Kedah, Phra Ong Mahawangsa, became the first ruler to renounce Hindu traditions and converted to Islam. In 1136, the Sultanate of Kedah in today's Malaysia was established as the first Muslim dynasty in Southeast Asia. "By the thirteenth century, the involvement of East Asia in world trade had grown extensively and all of the states of the region, north and south, were engaged in it. Political activity had increased greatly, especially in Southeast Asia where new forces continued to cohere."⁹⁶ With intensified maritime trade activity, Melaka, founded in 1402 by Parameswara, became the centre of Islamic study and other rulers followed its example. In Mainland Southeast Asia the Buddhist Pagan Empire in today's Myanmar and the Hindu-Buddhist Khmer Empire in today's Cambodia and Thailand emerged as dominant powers between the 11th and 13th century CE. Both were prime examples of large urban 'ceremonial centres'⁹⁷ that combined political, economic and social functions.

⁹³ Feldbauer, Peter and Husa, Karl and Korff, Rüdiger (eds.) (2003). *Südostasien - Gesellschaften, Räume und Entwicklung im 20. Jahrhundert*. Wien

⁹⁴ Cohen, Warren I. (2000). *East Asia at the Center - Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World*. New York : 61

⁹⁵ Ibid. : 58

⁹⁶ Ibid. : 127

⁹⁷ Stark, Miriam T. (2015). *Southeast Asian urbanism: from early city to Classical state*. In: Yoffee, Norman (ed.) (2015). *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 bce–1200 ce*. Cambridge

Until the 15th century, three main patterns of urbanisation can be recognised throughout Southeast Asia.⁹⁸ The first were the commercial cities which represented the centres for trade and exchange. These cities were mostly located along the seashore or river mouths as ships were the main means of transportation. An urban society made up of a multiethnic population inhabited a heterogeneous city structure with diverse forms of living, architectures, and neighbourhoods. Traders from Arabia, India and China met in these entrepôt cities to conduct business. Many of them settled and assimilated through intermarriage with locals. The livelihood of the commercial cities was based on a constant and stable form of trade. Melaka, with its location directly on the Strait of Malacca and Makassar on peninsular Sulawesi, today's Indonesia, were the most prominent examples. Others were Syriam and Mottama in today's Myanmar. Palembang was located on the Musi River during the Srivijaya empire and Surabaya on the island of Java. The second were sacred cities which can mostly be found in the interiors of a state, kingdom or sultanate. These cities "served multiple functions [...] but formed the ritual / ceremonial core of their respective polities".⁹⁹ Their importance was based on a local ruler's transcend powers and its religious or cultural ideology was tightly bound to the legitimisation of rule. Often, these places were venues for ritual, secular and public performance accompanied by architectures of representation to visualise the dominance of a ruler or culture. Ankor, the centre of the Khmer Empire was a prime example of such a city. Other examples were the Pyu city-states in the Irrawaddy Valley which later became the spiritual centre of the Pagan Empire. The third urbanisation pattern was made up of small or medium sized towns of local importance. These were regional nodes, serving the other two categories as support and supply centres. Often, these towns were within the influence and conurbation of larger cities. All three patterns were tightly interwoven. The profit of the trade activity of the commercial cities was shared with the sacred cities. These in return supplied the commercial cities with agricultural products, mainly rice, of which the rulers generated their main income. The smaller towns served both, depending on their location and capability.

Regrettably, these early cities "have left a faint archaeological signature and offer little direct evidence of urban morphology."¹⁰⁰ But it still becomes evident that a unique and diverse urban culture had been established in Southeast Asia, influenced and shaped by geographic, cultural and religious peculiarities.

Colonisation

In the 16th century, European discoveries extended and modified the global maritime trade system of which Southeast Asia was an important component. Primary interest of European

⁹⁸ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London

⁹⁹ Stark, Miriam T. (2015). *Southeast Asian urbanism: from early city to Classical state*. In: Yoffee, Norman (ed.) (2015). *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 bce–1200 ce*. Cambridge : 85

¹⁰⁰ Stark, Miriam T. (2015). *Southeast Asian urbanism: from early city to Classical state*. In: Yoffee, Norman (ed.) (2015). *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 bce–1200 ce*. Cambridge : 77

traders was the direct control of the spice trade instead of relying on unknown middlemen and routes along the Silk Road. The development of superior ships and armour made the Europeans successful dominators of the sea routes between Europe and Asia. The profit margins of the first Portuguese spice traders who managed to sail with their own fleets was, at least initially, staggering.¹⁰¹ As a consequence, the Portuguese in 1511 conquered Melaka to secure a trading post. At the time, Melaka was a cosmopolitan entrepôt city which was not relying on goods to export from a nearby hinterland, but on the concentration of trade volume that passed through its harbour and the Strait of Malacca. This unique setting was identified and used by the Portuguese to control and secure trade routes between Asia and Europe. In this first phase of colonisation, the Europeans were not interested in a territorial control of land. This only happened later when commodities were exploit for the sole purpose of export.

Other European nations followed the example of the Portuguese. By the end of the 16th century the Spanish began to colonise the Philippines. In the 17th century the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established the Dutch East Indies with Batavia as its commercial centre and conquered Makassar with the help of the Bugis. The French took possession of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to establish French Indochina. Finally, the British began to form the Strait Settlements on the Malay Peninsula¹⁰² and proclaimed control over most of Burma. By the 19th century, all Southeast Asian countries were colonised except for Siam, today's Thailand.

The trading posts under European control quickly extended beyond their initial size and significance. Growing demand for ship building material (especially timber) and food supplies for a growing population lead to a first expansion of activity. The Europeans were forced to deal with local communities which marked the beginnings of territorial control. One such example is Batavia from where the Dutch extended control over West Java where rice was grown and timber cut. This development stimulated a second wave of expansion in which private investors, mostly Chinese and European immigrants, started to cultivate non-indigenous cash crops eg. coffee, tea, cacao or tobacco.¹⁰³ The final expansion came with the advent of industrialisation that spurred the large-scale export of commodities and the expansion of built infrastructure. Furthermore, thousands and thousands of workers who immigrated mostly from China and India were needed in the tin mines of Malaya, the vast rubber plantations of Malaya,¹⁰⁴ Vietnam and Cambodia, the opium, salt and rice fields of the Mekong Delta in French Indochina, and the rice plantations in the Irrawaddy River delta in Burma. Moreover, "colonial headquarters turned into real centres of commerce and administration"¹⁰⁵ which favoured urban and rural development that was driven by economic rather than social processes. Administrative control mainly involved the forced

¹⁰¹ Feldbauer, Peter (2005). *Die Portugiesen in Asien. 1498-1620*. Essen

¹⁰² Cohen, Warren I. (2000). *East Asia at the Center - Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World*. New York

¹⁰³ See Chapter 1.2.2.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 1.2.3.

¹⁰⁵ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London

integration of inland territories and regulation of immigration. The consequences were deep and long-lasting.

Despite the universal policy of divide and rule, the political and administrative structure of European colonisation was very different in detail. Depending on regional contexts, different systems of colonisation were used to exercise power. For example, in Birma the local kingdom was dissolved by the British whereas in Malaya, the Sultans kept their positions to frame an indirect form of local governance. Today's administrative and legislative structures are still influenced by this legacy leading to significant inequalities in the ethnic and sociocultural development of Southeast Asian societies. With colonialism, Southeast Asia inherited a common, yet diverse historical experience of non-native urbanisation.

Urban Growth

After the Second World War, all countries in Southeast Asia gradually gained independence. In 1950, the combined urban population in Southeast Asia was around 15 per cent¹⁰⁶ which suggests that the countries had predominantly rural characteristics. No city had more than 600,000 inhabitants. Indonesia and the Philippines started as democratic states, but both experienced military overthrows resulting in long-term dictatorships. Malaysia and Singapore started as a Federation but separated in 1965 after ethnic tensions. In 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional platform for political and economic cooperation, was established. A first wave of urbanisation seized the region, although with very different dynamics and intensity, depending on administrative structure or political stability. Rural to urban migration, especially the voluntary in-migration to cities in search for employment was the predominant pattern. Until the 1970s the region was plagued by the Vietnam War with repercussions on especially Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, where communist regimes supported rural rather than urban development.

In the rest of Southeast Asia, urbanisation became an important indicator of progress and modernisation. New industrial sites were established in port cities, using existing infrastructure and service networks in order to take up export oriented businesses of the past. The capital cities of Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok turned their focus to nation building, manifested in modern architecture and symbols of national identity. The Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta or the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur are not only religious manifestations but modernist architectures of self-confidence and national pride.

Urban growth continued in market economies like Malaysia. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand followed suit but with more complex socio-economic challenges and consequences. Informal work, sub-standard housing, low levels of services and poverty, among others, were the flip side of hasty developments. The resulting fragmentation of the urban landscapes in Southeast

¹⁰⁶ United Nations (2018). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*. New York

Asia featured the close proximity of industrial sites and marginalised islands of informal settlements, so-called squatters. These issues defined the United Nations Conference on Human Settlement HABITAT 1 in Vancouver in 1976, seeking for a global consensus on the future of urbanisation with a focus on residential development. Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta were drowned in uncontrolled sprawl and congestion due to low levels of administrative control.¹⁰⁷ Among the ASEAN only Singapore and Malaysia had tightly regulated urban development policies.

The era of capitalist globalisation coincided with the irrevocable belief that cities are "control centres of the global economy".¹⁰⁸ Scholarly attention turned to world cities and emphasised the mechanisms of growing trade relations, infrastructure investments, technology transfer and the spatial organisation of the division of labour.^{109,110} The global shift of manufacturing industries to Southeast Asia was a crucial part of this development and Singapore was at the very forefront of it. The autocratic city state transformed into a centre for the electronics industry and a global node of financial services. Infrastructure hubs for container shipment and air transport completed the global aspirations. Between the early 1960s and 1990s, the so-called *Asian Tigers* Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan underwent rapid industrialisation and maintained exceptionally high economic growth rates. The four countries replaced Japan as low-cost producers of the global economy. Their success became highly influential in ASEAN since their acquired wealth allowed heavy direct investments in the regions natural resources and commodities, at the same time relying on cheap labour resources for industrial production. This can be observed in the state of Johor in Malaysia and the Riau Islands of Indonesia, where the economic strength of Singapore dictates the urban development of industrial sites, commercial developments and infrastructure facilities. The Singapore Johor Riau (SIJORI) Growth Triangle was officially established in 1989 and has grown to a regional agglomeration between the three countries with a population of over nine million people.

At the height of exponential growth the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 hit hard. It highlighted the problematic regional and global interdependencies and mainly impacted South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. Hong Kong, Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines were also affected. Nevertheless, financial restructuring and an already strong middle class eased the crisis and most urban societies soon recovered. New urban growth centres in second tier cities eg, Penang, Cebu, Surabaya, Chiang Mai or Bandung evolved with modernised commercial and residential areas for a rapidly growing middle class. "The landscapes of the urban regions now reflect a revolution of mass consumption. New housing developments proliferate, and shopping malls, golf courses, and theme parks are scattered throughout the urban peripheries."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Feldbauer, Peter and Husa, Karl and Korff, Rüdiger (eds.) (2003). *Südostasien - Gesellschaften, Räume und Entwicklung im 20. Jahrhundert*. Wien

¹⁰⁸ Friedmann, John (1986). *The World City Hypothesis*. In: Development and Change. Volume 17, Issue 1

¹⁰⁹ Castells, Manuel (1989). *The Informational City*. Cambridge

¹¹⁰ Sassen, Saskia (1991). *The Global City*. Princeton

¹¹¹ McGee, T. G. and Robinson, Ira M. (eds.) (1995). *The Mega-Urban Regions of Southeast Asia*. Vancouver : 345

Desakota

Despite a large number of scholarly interpretations of Southeast Asian urbanism^{112,113,114} only few were pioneering. One of the most original concept remains *mega-urban regions* of Terry McGee which highlights linkages of urban and rural areas, coined *desakota*.^{115,116} The term combines the Indonesian *desa* (village) and *kota* (city) and "refers to this last zone of urbanization, where non-agricultural activity is increasingly mixed with agriculture."¹¹⁷ In McGee's analysis, *desakota* areas originated in densely populated rural areas which used the proximity to urban cores as market outlets. Over time, urban elements became mixed in, resulting in a unique juxtaposition of various industrial, agrarian, and commercial uses with residential typologies that range from gated communities to squatter areas.

In simple terms, *desakota* regions are characterised by a high mobility of goods, services and people and a rapid change of land use resulting in perpetually changing settlement patterns. However, the concept of *desakota* regions is rarely accepted as such. It is safe to say that most local or regional authorities eg, in Indonesia, consider the in-between of mega-urban regions simply as rural. Prime examples of *desakota* areas can be found along northern Java, and between Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya. Or, in the Mekong River Delta, situated between Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). However, the *desakota* hypothesis is by no means universally applicable and does not work well for eg, Kuala Lumpur.¹¹⁸ Put in perspective, "the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur, historically a relatively lightly populated collage of tin mines, forests and rubber and oil palm plantations, is vastly different from the densely settled floodplains that surround Bangkok or Ho Chi Minh City."¹¹⁹

Malaysia

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and three Federal Territories. The country is divided into Peninsular (West) Malaysia and East Malaysia, separated by the South China Sea. Peninsular Malaysia borders with Thailand and Singapore. East Malaysia borders with Brunei and Indonesia and is part of Borneo. The Straits of Malacca, one of the worlds busiest ship routes is located

¹¹² Lim, William (2012). *Incomplete Urbanism - A Critical Strategy for Emerging Economies*. Singapore

¹¹³ Chalana, Manish and Hou, Jeffrey (eds.) (2016). *Messy Urbanism - Understanding the "Other" Cities of Asia*. Hong Kong

¹¹⁴ Padawangi, Rita (ed.) (2019). *Routledge Handbook of Urbanization in Southeast Asia*. Abingdon-on-Thames

¹¹⁵ McGee, T. G. (1991). *The Emergence of Desakota Regions in Asia: Expanding a Hypothesis*. In: Ginsburg, Norton and Koppel, Bruce (eds.) (1991). *The Extended Metropolis - Settlement Transition in Asia*. Honolulu

¹¹⁶ McGee, T. G. and Robinson, Ira M. (eds.) (1995). *The Mega-Urban Regions of Southeast Asia*. Vancouver

¹¹⁷ McGee, T. G. and Robinson, Ira M. (eds.) (1995). *The Mega-Urban Regions of Southeast Asia*. Vancouver : 11

¹¹⁸ McGee, T. G. (1991). *The Emergence of Desakota Regions in Asia: Expanding a Hypothesis*. In: Ginsburg, Norton and Koppel, Bruce (eds.) (1991). *The Extended Metropolis - Settlement Transition in Asia*. Honolulu : 7

¹¹⁹ Jones, Gavin W. (2015). *Some conceptual and methodological issues in studying urbanization in Southeast Asia*. In: Padawangi, Rita (ed.) (2019). *Routledge Handbook of Urbanization in Southeast Asia*. Abingdon-on-Thames : 91

between Peninsular Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Malaysia has a population of 32.5 million and a total landmass of 330,803 square kilometres of which most is covered with tropical rainforest. Malaysia was sparsely populated until the 20th century and even today has only an average density of 99 people per square kilometre.¹²⁰ This is low compared to other Southeast Asian nations, whereas the urbanisation rate is rather high. The rate has continuously increased, especially through rural to urban migration. In the late 1970s, only 40 per cent of Malaysia was urbanised. In 1991 the rate stood at 50 per cent, increasing to 62 per cent in 2000, 71 per cent in 2010 and 77 per cent in 2020.¹²¹ There are significant regional differences. For example, the East coast of Peninsular Malaysia is much less urbanised than the West coast. East Malaysia is least urbanised and populated. Located on the West coast, Selangor is the most populated and urbanised state and contributes to approximately one-quarter of the national GDP. Selangor surrounds but does not include the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. Penang and Johor, with its respective capitals George Town and Johor Bahru, are the next populous states. These particulars reflect a heterogeneous settlement pattern and a varying degree of urban development in different regions of Malaysia.

Having achieved *Merdeka* (independence) within the British Commonwealth in 1957, Malaya expanded with the crown colonies of British North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore to become Malaysia in 1963. Singapore left the Federation in 1965. Despite the relative ease to continue with commodity export after *Merdeka*, the unified country faced several structural problems. Among them an over-dependence on rubber and tin production, an uneven distribution of income (especially affecting rural areas) and a fast growing population with low levels of education. "At the time of independence, the rate of poverty among Malays was 70 percent, compared with 27 percent among Chinese and 36 percent among Indians."¹²² The majority of the Malay population continued to live in rural areas, mainly kampungs, practising subsistence agriculture. In the few thriving urban centres, Chinese, Indians and a small number of Europeans prevailed economically and demographically. Basically, post-independence urbanisation was a non-Malay phenomenon.

As early as 1956, so-called FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority) schemes were implemented all over Malaysia. The objective was to eradicate rural poverty by resettling landless rural poor, mainly Malay subsistence farmers, to new rural settlements. The farmers were engaged in commercial agriculture, especially for an export-oriented rubber and palm oil industry. More than 715,000 people were resettled between 1958 and 1990.¹²³ By 1966, as a result of the FELDA schemes, Malaysia had become the world's largest palm oil producer. However, "despite the impressive economic growth and stability [...] the problems of unemployment and poverty persisted, notably in the rural areas primarily occupied by Malays."¹²⁴ At the same time, new jobs

¹²⁰ Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022). *Population and Housing Census Malaysia 2020*. Putrajaya

¹²¹ Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York

¹²² Lee, Hwok-Aun (2015). Affirmative action - Hefty measures, mixed outcomes, muddled thinking. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 174

¹²² Lee, Hwok-Aun (2015). Affirmative action - Hefty measures, mixed outcomes, muddled thinking. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 174

¹²³ Malaysia (2021b). *Felda Profil*. Retrieved from: www.felda.net.my

in the urban manufacturing sector strengthened the position of the Chinese. The scale of rural and urban transformation changed settlement and occupational patterns indefinitely. Rural areas were restructured to support commercial agriculture and impacted mainly Malays. Urban areas became a boost from industrial production, benefitting many Chinese.

May 13th 1969

The economic and ethnic imbalance between rural and urban residence became a potential for conflict, erupting in the racial riots in Kuala Lumpur on May 13th 1969.¹²⁵ Clashes after the General Election between Malays and Chinese with several hundred deaths, mainly Chinese, changed the country from the ground up.¹²⁶ In the wake of the riots, the government declared a state of emergency and the parliament was suspended, reconvened only in 1971. In the mean time, the political course of the government changed, culminating in the so-called *New Economic Policy* (NEP) which was implemented with the Second Malaysia Plan in 1971.

The NEP had three main intentions. First, to call for national unity after the May 13 incident. Second, an accelerated socio-economic restructuring to ease ethnic separation. Third, to eradicate poverty, especially among Malays.¹²⁷ Upon closer inspection, the NEP was an affirmative action programme that aimed to increase *bumiputera*¹²⁸ influence. The factual "under-representation of bumiputera in universities and among professionals and managers, and their concurrent over-representation among farmers and agricultural workers, was deemed an unacceptable and unsustainable ethnic division of labour."¹²⁹ Because economic growth alone did not help bumiputera upward mobility, the NEP introduced a number of measures eg, university quotas for Malay students, the formation of state-owned (Malay) companies, and a mandatory 30 per cent bumiputera stake in commercial and business activities.

Together with an increased industrial production, the measures had a bigger impact on urban areas compared to rural areas, thus an accelerated rural to urban migration was set in motion among the Malay population. Many found a home in squatter areas or low rise settlements throughout the city. Over time, the NEP resulted in a shift of demographic and social fabric of urban centres and reinforced the political dominance of bumiputeras. This dominance is also reflected in article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia. "In short, the country's development since the early 1970s has had a tremendous transformative impact on the economic, social and political position of the various ethnic groups. The social mobility of the ethnic groups, vertically and horizontally, increased at an incredible pace after that time, and in about two decades, we suddenly saw the emergence of a visible 'new' middle class, urban-based and working not only in the expanded public sector, but also in the enlarged private / corporate sector."¹³⁰ The

¹²⁴ Watson Andaya, Barbara and Andaya, Leonard Y. (1982). *A History of Malaysia*. London : 283

¹²⁵ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London : 44

¹²⁶ Cohen, Warren I. (2000). *East Asia at the Center - Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World*. New York

¹²⁸ Bumiputeras are Malays of indigenous origin, excluding ethnic-Chinese and ethnic-Indian minorities.

¹²⁹ Lee, Hwok-Aun (2015). Affirmative action - Hefy measures, mixed outcomes, muddled thinking. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 164

¹³⁰ Shamsul, A.B. and Athi, S.M. (2015) *Ethnicity and identity formation - Colonial knowledge, colonial structures and transition*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 275

importance of urban planning and development was reflected by two pioneering legislations: first, the Local Government Act 1976 (Act 171), second, the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172).

Industrialisation

Economic growth in the late 1970s was driven by an accelerated industrial production, at first in the electronics and textile industries. The government was instrumental in this development by setting up free trade zones to attract foreign direct investment, especially from Japan and later South Korea. "Most of these projects took the form of joint ventures with Japanese partners who supplied technology, and were supported with subsidised credit and significant tariff protection".¹³¹ For example, with the help of technology transfer from Japan, *Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional* (Proton) the first national car maker in Malaysia, started to produce automobiles in a new plant in Shah Alam, west of Kuala Lumpur. Manufacturing growth rates of about 25 per cent in the 1980s spurred expansive urban agglomerations in the states of Selangor, Penang and Johor. The satellite townships of Petaling Jaya and Shah Alam in Selangor became dynamic centres of the Klang Valley development corridor. Increasingly, large areas of terraced housing was built everywhere, a form of residence that became a standard for the urban population. For the first time, the share of the GDP in the manufacturing sector was larger than in the agricultural sector. Simultaneously, the oil and gas industry became an even more dominant factor, with *Petroleum Nasional Berhad* (PETRONAS) contributing more than 25 percent of government revenue.¹³² A consequence of accelerated industrialisation was the need for large numbers of low-cost workers who were mainly recruited from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Bangladesh.¹³³ The continued economic growth helped to reduce poverty rates while at the same time growing urbanisation rates caused a perennial shortage of low-cost housing. Squatters existed in most urban agglomerations.

WAWASAN 2020

In 1991, the outgoing NEP was replaced by the so-called *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020), an economic and social development programme that aimed to push Malaysia into the club of fully developed nations by the year 2020. The slogan, coined by then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was present in almost all sectors of Malay daily life, though the majority of its initiatives were directed at Greater Kuala Lumpur. "Its futuristic, neoliberal, and entrepreneurial themes particularly resonated with the elites, the politically well connected, and the aspirations of a sizeable middle class of the two largest ethnic groups in the country, the Malays and the Chinese."¹³⁴ Several mega projects, among them the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) with the Petronas Twin Towers at its core, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and the

¹³¹ Shamsul, A.B. and Athi, S.M. (2015) *Ethnicity and identity formation - Colonial knowledge, colonial structures and transition*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 137

¹³² Shamsul, A.B. and Athi, S.M. (2015) *Ethnicity and identity formation - Colonial knowledge, colonial structures and transition*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 194

¹³³ Nah, Alice M. (2014). *Seeking refuge in Kuala Lumpur - Self-help strategies to reduce vulnerability amongst refugees*. In: Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York : 148

¹³⁴ Barker, Joshua and Harms, Erik and Lindquist, Johan (2014). *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*. Honolulu : 171

Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a Special Economic Zone for high-technology businesses, were instrumental to put Malaysia on the (economic) world map.¹³⁵ All projects were carried out under the 7th Malaysia Plan (1995–2000) and succeeded in lifting the global appeal of the country. However, achieving the status of a fully developed nation was rather a desired ideal than a realistic goal. At the time, domestic politics were strongly influenced by the controversial *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) policy, also introduced by Mahathir.¹³⁶ It called for a *national identity* and suggested that all races should identify as foremost 'Malaysians'. The policy was bolstered by an increasing Islamisation of the Malaysian society, especially "through the establishment of an integrated network of legal, judiciary, financial and educational institutions operating in towns and cities throughout the country."¹³⁷

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 was a sudden turning point and although Malaysia's economy recovered rather quickly, a large number of legal, social and environmental problems surfaced in its wake. First and foremost the widespread cronyism and corruption within the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, water and air pollution prompted by uncontrolled construction activities, and environmental degradation as a result of deforestation for palm oil plantations. These issues triggered widespread unrest among the population, leading to the Reformasi protests of 1998 against the BN government under then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim initiated the movement after he was sacked from his position. The protests demanded social equality and social justice and peaked after Anwar was sentenced to several years of prison.¹³⁸ Aside from the political impact, the movement revealed that the impressive urban and economic development of only few decades had its pitfalls. Malaysia's largest cities, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru, all had developed common although unfavourable issues: a rather low density, a lack of public transportation, a prevailing pattern towards sprawl and an inefficient local administration.¹³⁹ An additional challenge was the continued influx of foreign workers. "From 1990 to 2008, authorised recruitment per year multiplied from 242,000 to 2.1 million."¹⁴⁰ Actual numbers are believed to be significantly higher because irregular foreign workers were not recorded. As a consequence, the urban housing market was severely affected and many low-income residents were pushed out of inner city areas.

National Planning

The 8th Malaysia Plan (2001–2005) started to address the continued challenges with a comprehensive urbanisation policy. As a result, the first *National Physical Plan* (NPP)¹⁴¹ was implemented in 2005. It represents the highest planning document in the national planning

¹³⁵ Malaysian and international companies who set up a facility within the MSC can apply for MSC status. Benefits include a ten year exemption from local income tax and streamlined work permits.

¹³⁶ See: Beng, Ooi Kee (2006). *Bangsa Malaysia: Vision or Spin?* In: Saw, Swee-Hock and Kesavapany, K. (2006). *Malaysia - Recent Trends and Challenges*. Singapore

¹³⁷ Yeoh, Seng Guan (2015). *The great transformation - Urbanisation and urbanism in Malaysia*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 251

¹³⁸ Sardar, Ziauddin (2000). *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*. London : 217

¹³⁹ Malaysia (2016). *Malaysia National Report for the 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁴⁰ Nah, Alice M. (2014). *Seeking refuge in Kuala Lumpur - Self-help strategies to reduce vulnerability amongst refugees*. In: Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York : 148

¹⁴¹ Malaysia (2005). *National Physical Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

system. Its key function is the translation of national policies into spatial planning. Attention was given to the development of coherent areas across states including urban and rural growth centres. In 2006, the *National Urbanisation Policy* (NUP)¹⁴² was adopted to complement the NPP. It is imbued by the idea that cities and urban agglomerations are the primary drivers for economic growth. The suggested development plans are based on the concept of urban hierarchies. These include a National Growth Conurbation (Kuala Lumpur), three Regional Growth Conurbations (Georgetown, Johore and Kuantan), two sub-regional Growth Conurbations (Ipoh and Seremban), State Growth Conurbations and District Growth Conurbations. The accompanied 'development thrusts'¹⁴³ are progressive in character and introduce contemporary planning paradigms eg, sustainability, resilience and liveability. To some extent the comprehensiveness of the proposed policies is surprisingly detailed: "urban design should be given emphasis – as good design could aid in building a distinct identity or character for the town. For a quality urban design that incorporates local cultural values, historic and heritage areas will be conserved and integrated with urban development."¹⁴⁴ One might suspect that this account is aimed at the many urban kampungs in Malaysia. Far from it! The term *kampung* does not appear in the NUP. The policy remains rather speculative and concludes with an action plan which directs responsibilities at specific government agencies. Unfortunately, most agencies in Malaysia do not have the capacity and knowledge to implement such plans. The current urban development continues to focus on large scale projects, often under foreign influence, rather than realising "liveable urban environment[s] with identity"¹⁴⁵ as suggested in the NUP.

Prospect

Based on a 15,000 US dollar threshold, Malaysia is expected to achieve the status of a high-income economy by 2024.¹⁴⁶ This goal is supported by the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), a government initiative which is focused on National Key Economic Areas. However, inequality remains a significant challenge. The *Gini coefficient* for Malaysia is one of the highest in Southeast Asia and is substantially higher in urban areas than in rural areas.¹⁴⁷ There is a significant disconnect between the impressive economic development and the quality of growth, especially in regard to inclusive urban development. In recent years, the cost of living in urban centres has risen significantly and it is crucial to understand how people will cope with this increase.¹⁴⁸ Affordable housing is at the centre of this challenge. Residents of urban kampungs are particularly vulnerable to economic drawbacks and the provision of housing for low-income groups is a significant component of this challenge. The other challenge is the availability and quality of housing for middle-income groups.¹⁴⁹ A sole focus on large real estate

¹⁴² Malaysia (2006a). *National Urbanisation Policy*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Malaysia (2006a). *National Urbanisation Policy*. Kuala Lumpur : 59

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Economic Planning Unit (2015), *Achieving a System of Competitive Cities in Malaysia*. Putrajaya

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ World Bank (2020). *Navigating the New Normal*. Development Digest, Issue 8, April 2020

¹⁴⁹ Malaysia (2016). *Malaysia National Report for the 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)*. Kuala Lumpur

projects, often controlled by foreign capital, seems counterproductive for three reasons. One, they are mostly not embedded in the local context. Two, they are fixated on few urban growth conurbations. Three, their target audience is different from the one that is in need of housing. Moreover, this challenge has to be viewed in the context of an immense incongruity of formulated policies and actual implementation. The example of eg, *Forest City*^{150,151} in *Iskandar Malaysia* shows that the promise of "compact cities, transit-oriented development, good quality homes, reducing carbon emissions, and increasing the use of renewable energy"¹⁵² remains unfulfilled, despite the progressive strategies suggested in the 11th Malaysia Plan.

Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur is the political, cultural and economic centre of Malaysia. As national capital, it is also the seat of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (King of Malaysia) and the *Parlimen Malaysia*, the national legislature. The city covers an area of 243 square kilometres and is home to 1.98 m people.¹⁵³ The ethnic composition of KL constitutes of 41,6 per cent Malays, 37,2 Chinese, 9 per cent Indians and 1,7 per cent other ethnicities. 10,5 per cent are non-Malaysian citizens. Greater Kuala Lumpur covers 3,483 square kilometres and is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Southeast Asia. It is home to 8.46 m people and is including but not limited to the Klang Valley with the cities Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam and Klang. In Shah Alam, the state capital of Selangor with 740,750 inhabitants, the Malay population is 65 per cent. To the south of Kuala Lumpur lies the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, the administrative and judicial capital of Malaysia. In 1999, the seat of the federal government and most of its ministries was moved from KL to Putrajaya. The planned city has 109,202 inhabitants, the Malay population is 98 per cent.¹⁵⁴

Nation Building

When the Federation of Malaya became independent in 1957, Kuala Lumpur was a rather small and insignificant national capital. With a population of 316,200 people, it was only slightly larger than Georgetown but much smaller than Singapore.¹⁵⁵ Economically, it was less powerful than both port cities. About one-fourth of KL's population were squatters who lived in dispersed settlements throughout the city.¹⁵⁶ A number of symbolic buildings eg, the *Malaysian Houses of Parliament*, the *National Mosque of Malaysia* and the *National Museum of Malaysia* were completed by the early 1960s. A blend of vernacular architecture and International Style was used to

¹⁵⁰ Williams, Joseph Marcel R. (2016). *Evaluating Megaprojects: The Case of Forest City in Johor, Malaysia*. Malaysia Sustainable Cities Program, Working Paper Series

¹⁵¹ Merchant, Chat (2021). *Johor's Forest City Debacle Named Among World's 'Most Useless Megaprojects'*. Retrieved from: <https://www.expatgo.com/my/2021/11/21/johors-forest-city-debacle-named-among-worlds-most-useless-megaprojects>

¹⁵² Malaysia (2015). *Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP)*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁵³ Department of Statistics (2022). *Population and Housing Census Malaysia 2020*. Putrajaya

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Yaakob, Usman and Masron, Tarmiji and Fujimaki, Masami (2000). *Ninety Years of Urbanization in Malaysia: A Geographical Investigation of Its Trends and Characteristics*. Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities, Volume 4, Number 3

¹⁵⁶ Johnstone, Michael (1983). *Urban Squatting and Migration in Peninsular Malaysia*. International Migration Review, Volume 17, Number 2 : 302

emphasise an equal approach of traditional and modern. The conception of visible nation-building was at the centre of most planning efforts. The city was significantly enlarged on land of former plantations and mining areas. Satellite towns were projected after the example of British new towns. Petaling Jaya, called PJ by locals and already established before *Merdeka* (independence), is arguably the most prominent. Soon, PJ became too small and Shah Alam, the second new town within the Klang Valley development corridor, was drafted. Additional housing projects, mostly terraced housing, and industrial sites were built by public and private investors on cheaper land further away from the city. New highways and an increasing car ownership made this expansion possible. The result was a stretched out conurbation of relatively low density. Smaller settlements, among them existing kampungs or squatter areas, were incorporated into the expanding urban fabric. It was the starting point for a distinctive urban image that we are familiar with today. A contrasting fabric of modern high-rise developments and existing low-rise areas interspersed with tropical rainforest.

In the early 1970s, the socio-economic restructuring set in motion by the *New Economic Policy* (NEP) changed the urban development of KL indefinitely. The government supported the immigration of Malays, of whom many found jobs in the expanding public sector. The former Chinese mining town slowly transformed to a Malaysian city. At the same time, the mono-ethnic separation¹⁵⁷ faded and "residential quarters in which residence is determined not by race but by social class reflect[ed] a new principle of spatial and social organisation in Malaysia."¹⁵⁸ In new towns like PJ, "rank and position in the civil service rather than race became the determining factor for residential allocation."¹⁵⁹ However, around 25 per cent of the population still lived in squatters. Moreover, their ethnic composition gradually changed. "A 1966–1968 survey indicated that 67.2 percent of squatters were Chinese, 20.4 percent Malays, and the remainder primarily Indians. These ethnic proportions had changed dramatically by 1978: 52 percent were Chinese, 33 percent Malays, and 15 percent Indians."¹⁶⁰ Most probably, these particulars were a strong motivation for the (Malay) government to intervene. A first approach and a possible solution to the "squatter problem"¹⁶¹ was introduced in 1977, when a *Squatter Control and Resettlement Unit* was established. It combined a low-cost housing program with resettlement.¹⁶²

Federal Territory

In 1974, KL became a Federal Territory and was put under direct jurisdiction of the Federal Government. Since then, the city is administered by the city council, *Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur* (DBKL), which is headed by the mayor. The first proper planning document for the

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter 1.2.1. for details.

¹⁵⁸ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London : 61

¹⁵⁹ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London : 62

¹⁶⁰ Anjomani, Ardeshir and Ahmad, Faizah Binti (1992). *Squatter Settlement in Kuala Lumpur: Evaluation and Alternatives*. *Ekistics*, Volume 59, Number 354/355 : 160

¹⁶¹ Yaakob, Usman and Masron, Tarmiji and Fujimaki, Masami (2000). *Ninety Years of Urbanization in Malaysia: A Geographical Investigation of Its Trends and Characteristics*. *Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities*, Volume 4, Number 3 : 80

¹⁶² Ibid.

Federal Territory was the *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 1984* (17.22).¹⁶³ It laid out a polycentric city with a 'Central Planning Area', four 'Growth Areas', and ten 'Development Areas'.¹⁶⁴ The plan was projected up to the year 2000. Focus was put on the 'Central Planning Area' to accommodate the desired commercial, financial and touristic agendas. Subsequently, the first shopping malls, hotels and office buildings mushroomed in the city centre.¹⁶⁵ In other areas, building activity was equally ambitious but challenged by constraints for available land and a varied natural topography.

In retrospect, the objectives of the first Structure Plan were only partially met. Several reasons can be found. Follow-up tools eg, local plans or development guidelines were lacking or incomplete. Unclear responsibilities between the federal and local level also proved to be problematic. Most importantly, the economic success with annual growth rates of about 8 per cent could not have been anticipated in the early 1980s. For example, residential population in the surrounding areas of KL grew much faster than in the city.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, the projected population distribution of the Structure Plan was very different from the reality. "At the time [the Structure Plan was conceived], Kuala Lumpur was viewed as a national growth centre and not as one playing an important financial and commercial role globally."¹⁶⁷ However, burgeoning economic involvement and scholarly debates^{168,169,170} in the late 1980s showed that the global context became more and more critical.

Global Approach

The increasing competition among global metropolitan regions urged the political elite in Malaysia to realign its development strategy. Kuala Lumpur had to be put "on the global map of circulating capital — to capture the attention of whoever is out there with money to invest".¹⁷¹ At the time, the social and economic dynamics in East Asia were staggering¹⁷² and Malaysia followed along in its wake. In order to face "global competitive processes"¹⁷³ and to bring about major planning projects in the Greater Kuala Lumpur area, political power was concentrated in the so-called *Economic Planning Unit*, a separate ministry controlled by the Prime Minister's office of Malaysia. This move explains the strong influence of Malaysia's Prime Ministers on the city's

¹⁶³ Malaysia (1982b). *Draft Structure Plan 1984*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁶⁴ Ibid : Figure 20.01.

¹⁶⁵ For early buildings, see: Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM). (1976). *Guide to Kuala Lumpur Notable Buildings*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁶⁶ Morshidi, Sirat (2001). *Kuala Lumpur, Globalization and Urban Competitiveness: An Unfinished Agenda?* Built Environment, Volume 27, Number 2

¹⁶⁷ Morshidi, Sirat (2001). *Kuala Lumpur, Globalization and Urban Competitiveness: An Unfinished Agenda?* Built Environment, Volume 27, Number 2 : 102

¹⁶⁸ Friedmann, John (1986). *The World City Hypothesis*. In: Development and Change. Volume 17, Number 1

¹⁶⁹ Castells, Manuel (1989). *The Informational City*. Cambridge

¹⁷⁰ Sassen, Saskia (1991). *The Global City*. Princeton

¹⁷¹ Robinson, Jennifer (2006). *Ordinary Cities - Between Modernity and Development*. New York : 79

¹⁷² Vogel, Ezra F. (1991). *The Four Little Dragons - The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia*. Cambridge

¹⁷³ Morshidi, Sirat (2001). *Kuala Lumpur, Globalization and Urban Competitiveness: An Unfinished Agenda?* Built Environment, Volume 27, Number 2 : 96

image. During the premiership of Mahathir Mohamad between 1981 and 2003, a number of large-scale and big-budget projects were carried through. Most of them with the support of private real estate developers and without prolonging public discourse.

Mahathir initiated *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020), an economic and social development programme that had a major impact on the Greater Kuala Lumpur area. At its core was the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a Special Economic Zone that reached from the city centre of KL to the district of Sepang, some 50 kilometres to the south. The zone contains, among others, the newly planned cities of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya. The former became the administrative and judicial capital of Malaysia, the latter is an IT-themed precinct for international high technology companies, resembling the Silicon Valley. At the southern end of the MSC, and connected via an Express Rail Link to the city, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) was set up. However, the most prominent and albeit most visible project of that time was the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) with the Petronas Twin Towers, the highest building in the world from 1998 to 2004 and the world's highest twin towers to date. Its design, based on Islamic motives, sends an unambiguous message of a modern and confident Malay nation state. "The world to which it speaks is not only that of the global media but especially, that of the Malaysian nation state and, not least, the larger world of Islam."¹⁷⁴ The towers became a very successful architectural statement and was instrumental in lifting Malaysia's global appeal.

Parallel to these remarkable projects, luxurious condominium towers, large shopping malls and lavish office parks mushroomed in the KL conurbation. Gated communities and repetitive terraced housing precincts became the preferred real estate option of a new consumerist middle class. This extensive development activity cemented an already fragmented and spread out urban landscape, only held together by a continuously growing road and highway network. More and more toll roads were built with the help of public-private partnerships, stimulating further suburban development. Public transportation was either lacking or could not keep up. A first commuter rail service was introduced in 1995, with a light rail system introduced only several years later. Initially, only few lines were built and operated separately by different private companies. Modal integration between these lines and connections to existing bus services was mostly impossible.

Zero Squatter

In 2001, at the height of Mahathir's modernisation process, the *Selangor Zero Squatters 2005 Action Plan* was implemented which led to the eviction of all remaining squatters within DBKL in the following years.¹⁷⁵ Squatters were not just in the way of urban development, they also "became increasingly judged as a serious impediment to the nation's collective progress and to aspirations

¹⁷⁴ King, Anthony D. (2004). *Spaces of Global Cultures - Architecture Urbanism Identity*. London : 17

¹⁷⁵ Aziz, Faziawati Abdul (2012). *The Investigation of the Implications of Squatter Relocations in High-Risk Neighbourhoods in Malaysia*. Thesis, Newcastle University

to carve a hypermodern 'world-class city' out of Kuala Lumpur."¹⁷⁶ The plan was accompanied by a low-cost housing programme. The mid-rise and high-rise buildings that originate from this initiative still make for a substantial number of urban housing stock in KL.¹⁷⁷ Squatters were relocated and their settlements destroyed in order to develop new residential, commercial or infrastructural projects.^{178,179} These measures had far reaching consequences for kampungs that were closely attached to squatter areas, eg kampung Pandan and kampung Air Panas. The social cohesion of the squatter communities was dissolved when residents were shifted to areas further away and thus distanced from their jobs, families and social context. The low-cost accommodations provided by the government mostly offer smaller units and it is difficult for extended families to cope with the loss of space. Basic amenities like schools, markets and open spaces are not always accessible for the residents.¹⁸⁰ Although the overall decline of poverty since the 1950s in Malaysia was remarkable,¹⁸¹ the eviction of squatters did not eliminate urban poverty. Today, the majority of urban poor live in cramped conditions and increasingly deteriorating public housing. Most buildings are in need of serious upgrading. Poor maintenance and deterioration will present a costly challenge in the near future.

In 2004, the *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan*¹⁸² was adopted, followed by the *Kuala Lumpur City Plan*¹⁸³ replacing the former *Local Plan*. The Structure Plan prescribes general policies and strategies, whereas the City Plan renders a more detailed physical image with suggestions for development. The characteristics of these suggestions oscillate between expectation and requirement. The city must fulfil 'a major global role', at the same time it must satisfy 'the people's needs'.¹⁸⁴ Curiously, kampungs did not find any particular mentioning in the City Plan. Neither their general existence nor their specific role within the global city is examined.

Over time, the poorly developed public transportation network was extended. Finally, in 2011, a single ticket (MyRapid Card) for the variety of rail and bus lines was launched. Together with an extending rail network, it significantly improved the quality of public mobility. However, private cars, taxis and ride hailing services remain the most important modes of urban transport. Between 2010 and 2014, the number of private vehicles rose faster than the population.¹⁸⁵ Half of the poorest 10 per cent of households own a car, most own two-wheelers.

¹⁷⁶ Barker, Joshua and Harms, Erik and Lindquist, Johan (2014). *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*. Honolulu : 190

¹⁷⁷ Goh, Ai Tee and Ahmad, Yahaya (2011). *Public low-cost housing in Malaysia: Case studies on PPR low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur*. Journal of Design and Built Environment, Volume 8, Issue 1

¹⁷⁸ Low, Christina (2007). *Goodbye to Another Urban Kampung*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 31 July 2007

¹⁷⁹ Zurairi, AR (2014). *In final plea, KL mayor tells Chubadak folk to move out, not squat*. The Malay Mail, 17 June 2014

¹⁸⁰ Yeoh, Seng Guan (2019). *Transforming Kuala Lumpur - Hybrid urbanisms in motion*. In: Padawangi, Rita (ed.) (2019). *Routledge Handbook of Urbanization in Southeast Asia*. Abingdon-on-Thames : 241

¹⁸¹ Shamsul, A.B. and Athi, S.M. (2015) *Ethnicity and identity formation - Colonial knowledge, colonial structures and transition*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 275

¹⁸² Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁸³ Malaysia (2008). *Kuala Lumpur City Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Malaysia (2016). *Malaysia National Report for the 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)*. Kuala Lumpur

The ongoing urban development brought substantial and long-lasting changes to the natural landscape. Large parts of tropical rainforest in the Klang Valley and its surroundings were replaced by building structures and road infrastructure. Development in sensitive areas and the large-scale soil sealing caused numerous issues eg, surface erosion, flash floods and water pollution.

Integrated stormwater management was identified as a central element of KL's urban infrastructure, resulting in the successful construction of the *Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel* (SMART) that regulates storm drainage in the Sungai Besi area during flash floods. The highly anticipated *River of Live* project, an ambitious approach to upgrade KL's neglected waterway, did not lead to cleaner rivers. The project lacked a proper planning approach and was short-lived.

Emphatically KL

Urban production concentrated on projects that pushed the *global appeal* of KL. The demand for high-end real estate was made possible by high plot ratios within existing urban fabric. A prime example is the 294 acre development of Sentul by YTL, a private developer. Several apartment buildings, upscale condominium towers and office buildings transformed the once sleepy neighbourhood north of the city centre. The former railroad workshops at the centre of the site were redeveloped to include cultural venues and a performing arts centre. Rapid gentrification changed the image of charismatic albeit decaying downtown areas. Chinatown and Brickfields underwent major upgrading and clearance of old building structures. The measures resulted in an ambivalent cityscape of mostly commercialised and privatised urban spaces. The parallel challenge to attract foreign talent and international tourists is manifested in the aesthetic revaluation of the Bukit Bintang area. Branded shopping malls, luxurious hotels and lively entertainment venues reached a level of sophistication that matches the expectation of a global clientele. Despite varying architectural quality, the cityscape of KL maintained its specific character.

The most recent and conspicuous urban developments are excessive superlatives. Adopted under the previous government the of two megatall skyscrapers, Merdeka 118¹⁸⁶ and Exchange 106¹⁸⁷ are near completion. Both towers are the centre pieces of large scale urban developments, mostly to attract the financial service industry. Both developments experience criticism from citizens. It seems that KL is in need for an alternative, or less megalomaniac, planning approach. The exemplary renewal of the old Rex cinema in Chinatown might lead the path of a more local and community based approach.¹⁸⁸ The defunct cinema was renamed REXKL and redeveloped into an eclectic community & cultural hub. Exhibitions, performances and concerts draw a young and creative crowd that has avoided the overdeveloped city centre in the past. The project also contains a bookstore, retail and food stalls that attract tourists and locals alike.

¹⁸⁶ Merdeka 118 is the second-tallest building in the world.

¹⁸⁷ Exchange 106 is the third-tallest building in Southeast Asia.

¹⁸⁸ Mah, Kenny (2019). *Repurposing a Chinatown icon: From Rex Cinema to REXKL*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 3 April 2019

1.2. Historic Evolution

1.2.1. A City is Formed – Traditional Kampung

At the onset of the 19th century the valley of the Klang River in the Sultanate of Selangor was sparsely populated by two groups of people. On the one hand there were *Orang Asli* (indigenous people) who lived isolated in small and dispersed groups in the vast interior rainforest. Their nomadic livelihood was based on hunting and gathering and their settlements were temporary and shifting.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand there were Malay people, mainly immigrants from the Malay archipelago or Sumatra, who lived in small settlements called *kampungs* near the rivers and its branches. Their main activity was *sawah* (wet rice field) cultivation which underlined the annual rhythm of village life. "Rice cultivation was central to economic life, ritual life, and the belief system of the Malay villagers."¹⁹⁰ In addition, they cultivated a variety of vegetables and fruits. The combined cultivation of rice, additional subsistence crops and fishing was sufficient for their own use. "Each community was largely self-sufficient, producing almost all the requirements for its household consumption."¹⁹¹

The settlement form of the kampung was basic yet diverse. It was either a linear agglomeration of pile dwellings along a river or a grouping of several dispersed houses in close proximity to a source of water with vegetables, banana plants and coconut trees planted in between.¹⁹² "The traditional kampung embraced houses scattered over a loosely defined area featuring open compounds and easy mobility under the canopy of various root crops and fruit trees. Much as the kampung was an integral part of the human ecology of smallholding agriculture, it was also a social space composed of a network of kin relations. In more densely settled areas, kampungs merged imperceptibly into one another."¹⁹³ Kampungs were well integrated into the natural environment as it formed the base of an agricultural subsistence livelihood. Equally, the individual houses were well adapted to the climatic and cultural context. They were structured according to a clear pattern. "They have a veranda (*serambi*) a main room (*ibu rumah*) from which one or two sleeping rooms may be divided (*bilek*), and a kitchen attached to the back of the house (*dapur*)."¹⁹⁴ The building material was timber with roofs made of woven *atap* (palm) leaves. A separation between public and private open space did not exist. This originated in the preference for community intimacy as compared to individual privacy. Usually, a small *surau* for communal prayers was part of every village and located near a natural source of water. Social life was organised hierarchically with a so-called *penghulu* (headman) at the top. The settlements were separated by the abundant rainforest and "communication was limited to the rivers and

¹⁸⁹ Kuchiba, Masuo and Tsubouchi, Yoshihiro (1967). *Paddy Farming and Social Structure in a Malay Village*. The Developing Economies, Volume 5, Number 3

¹⁹⁰ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 112

¹⁹¹ Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - In-Situ Urbanization of Villages and their Land around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore : 30

¹⁹² Lim, Jee Yuan (1991). *The Malay House*. Penang

¹⁹³ Voon, Phin Keong (1995). *The Changing Human Ecology of Smallholding Agriculture in Malaysia*. Studies in Regional Science, Volume 8, Number 3-15 : 4

¹⁹⁴ Evers, Hans-Dieter (1977). *The Culture of Malaysian Urbanization: Malay and Chinese Conceptions of Space*. Bielefeld : 4

occasional jungle-tracks."¹⁹⁵ In summary, these early kampungs and their residents can be described as independent but internally close-knit units.

Due to the limitless resource of land and the villages' ability of self-sufficiency, ownership of land was not considered important. According to the Malay customary, every peasant was able to cultivate a piece of land with the permission of the community leader.¹⁹⁶ The only restriction was that the cultivation had to be 'active', meaning a crop must have been farmed, otherwise the land fell back to the local leader or community. In Malay, this is called *adat* law. In an economy that was basically one of self-sufficiency, such a simple regulation of land occupation was functionally adequate since a farmer was under no threat of losing land through external forces. The predominantly Muslim communities believed that all land belongs to God and the local community leader, chief or Sultan is holding the land as God's administrator. In return, these leaders granted protection to the members of the community.

Each state within the Malay archipelago was an individual entity ruled by a Sultan. "The Sultan was the symbol of the state's unity, was its ceremonial head, and was at the apex of its elaborate social hierarchy."¹⁹⁷ Governance was based on personal relations and its form was autocratic. Since the 15th century, the state of Selangor was ruled by the Sultan of Malacca. The state was subdivided into districts which were ruled by extremely powerful chiefs. "The chiefs' main source of power was their freedom to raise and spend their own revenues as they wished. A toll on boats or goods passing through the district was one of the most important sources of revenue."¹⁹⁸ Usually, the districts were centred around coastal or riverine waters along which most of the kampungs were located.

In the early 1800s, the overall population was small and ethnically diverse. The majority of the people were descendants of immigrants from Sumatra, so-called Minangkabaus, others being Korinchi, Rawa, Mandiling or Batak groups. The process of migration was simple. "The normal pattern of colonisation by these immigrants was for an enterprising headman to obtain the Sultan's permission to cultivate a pre-selected site. This leader then returned to his native village in Sumatra to recruit men to develop the land. Land that was suitable for rice, kampung and 'general' cultivation was invariably chosen, following the settlement and cultivation practice familiar to these migrants in their native homeland."¹⁹⁹ At the end of this migration process, the kampung became more than just a place to live. It was a chance for a prosperous life and the most important part of Malay identity. The kampung and its natural context was at the centre of a complex social and agricultural ecosystem.

¹⁹⁵ Jackson, James C. (1968). *Planters and Speculators. Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786-1921*. Kuala Lumpur : 3

¹⁹⁶ Kassim, Azizah (1985). *Politics of Accommodation: A Case Study of Malay Squatters in Kuala Lumpur*. Thesis, University of London : 50

¹⁹⁷ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 5

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Voon, Phin Keong (1976). *Malay Reservations and Malay Land Ownership in Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih Mukims Selangor*. Modern Asian Studies, Volume 10, Number 4 : 510

Tin ore was obtained in the Malay peninsula since the 15th century in small quantities. Its price grew substantially during the First Industrial Revolution and made tin as commodity more and more attractive. Subsequently, locals were searching and scraping for tin. There were different ways to obtain tin ore, depending on a variety of conditions. The smallest working unit were families who washed tin ore in small creeks and rivers. They used their spare time after harvesting rice during dry seasons or during times when floods were not frequent. The exploitation was minimal but enough to earn some additional income.²⁰⁰ The other working unit were small and middle sized groups of Malay workers who scraped for tin ore at the surface and extracted it afterwards in rivers or designated reservoirs by using pans. The revenue was larger but this method demanded constant work and a certain amount of organisation. The first method was called *lampang* (washing), the latter *dulang* (panning). Both were simple and could only reach the tin ore on the very surface of the soil.

An important resource on how the early Klang Valley looked like during this time is an eye witness report of John Anderson who was a translator to the British government and dealt with treaties for various British commissions. He travelled extensively in Malaya and described the Klang Valley in 1824: "Colong [Klang River] is about 200 yards wide at the mouth, but narrow to 100, and in some places 70 after a few reaches. The Channel is safe and deep in most places, and the Current very rapid. The first Town is about 20 miles from the entrance, called Colong [Klang]. It is situated on the right bank, and defended by several Batteries. Here the King of Salengore [Sultan of Selangor] resides at times. The inhabitants [...] were reckoned at about 1500 [population], and the following are the names of the Villages upon the River, as far as within one day's journey of Pahang [...]"²⁰¹ In his report, Anderson continued listing several names of areas or kampungs: "Penaga, Petaling, Sirdang, Junjong, Pantei Rusa, Kwala Bulu, Gua Batu, Sungei Lumpoor – At all these places, Tin is obtained, but most at Lumpoor, beyond which there are no Houses. Pahang is one day's journey from Lumpoor."²⁰² Some of these local Malay names still exist today in the Klang Valley, for example neighbourhoods like Petaling, Junjong and Gua Batu.

More and more settlers migrated to Malaya and the Klang Valley in search for tin. These new immigrants were Minangkabau from Sumatra, Mandailing, Bugis, Korinchi, Rawa, Acehnese and Batak.²⁰³ Since most of them were Moslems and with a similar cultural background, assimilation with local Malays was seamless and happened through intermarriage.²⁰⁴ The amount of tin explored was still relatively low although the Sultan already drew the majority of his income from its taxation. Anderson reported in 1824 that "there are two modes practised by the Malays

²⁰⁰ Gullick, John Michael (2000). *A History of Kuala Lumpur 1856-1939*. Selangor

²⁰¹ Anderson, John (1824). *Political and Commercial Considerations relative to The Malayan Peninsula and The British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*. Printed under Authority of Government by William Cox, Prince of Wales Island : 189

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Gullick, John Michael (1990). *The Growth of Kuala Lumpur and of the Malay Community in Selangor before 1880*. Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS), Volume LXIII Part I : 15

²⁰⁴ Wilson, Peter J. (1967). *A Malay Village and Malaysia*. New Haven

and Siamese, [...] the one, every person is at liberty to dig for Tin, and sell it to the best advantage, paying the King a duty; the other, the King is the sole purchaser, he appoints a smelter of Ore, and no other person is allowed to smelt."²⁰⁵ Global demand for tin rose continually and Selangor became an ever more active area, diverse in terms of trading, settling and social composition. "The Mountains of the Peninsula of Malacca, tho' hitherto unexplored by Europeans, are known to abound with Tin Ore, of which an unlimited quantity might be obtained, under proper management and a more settled state of things."²⁰⁶ Anderson clearly saw the growing activity of the locals and the potential for further exploration of tin ore. There were two main areas in the state of Selangor where tin was obtained, Lukut and Ulu Selangor. In the neighbouring state of Perak it was Larut and Kinta.²⁰⁷

The British had been present in Penang since 1786, in Singapore since 1819 and in Malacca since 1824. In 1826, the three settlements were established as the Straits Settlements, controlled by the British East India Company. Strategically located along the Straits of Malacca, these urban entrepôt centres were of key importance to control trade between Asia, India and Europe. The settlements' dynamic nature provided employment and wealth for anybody participating in this trade. A significant number of Chinese business merchants and craftsmen, Indian traders and labourers, Malay locals, Europeans and Arabs populated the Straits Settlements.²⁰⁸ Everybody was ready and eager to jump on the next opportunity that might open up.

In 1840, the Sultan of Perak was actively looking for a commercial venture in tin. Shortly after, Long Ja'afar, chief of the Larut district of Perak, discovered large deposits. He initiated a serious mining operation with the help of Chinese *toukeys* (investors) from the Straits Settlement. Similar operations started in Lukut and Kanching. The availability of capital, entrepreneurship, political power and a large workforce of Chinese coolies made these operations possible. The approach, method and outcome was very different compared to the small scale local efforts up to now. Anticipating significant revenues, Chinese investors drew large sums into the operations. "Mining operations were largely financed by Chinese capitalists from the Straits Settlement."²⁰⁹ With the help of so-called secret societies, they brought in large numbers of workers from mainland China. Malay chiefs who controlled areas with rich tin deposits encouraged this immigration of Chinese miners, sensing the future prospect in mining. The Chinese mining camps and communities were developing at a rapid pace. They were self-organised, socially tightly knit and often opposed to another. Each camp was lead by a headman, a so-called *Captain China*. The camps soon became a great source of disturbance within the Malay government.

The relative successful mining activities in areas like Perak and the direct relation to the district

²⁰⁵ Anderson, John (1824). *Political and Commercial Considerations relative to The Malayan Peninsula and The British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*. Printed under Authority of Government by William Cox, Prince of Wales Island : 122

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Swettenham, Frank (1907). *British Malaya*. London

²⁰⁸ Evers, Hans-Dieter and Korff, Rüdiger (2000). *Southeast Asian Urbanism - The Meaning and Power of Social Space*. London : 48

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

chief in Lukut confirmed the district chief in Klang, Raja Abdullahbin Baja Ja'afarthe, to venture on a similar operation. He was the nominal ruler of the entire Klang Valley and his revenues and wealth depended on the amount of trading and mining which passed his riverside fort at Klang town. With the help of two Chinese towkeys from Malacca, Chee Yam Chuan und Lim Say Hoe, he invested 70,000 US dollar in the operation.²¹⁰

In 1857, Raja Abdullah and his brother Raja Jumaat sent a group of 87 Chinese miners up the Klang Valley in search for tin ore. The two men were sure that more tin must to be found in this area, especially since small scale activities of the local villagers already existed. The miners were accompanied by a group of armed men under Syahbandar Yaseh, a Bugis. The operation with rafts and boats upstream started in Klang. The miners were experienced, most of them had worked in Lukut before. More than 50 kilometres inland, at the confluence of the rivers Gombak and Klang, the men went ashore and traveled further through the jungle. Finally, and after intensive search, large deposits of tin were found near an area called Ampang (05.02 p.11).²¹¹ For the Chinese miners a demanding and extremely hard work began. The jungle had to be cleared and before starting any excavation they had to build a single large dwelling for accommodation, a so-called kongsi hut. Over time, the hut was expanded and eventually several of them were erected in close distance to the mines. After a couple months, before the actual excavation began, most of the men died of malaria (05.03).²¹² Another 135 miners were sent upstream to continue the merciless work.

In contrast to the simple washing methods of locals, the Chinese practised lombong (opencast or open-pit) mining, an extremely labour intensive and manual work. To start a mine several dams and runnels had to be erected in order to detour a natural river or creek. A waterwheel, driven by the main runnel, was installed. The soil in which tin alluvials (karang) were found was dug up in manual fashion. Chain pumps, powered by the waterwheel, transported the tin alluvial over hydraulic sluices. The extracted tin ore was then recovered in large (open) casts or pits. Eventually, it took two years until a significant amount of tin ore was excavated and finally exported via Klang. During that time, simple trails for ox carts were built to connect the first three mining areas with the landing point at the confluence of the two rivers. The areas in the upper Klang Valley where large deposits of tin were found, were Ulu Klang, Ampang and Sugei Putih. Later, more mines were opened in Petaling, Pudu and Batu. Today, these areas are common neighbourhoods or sites in Kuala Lumpur.²¹³

Existing Malay kampungs and newly built Chinese kongsi dwellings soon entered a symbiotic relationship. For the first time, the Malays touched the cycle of the money economy that was prevailing around the mines. Initially, the miners brought their own supplies, foodstuff and

²¹⁰ Gullick, John Michael (1956). *The Story of Early Kuala Lumpur*. Singapore : 12

²¹¹ Tsou, Pao-Chun (1967). *Urban Landscape of Kuala Lumpur - A Geographical Survey*. Singapore : 11

²¹² Gullick, John Michael (1990). *The Growth of Kuala Lumpur and of the Malay Community in Selangor before 1880*. Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS), Volume LXIII Part I

²¹³ See Figure 1 and Figure 3

materials with them. But soon, existing kampungs nearby became part of the supply chain and provided food, especially rice, to the miners. An exception were pigs as the Malays were Muslims and considered them unclean. The Chinese imported their own pigs and soon bred them as livestock. The mines offered job opportunities for a variety of activities. "Women re-panned and re-washed refuse heaps of sand for tin which Chinese miners had already panned and washed, while men did odd jobs around the mines such as building sheds."²¹⁴ For ethnic, religious and cultural reasons, Malays and Chinese did not mingle or mix in the same area. The Malay villagers were socially bound within the power cycle of their district chief and Sultan. The Chinese miners were bound to their various secret societies which in turn were dependent from the capital of the towkeys.

The actual founding of Kuala Lumpur, loosely translated as 'muddy river mouth' in Malay, is subject to historic, linguistic and political debate.²¹⁵ It is safe to say that only in 1859, several huts were permanently built near the confluence of the rivers Klang and Gombak. Two Hakka Chinese merchants, Hiu Siew and Ah Sze Keledok, and a Sumatran trader, Sutan Puasa, were the first to set up their shops near the landing point, forming a nucleus of activity.²¹⁶ The location of these huts was on the elevated eastern side of the Klang River, protected from recurring floods. All mining areas were located further to the East and North-East of this site. The landing point was nothing more than a small shipment centre. Tin ore from the mines was transferred from ox carts to rafts or boats and shipped downstream to Klang. The supply of material and livestock for the miners took the opposite way upstream. Initially, the settlement was purely Chinese, consisting of a Hakka majority and a Cantonese minority.²¹⁷ A so-called Captain China was responsible for the development and defence of the settlement.²¹⁸ Outside mainland China such a leader was customary in order to negotiate with the local community, authorities, penghulus and owners of mining operations. A Captain China was "the recognised captain, chief or headman of a community on foreign soil [...] officially vested with certain executive, administrative and, in some cases, judicial powers over his own people, and invariably acting as the channel between the Government and the community."²¹⁹ Hiew Siew was appointed the first Captain China of Kuala Lumpur.

In 1862, Yap Ah Loy²²⁰ (04.13 p.126) arrived in the prospering mining centre. He was a Hakka Chinese leader who was in Malaya since 1854 and had gained local fame in Lukut in the state of Sungei Ujong. Lukut was the most successful mining area in Malaya at the time. In 1868, Yap Ah Loy took over the title as Captain China from Liu Ngim Kong and became the third Captain

²¹⁴ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 114

²¹⁵ Tsou, Pao-Chun (1967). *Urban Landscape of Kuala Lumpur - A Geographical Survey*. Singapore : 30

²¹⁶ Tsou, Pao-Chun (1967). *Urban Landscape of Kuala Lumpur - A Geographical Survey*. Singapore : 11

²¹⁷ Gullick, John Michael (1990). *The Growth of Kuala Lumpur and of the Malay Community in Selangor before 1880*. Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS), Volume LXIII Part I

²¹⁸ Tsou, Pao-Chun (1967). *Urban Landscape of Kuala Lumpur - A Geographical Survey*. Singapore : 16

²¹⁹ Wong, Choon San (1963). *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitans*. Singapore

²²⁰ Ownby, David and Heidhues, Mary Somers (eds.) (1993). *Secret Societies Reconsidered*. London : 126

since Hiew Siew. It was Yap Ah Loy's strong leadership and the enormous success of the mining operation that finally spurred the development of early Kuala Lumpur. Yap Ah Loy is often considered the founding father of Kuala Lumpur. This is not entirely correct, as it ignores previous leaders. But he was the first who left a significant impression. Shortly after his arrival, the site where the first shops were located grew into a small centre consisting of a market, additional shops, piggeries, gambling halls and brothels. The Chinese houses had a foundation and sat on the ground. This was in contrast to the Malay houses that were always raised on piles. The first new Malay settlement, aside from the existing kampungs nearby, was kampung Rawa²²¹ (05.01) to the north of the Chinese centre. Here, Sumatran Malay traders settled and formed a small community separated from the Chinese quarters. "Kampong Rawa comprised many Malay houses standing a little apart from each other, hidden under tall coconut palms, and lacking regular streets."²²² (05.02. p.16)

Early Kuala Lumpur was a heterogeneous accumulation of different clusters spreading over a relatively large area. First was the landing point on the river that became the trans-shipment centre with a nucleus of shops and businesses close by. Second were the dispersed mines in the jungle with the kongsi dwellings of the migrated Chinese miners. Finally, there were various types of kampungs, either existing or newly set up by local Malays. In between, there were vegetable gardens, agricultural fields and the abundant tropical rainforest with its natural topography of hills and valleys.²²³ Of course, this small town has changed dramatically over time. But the *image* of an accumulation of different clusters in the green landscape reflects the basic composition of modern Kuala Lumpur surprisingly well.

Up to this point, the Malay political system was relatively balanced. No chief or Sultan was notably more powerful or wealthy than the other. This changed significantly with the financial success of the Chinese mining operations. Through concessions and customs duties, the Malay chiefs benefitted from the revenue of the mines. Soon, internal struggle rose between the local chiefs, the Sultan of Selangor and various other rival coalitions. A dispute over the power of Klang led to the Selangor Civil War that lasted from 1867 to 1873. In short, it was a rivalry between the Rajas of Lukut who were allied with the Chinese miners of the upper Klang Valley and the Viceroy of Selangor who was allied with colonial and Malay groups. In addition, the strong hostility between the different Chinese groups of the mining centres in Kanching and the centres in the upper Klang Valley intensified. Chinese secret societies, allied with Selangor chiefs, fought for control over the tin mines. The war brought all mining activities to a halt and the export of tin dropped significantly.

This was a window of opportunity for the British government to step in and gain political influence. As a result of the war, a weakened and tired Sultan of Selangor was forced to accept a

²²¹ Ownby, David and Heidhues, Mary Somers (eds.) (1993). *Secret Societies Reconsidered*. London : 126

²²² Ownby, David and Heidhues, Mary Somers (eds.) (1993). *Secret Societies Reconsidered*. London : 126

²²³ See Figure 4 and Figure 5 and Figure 6

British Resident in 1874. "The Sultan should receive a British officer, called a Resident, 'whose advise must be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom'. The collection and control of all revenue and the general administration of the state was to be regulated by the 'advise' of the Resident."²²⁴ The basic principle of this administrative move was to consolidate and exercise power through the Resident while maintaining ceremonial prestige with a Malay Sultan and his chiefs who were often overwhelmed with the constant quarrels in their areas. The British respected the religious and cultural customs of the Malays and in turn the Sultans hoped for political stability and wealth through taxation.

In just a few years the quiet and calm equilibrium of the Malay Sultanates was shattered by Chinese mining operations, colonial capitalists and various groups of Malay chiefs. All of them tried to gain influence and wealth through participation in revenues from exporting commodities. Within the larger political framework, the British proceedings were a safeguard for colonial influence and control over the Malay States. In 1867, the Straits Settlements became a Crown Colony and therefore directly controlled by a Governor and the Colonial Office in London.²²⁵ This move offered an even further extension of power for the British. Between 1874 and 1888, the four Malay States of Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Pahang became British protectorates. In 1895, the Straits Settlements and the protectorates became the Federated Malay States. The urban and singular Straits Settlements (Penang, Dinding, Malacca and Singapore) were effectively merged with the rural land mass of the various Sultanates in between them. The British colonial trading posts along the Straits of Malacca were thus completed with a hinterland that was rich in commodities and usufruct.

By imposing political and administrative stability after the civil war, the state of Selangor started to prosper again. 'Kwala Lumpor', 'Kuala Lumpor' or 'Qualla Lumpor', as the town was called depending on various resources²²⁶ was rebuilt. Frank Swettenham, a British colonial administrator who became Resident in 1882, visited the town for the first time in 1872 describing it vividly. "At a place called Kuala Lumpur, on the Klang River about seventy-five miles from its mouth, was a Chinese town, with two streets, and a considerable number of shops and houses, built of adobe and thatched with palm leaves. From this centre, Kuala Lumpur, there were a few miles of rough, unmetalled, cart-track, running north and south, to other smaller mining camps. For the rest there was unbroken forest and a very sparse population."²²⁷ In the following decades the development of Kuala Lumpur and the fortune of its residents were closely bound to the monetary value of tin. This value was influenced by a variety of local and global factors. Fluctuating global demand lead to oversupply or undersupply with a substantial impact on local prices. So did the discovery of new mining areas, either in a neighbouring Malay State

²²⁴ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 6

²²⁵ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 2

²²⁶ See Figure 1 and Figure 2

²²⁷ Swettenham, Frank (1907). *British Malaya*. London : 127

or in a country on a different continent. Lastly, improved means of transportation eg, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had a severe impact, too.

In 1875, after a first wave of prosperity, the population of Kuala Lumpur including the spread out mining areas grew to about 7,000 Chinese and Malays.²²⁸ The town consisted of several quarters in which different ethnics lived separately from each other. The Malay community lived further apart from the original centre and had its own leaders. It was a heterogeneous community of various immigrants and thus weakened by different cultural traditions.

A detailed description of early Kuala Lumpur was documented by Swettenham in 1875. Interestingly, the spelling changed once again. "Qualla Lumpor, the depot of all mines in Klang, is perhaps the best built village, and has the most flourishing appearance of any in the Peninsula. The town is well laid out, with a market and a gambling booth, and is situated on the left bank of the Klang River. There are about 1000 Chinese and 700 Malays resident in the town, and the authorities are a Captain China and a Toh Dagang. In and around Qualla Lumpor, that is to say including the mines, there are about 7000 Malays and Chinese. 1500 Chinese are said to have come into Klang since their new year. The last time the steam-ship Telegraph came into Klang on the 5th of April, she left nearly 200 would-be passengers, Chinese, at Malacca, for want of space. The Captain China has a capital house at Qualla Lumpor, probably no other Chinaman in the Native States has such a good one, and all the other houses are roomy and substantial ... almost the whole of the present town of Qualla Lumpor has been built within the last year. [...] The town is divided into a Chinese Quarter and a Malay Quarter in the form of a margin, the Chinese near their Captain and the Malays at the further end of the own. [...] The road from Ulu Ampang to Qualla Lumpor is all open thro` lallang, gardens and occasional villages and I found it intensely hot. There are acres and acres of plantations on both sides of the road, mostly owned by Malays."²²⁹

Between 1860 and 1879, tin prices started to fluctuate and not all operators of mines could keep up with the high maintenance cost. It was a time when settlers tried to plant different crops or venture into promising alternatives. For example, Yap A Loy who owned several mines developed his own strategy of diversification. He invested heavily in infrastructure and building roads became an essential part of Yaps survival. In 1875, Minakabau settlers started to grow tobacco and Yap planted *cassava* (tapioca) on 12,000 acres concession land. The crops were processed and exported to Malakka and Singapore. Three coffee plantations were established by Europeans, namely Dutch, English and Germans, but proved to be unsuccessful. Malay peasants extended their farm land around the kampungs and attracted immigrants to work on these farms. In other states, especially Negeri Sembilan, cassava estates became a prime cash crop. Backed by a high demand for laundry starch and tapioca pudding in Britain,²³⁰ large scale commercial cultivation

²²⁸ See Figure 7. The plan of Gullick is based on information from the year 1895, however shows separate quarters.

²²⁹ Burns, P. L. and Cowan, C. D. (eds.) (1975). *Sir Frank Swettenham's Malayan Journals 1874-1876*. Kuala Lumpur : 218

²³⁰ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 114

was done by Chinese farmers. The cultivation of these cash crops was very much dependent on their value. For the planters it was often trial and error. In the end, tin remained the most important commodity in the Klang Valley. After a slump in the years from 1875 to 1879 the price for tin rose sharply in 1878 and 1879.

Politically, the newly established British Resident system strengthened the traditional hierarchy of the Sultan of Selangor down to the village headmen. "Whereas the chiefs were effectively displaced by British officers, the local penghulus (headmen) were incorporated in the new administration and paid salaries; they became the direct link between the [British] government and the Malays in the villages (kampung)." ²³¹ The primary aim of the British was a stable political and administrative system that allowed for an uninterrupted engagement in tin mining and other export oriented activities. The locally installed British Resident in Klang was key to this aim.

To attract a sufficient number of prospect capitalists and safeguard their investments, the availability of land and the security of tenure were necessary provisions. Consequently, the British Residents introduced land codes in their states which effectively made the state and colonial government the owner of all land. "Under the British administration, a new, alien system of land-ownership was imposed. Although the sultans were still recognised as the titular heads of state to whom land matters were referred, their administrative power over land was lost to the appointed British Resident." ²³²

This prepared the opportunity to provide land titles to investors who were keen in plantation, mining or other activities. In order to get there, all occupied land had to be recorded at individual land offices. Initially, the actual size or use of the land lot was not taken into consideration or stipulated. To receive ownership rights, the Malays had to register their possessions and in turn received a title called *geran*. This also concerned kampungs and the land that was surrounding them. Subsequently, a *geran* meant the beginning of individual ownership, a concept that was completely unknown to the local Malay peasants. This first land legislation in Malaya had two important outcomes. First, the government was able to collect taxes from each owner. Second, land was turned into a marketable commodity. The implementation of the codes happened gradually and culminated in the common land codes for all of the Federated Malay States in 1896.

The regained strength of the mining business was not without changes, too. The undisputed power of the Chinese secret societies was weakened after the Selangor War and labour for the mines was more difficult to attract due to an increased mobility of workers and growing competition from plantation businesses. The old fashioned and labour intensive mining methods of the Chinese came under pressure from European miners who started to use improved

²³¹ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 8

²³² Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - The In-Situ Urbanization of Villages, Villagers and Their Land Around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore : 32

technical equipment like steam engines. Nevertheless, mining remained predominantly Chinese and "only 10-15 per cent of tin production was in western hands."²³³ Despite fluctuating prices, the overall output of tin was still rising from year to year.

This required an improved infrastructure. A proper road (Damansara Road) was built between Klang and Kuala Lumpur, enabling the little town to grow westwards and securing import and export of goods aside from the limiting river transport. The expansion of KL was now gaining speed and the character of the Chinese mining settlement changed rapidly. European quarters west of the Klang River formed the political and administrative part. The Malay quarters, Kampung Rawa and Kampung Baru, expanded to the north. The Chinese business and commercial quarter remained at the centre and expanded gradually to the east and south. In 1880, the British Resident of Selangor moved his office from Klang to Kuala Lumpur and as a result the town became state capital. The reason for this somehow unexpected move of office to a small inland mining town was politically and economically motivated. The short but dynamic development of Kuala Lumpur has evoked multiple economic activities by multiple stakeholders. The British administration felt that the importance of the town and its activities became too significant to leave it in the hands of a Chinese Captain and several Malay headmen. Sporadic visits of the British Resident to oversee matters did not seem sufficient. Interestingly, Kuala Lumpur was still a small town of only 220 wooden houses.²³⁴ "Although British rule in the Malay States began in 1874 it was only by about 1880 that the general outline of British policy toward the states was firmly established. [...] British administration grew steadily, but the principal industry, tin, was almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese."²³⁵

In 1881, the town was completely destroyed by floods. The event led to a restructuring of the town and rebuilding took place under the leadership of Frank Swettenham. New houses were built of brick, streets were laid out properly and rows of shophouses were built as in Singapore. A courthouse and police headquarters were erected, followed by representative government buildings in a Moorish (Indian) style.

As a result, the appearance of Kuala Lumpur changed dramatically. Its character of a Chinese trading and mining settlement was altered to a formal city, headquartering the British administration in Malaya. "After Frank Swettenham replaced (Bloomfield) Douglas as Resident in 1882 the face of Kuala Lumpur underwent many changes as officials introduced building rules to make the town (which had been known for its filth and had been destroyed by fire several times) cleaner and safer, moved the market to a better location, and planned the railway."²³⁶ By 1883, Malaya was the largest tin producer in the world and more and more immigrants came to the booming town. A substantial number of Indians, Sikh and Punjabis were brought in by the

²³³ Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 24

²³⁴ Gullick, John Michael (2000). *A History of Kuala Lumpur 1856-1939*. Selangor

²³⁵ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 2

²³⁶ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur : 10

British to work in administration, public services and railroads. "In 1884, the town population was about 4000 and the vast majority, say 90 percent, would have been Chinese. Many of them were labourers, but there were also several hundred traders and shopkeepers."²³⁷

"There was still a small Malay, predominantly Sumatran immigrant, community in the town, trading with others of their kind in the outlying villages, buying local produce for sale in the town market."²³⁸ Yap Ah Loy, who dominated the early development of Kuala Lumpur, died in 1885. He was followed by Yap Ah Shak but the power of a Captain China subsided. The British administration with their Resident clearly gained control. New building regulations were established by Swettenham in 1884 and almost the entire city centre was rebuilt again after a severe fire. Streets were widened once more and houses had to be built with brick and covered with tiled roofs. Atap houses in the central part of the city were extinct. The Europeans built large freestanding villas to the west of the Klang River. Malay neighbourhoods such as Kampung Baru established further, so did the growing Chinese quarters to the east of the Klang River. The area on the western shore of Klang and Gombak Rivers became more or less the political-administrative part of the city whereas businesses were located to the east. A significant change was the completion of the railway between Klang, later renamed Port Swettenham, and Kuala Lumpur in 1886. The river lost its former significance for transportation to the railway and an improved road network. "In 1880 Kuala Lumpur had been a place to which men came to work for a few years and to make money. In 1885 it had become a settled community or group of communities with their own institutions and social organisation."²³⁹

In 1896, the state of Selangor was united with the states of Negri Sembilan, Perak and Pahang to form the Federated Malay States. Its capital Kuala Lumpur became the administrative centre and the most important town in Malaya. The exploration of tin has not only changed the economic and political landscape of Malaya. It also redefined the social existence of local inhabitants, new immigrants and colonial representatives of power. The British saw a strong point in the existing Malay kampungs and further encouraged the permanent settlement of these communities in Malaya. It "was to promote social stability in a still largely unopened country with its 'raw and unstable' elements."²⁴⁰ Any risk that interfered with economic benefits had to be minimised. For the British administration, stability meant that the lucrative tin mines should be operational without interruption and miners supplied with locally produced foodstuff by Malay peasants. Therefore, a preferred scenario was a diversified agriculture with a surplus of especially rice to help reducing the dependence on imported rice and other foods.²⁴¹ Of course, a growing population and increasing competition for land set a limit to this preference.

²³⁷ See Figure 7 and Figure 8

²³⁸ Ibid. : 69

²³⁹ Gullick, John Michael (1955). *Kuala Lumpur 1880-1895*. Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Volume 28, Part 4, Number 172, Singapore : 8

²⁴⁰ Voon, Phin Keong (1976). *Malay Reservations and Malay Land Ownership in Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih Mukims Selangor*. Modern Asian Studies, Volume 10, Number 4 : 512

²⁴¹ Gullick, John Michael (2000). *A History of Kuala Lumpur 1856-1939*. Selangor : 63

At the end of this first phase of development, Kuala Lumpur was made up of Chinese quarters, traditional Malay kampungs, and a growing number of European villas and administrative buildings. The heterogeneous town was surrounded by a vast jungle where outlying Chinese mining quarters and traditional Malay kampungs were loosely connected by a network of transportation and communication lines. Different types of settlements stood side by side, yet spatially separated. There were traditional riverine kampungs with pile dwellings, simple housing clusters for plantation workers, peasant kampungs with sawah fields, and the Chinese tin mining settlements.

Over time, the alluvial valleys around the trade centre were significantly reshaped by the mining industry. In its process, only few traditional kampungs survived. Many became squatter settlements. Today, twelve Traditional Kampungs still exist within the city limits of Kuala Lumpur. Most of them have been transformed completely. However, some still bear resemblance of their origin as self-sustaining villages in the jungle.

1.2.2. Rubber Boom – Malay Reservation Areas

By the end of the 19th century the once self-sufficient kampungs became an integral part of the monetary economy which surrounded the tin mines. This development was accelerated by the relative high value for various cash crops. Based on their experience with sawah (wet rice fields), fruit and vegetable cultivation, local Malays started to plant tapioca, tobacco, pepper, gambier, sugar cane and coffee.²⁴² These small scale plantation activities around the traditional kampungs were the beginning of a commercialised form of agriculture and stood in contrast to the subsistence production practiced until now. "Strictly speaking, the term 'plantation' refers to any planting of export-orientated crops of whatever size. Therefore, plantation agriculture represents a commercial venture producing for export. In the context of nineteenth-century Malaya the important distinction lies between export-orientated or plantation agriculture and domestic food-crop production or kampung agriculture."²⁴³ Initially, the Malay peasants practised both forms simultaneously, depending on the availability of land, the value of the crop and their willingness to work beyond their own immediate needs. Fluctuating global prices for tin and alternative prospects in crops like coffee and tapioca fostered Chinese and European capitalists to venture into plantation agriculture as well. In comparison to the Malay efforts, these ventures were done at a much larger scale and with foreign capital investment. Plantations which were set-up this way were called estate farms.

As outlined in Chapter 1.2.1, the British introduced land codes in the Malay States and land owners received a *geran* for their land. The majority of these owners were Malays as they were already occupying the land. The *geran* system was very basic and not intended nor useful to commodify land on a large scale. "The fact that entries in the book [land registers] were made according to a house, not according to a lot, without specifying land size, meant that the Malay Grants would not be useful once the commoditization process of Malay smallholdings unfolded."²⁴⁴ This commoditisation process started with the increasing plantation activities. With the current land law, the acquisition of large areas of unoccupied land was difficult and time-consuming, especially for foreign investors.

Therefore, the British were aiming for an alternative system that was reliable, secure and simple. The so-called Torrens system in South Australia which the British had established only a few years earlier was such an alternative. The Torrens system issues land titles by registration not by grant as in the *geran* system. Before obtaining a title, a transfer of land had to be registered at a government land office. Underhand dealings or unclear ownership were avoided. In addition, land size and land use were prescribed in the title and could therefore be restricted or taxed accordingly. In 1882, William Maxwell, a British official in Malaya, went to Australia to study the

²⁴² Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2

²⁴³ Jackson, James C. (1968). *Planters and Speculators. Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786-1921*. Kuala Lumpur : 14

²⁴⁴ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 119

Torrens system.²⁴⁵ Maxwell became Resident of Selangor in 1889 and began to implement the new system. In 1897, the Selangor Land Enactment,²⁴⁶ which was based on the Torrens system, was passed. From now on, land was registered in the so-called 'Mukim Register'. In Malay, mukim is the subdivision of a district or sub-district. "Each State capital has a central Registration of Titles Office to deal with large land grants, and each administrative district has its own Land Office to handle grants below four hectares in size. At the district level, land registration is based on areal sub-divisions of varying sizes known as mukims."²⁴⁷ With the implementation of the Torrens system, land became a transferable and valuable commodity. "Land began to be registered under individual names; the procedure for alienation was clearly specified; the transfer of ownership was regulated and guaranteed legally. These characteristics of the Register all contributed to the rapid commoditization of land. [...] In retrospect it is the Mukim Register, among other things, which bred and nurtured Malay attachment to land ownership, although not necessarily to the land itself."²⁴⁸

These changes signalled that the phase of colonial obtrusion in Malaya was concluded. It was succeeded by a phase of colonial consolidation. By forming the Federated Malay States with its capital in Kuala Lumpur in 1896, the British achieved a resemblance of individual legal and administrative particulars in these states. In 1911, the various land codes of 1897 were transformed to uniform land enactments that were effective in all states. The codes were implemented slowly and gradually rather than ad-hoc because each state still had its own leadership with its own particulars. But in the end, legal control over the process of land distribution in all states was achieved. The unified land codes were a prerequisite for the economic doctrine of *laissez-faire* that the British followed unconditionally. The free flow of capital, land and labour were its essential ingredients. The goal was to market the Federated Malay States as an attractive ground for prospect investors, especially estate farmers. Coincidentally, a new wave of unimaginable planting activity appeared in Malaya rather sooner than later.

The discovery of vulcanisation in the mid 19th century by Charles Goodyear opened a wide field of possible uses for natural rubber. The first major industrial application were bicycle tires, but rubber was soon introduced to various other industrial uses and consumer products. The demand grew quickly and set off the Amazon Rubber Boom in the northern part of Brazil, the only known place on earth where the plant was domestic. During the heyday of industrialisation, European influence in Brazil was minimal. The country gained its independence in the 1830s. Consequently, British explorers and botanists tried to get hold of rubber seeds to cultivate the plant outside Brazil. A similar climate and a consolidated colonial power suggested this step to happen in Southeast Asia. In 1876, the first rubber seedlings (*Hevea brasiliensis*) were smuggled to London and one year later transferred to Singapore. A long phase of experimental planting and

²⁴⁵ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2

²⁴⁶ Ibid. : 119

²⁴⁷ Voon, Phin Keong (1978). *Evolution of Ethnic Patterns of Rural Land Ownership in Peninsular Malaysia: A Case Study*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 15, Number 4 : 510

²⁴⁸ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 120

tapping followed as rubber trees take five to seven years until they can be tapped.²⁴⁹ In 1896, Tan Chay Yan, a Chinese merchant and philanthropist, planted the first 40 acres of rubber in Malaya on his estate at Bukit Lintang near Malacca. Since the prices for other cash crops were relatively high and large scale rubber planting was still a complex undertaking, it took several more years until further planting took place on the Malay peninsular. But with a growing demand, especially from the US automobile industry, the price for rubber rose dramatically. By 1898, Tan Chay Yan's plantation had grown to 3,000 acres.²⁵⁰ Techniques in planting and tapping were improved and soon rubber became the prime cash crop in the Federated Malay States.

Before rubber was brought to Malaya, ownership of land was not a priority. The British Resident of Malaya Frank Swettenham noted "Land had no value in the Malay States of 1874 and it was the custom for anyone to settle where he pleased on unoccupied and unclaimed land."²⁵¹ The planting of rubber changed these practises fundamentally. "The conversion of jungle land into a rubber holding rendered the land into an instant transferrable property and the smallholder's most valuable possession."²⁵² Land became a commercial commodity and the cultivation of rubber influenced the population and colonisation of Malay land instantly. "Whereas mining tended to [be] an 'introverted' economic activity pursued by the Chinese community and bearing marginally on the rest of the population, agricultural development affected virtually all communities. Also, whereas mining involved utilization of [relatively] small areas of land, agriculture occupied enormous areas."²⁵³

Two types of rubber plantations emerged in the first years of cultivation. One are smallholdings, second are estates. Smallholdings were below 100 acres and subdivided into medium holdings, 25 acres to 100 acres, and true smallholdings below 25 acres. Estates were much larger and roughly the size of 100 acres to several 1,000 acres.²⁵⁴ These different types of cultivation separated the rubber production not only in size, but also along ethnic lines.

It was mostly local Malays and Chinese who began to operate smallholdings. "Smallholding agriculture was the result of spontaneous pioneering during a period when land was abundant."²⁵⁵ The plantations were either an extension of existing Malay kampung agriculture, or separate smallholdings on land the peasants owned or occupied close to their kampungs. Often, rubber was interplanted along other crops. The Chinese mostly set up new plantations and settlements, solely for the purpose of rubber cultivation. To both groups, large capital investments were neither available nor necessary. Smallholdings could be managed with a limited number of

²⁴⁹ Drabble, John H. (1991). *Malayan Rubber: The Interwar Years*. London

²⁵⁰ See Figure 9

²⁵¹ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 118

²⁵² Voon, Phin Keong (1995). *The Changing Human Ecology of Smallholding Agriculture in Malaysia*. Studies in Regional Science, Volume 8, Number 3-15 : 5

²⁵³ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 81

²⁵⁴ Drabble, John H. (1991). *Malayan Rubber: The Interwar Years*. London

²⁵⁵ Voon, Phin Keong (1995). *The Changing Human Ecology of Smallholding Agriculture in Malaysia*. Studies in Regional Science, Volume 8, Number 3-15 : 4

workers or, as true smallholdings, run by a family in addition to the regular peasantry work as many Malays did. "Significantly too, unlike most crops, its production was not seasonal but provided a source of income almost on a daily basis."²⁵⁶ In comparison, the return on rubber was much bigger compared to any other cash crops. As a result, "rubber decisively committed a large number of Malay peasants in different parts of Malaya to cash cropping and thus to money economy".²⁵⁷ Clearly, rubber was a severe encroachment on the traditional kampung ecology. By far the biggest disruption was the sale of land. During the initial phase of planting, many Malay owners of smallholdings saw an opportunity in a quick return of their planting efforts by selling their land together with the planted seedlings or trees. The profit obtained, especially if sold to larger estates or land agents, was enormous.²⁵⁸ But in the long run, these peasants lost their basis of livelihood.²⁵⁹

The planting of rubber also influenced the settlement patterns. "The advent of rubber smallholdings saw the emergence of a settlement type consisting of clusters of houses located at or near the holdings to produce a dispersed settlement pattern generally served by a network of footpaths. Scattered throughout the holdings were processing sheds where the rubber latex was coagulated into thin sheets to reduce its high water content for ease of transport to the nearest rubber dealer. Among the more progressive smallholders these sheets were sent for drying in an air-tight chamber or smokehouse."²⁶⁰ Initially, these settlements were not more than working camps for immigrant tappers, mostly from Tamil Nadu in India. Over time, they became Indian communities, of which remainders could be seen in Kuala Lumpur until a few years ago.²⁶¹

The existing traditional kampungs underwent changes, too. The close knit Malay family structure was mostly maintained, but challenged by a new economy in which the exchange of goods and services was based on money. The place where this happened appeared in form of the so-called *kedai*. "The *kedai* was a small shop, usually owned by a non-Malay trader, stocking a wide array of products including metal articles, oil, soap, tinned foodstuffs and cigarettes. They had sprung up in all parts of the country where opportunities for selling goods and buying local produce existed and, besides being a source of market and money relations, stimulated new demands among a peasantry whose material requirements had previously been limited and had been met by self production."²⁶² Planting rubber offered the opportunity to participate in this growing market economy. Regrettably, the temptation of many Malay peasants for even more money was satisfied by selling ancestral land.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2 : 109

²⁵⁸ Hagan, Jim and Wells, Andrew (2005). *The British and Rubber in Malaya, c 1890–1940*. Conference Paper, University of Wollongong

²⁵⁹ Kato, Tsuyoshi (1991). *When Rubber Came: The Negeri Sembilan Experience*. Southeast Asian Studies, Volume 29, Number 2

²⁶⁰ Voon, Phin Keong (1995). *The Changing Human Ecology of Smallholding Agriculture in Malaysia*. Studies in Regional Science, Volume 8, Number 3–15 : 5

²⁶¹ Nagarajan, S. and Willford, Andrew (2014). *The last plantations in Kuala Lumpur*. In: Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York

²⁶² Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 264

In contrast to smallholdings, estate plantations were large scale and long term investments by multinational companies, mostly under Britain leadership. In order to attract these foreign investors, the British administration had to make sure that three elements were readily available. A flow of capital to safeguard long term investments in land and infrastructure, a large workforce of immigrant tappers, and an abundance of available and transferable land. All of these measures were made available at a rapid pace and it was not long until rubber took off at an unimaginable scale.

To provide the needed capital, international banks opened so-called agency houses and local branches in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Simultaneously, the government set up the Planters Loan Fund in 1904 to make additional capital available for local investors. Estate plantations were favoured and offered generous tax incentives. The road infrastructure was continuously expanded to the hinterland and the train connection between Klang and Kuala Lumpur was further improved. Land with newly built road frontage was offered preferably to estates and land that was less suitable for agriculture use was left for smallholdings.²⁶³ As rubber tapping and processing was labour intensive, "estate labor was recruited from the Tamil population of southern India, and it was during this period that the greatest number of Indians entered Malaya."²⁶⁴ In 1908, the government set up the Tamil Immigrant Fund to support the transfer of Indian labour for plantation work. The population of the Federated Malay States more than doubled between 1891 and 1911, from 419,000 to 1,037,000 people.²⁶⁵ This growth was mainly caused by immigrant workers. The demand for estate land rose at an exponential rate and the recently established land registration based on the Torrens system was an ideal tool to satisfy the request for large areas of land. In addition, it helped the colonial government to lease land to planters on the basis of extremely low peppercorn rents. In 1906, the quit rent for agricultural land was fixed at \$1 per acre per year.²⁶⁶

In summary, the dynamics set in motion were simply staggering. In 1905 and 1906 the price for rubber reached an undreamt-of historic high, only to be topped in 1909 and 1910.²⁶⁷ "There was frenetic activity as planters, speculators, adventurers and an assortment of other people, bitten by the rubber bug, flooded the western [Malay] states, buying and selling land, planting new fields and converting old ones. In five hectic years between 1905 and 1909, the acreage of rubber planted in the Federated Malay States increased sevenfold, and at the end of 1909 there was a total of 377 estates with a combined area of half a million acres."²⁶⁸ It is safe to say that the first

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Wilson, Peter J. (1967). *A Malay Village and Malaysia*. New Haven : 15

²⁶⁵ Butcher, John G. (1979). *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*. Kuala Lumpur

²⁶⁶ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University

²⁶⁷ Zephyr, Frank and Musacchio, Aldo (2008). *The International Natural Rubber Market, 1870-1930*. EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples. 16 March 2008. Retrieved from: <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-international-natural-rubber-market-1870-1930>

²⁶⁸ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 82

decade of the 20th century changed the Malay peninsula forever. The British had established a political and administrative framework that worked very well in the sense of colonial exploitation. The Malay sultans were satisfied with their share in taxation, investors were able to do more than a worthwhile business and the British oversaw an ever growing revenue from the balance of trade surplus. This perfect equilibrium was challenged by three local issues.

The first was the fact that the land sales of local Malays increased. "In Selangor State, for example, a total of 1,854 agricultural holdings comprising 3,027 ha [7,480 acres] were transferred from Malays either to other ethnic groups or to planting companies in 1909 and 1910, and half of these transactions involved kampung land."²⁶⁹ The consequences of these sales were not yet clear and discussed controversially among the British Residents. They feared to lose control of their colony if the Malay peasants would continue to sell off their ancestral land. In the state of Selangor, a growing number of Chinese and Indian immigrants²⁷⁰ already outnumbered the Malay population. Thus, the British covertly developed the idea that the Malays had to be 'protected' from self marginalisation of their own descent and cultural belonging. This argumentation was stirred by the premise that a settled Malay population would satisfy the Malay sultans and thus support colonial power.

The second issue was the widespread participation of Malays in planting rubber. Although Malay (and Chinese) smallholdings were small in size compared to estates, their combined number made up a substantial part of the overall rubber production and its revenue. It is estimated that the ratio of production output at that time was about 60 per cent estates and 40 per cent smallholdings.²⁷¹ The smallholdings were often criticised for their inefficient planting techniques, but these numbers suggest that they were quite successful. In the eyes of the British, this was unnecessary competition for estate owners and restricting Malays from planting rubber was an openly discussed option.

The third and last issue was the insufficient supply of locally produced food, especially against the backdrop of an exponentially growing population. The reason for the decline of sawah, coconut, fruit and vegetable cultivation was the high value of rubber. Its cash returns per acre were on average three to five times more compared to any other crop.²⁷² Although local peasants rarely abandoned homestead agriculture completely, everybody wanted to plant rubber.

Sticking to their economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*, the British saw, for the moment, no reason to interfere with these issues. But the sheer amount of land sales during the first rubber boom was so high that many officials, especially on state level, started to question the idleness of the

²⁶⁹ Voon, Phin Keong (1976). *Malay Reservations and Malay Land Ownership in Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih Mukims Selangor*. Modern Asian Studies, Volume 10, Number 4 : 517

²⁷⁰ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 117

²⁷¹ Drabble, John H. (1991). *Malayan Rubber: The Interwar Years*. London

²⁷² Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 298

government. In October 1908, the British Residents of the four Malay States decided to meet during a conference to discuss the consequences of the land sales, the plantation activities and its influence on the agricultural production. They were not able to agree on a solution, except that planting rubber in smallholdings was now taxed significantly higher compared to pure kampung cultivation. The intention was to motivate the Malay peasantry in planting foodstuff and to protect the estate plantations from competition. "The British encouraged the Malay settler to regard the kampung as the 'permanent abiding place of himself and his children'. (Selangor Secretariat Files, No. 3170, 1910) The subsistence economy of the kampung and its environs was based on sedentary cultivation of rice, coconuts, fruits, or even rubber. [It] was therefore the nucleus of Malay rural settlement and prosperity, and must form the backbone of the subsistence sector of the national economy."²⁷³ The Malays were expected to be peasants on their own land, not planters for commercial crops, especially rubber. Another conference of the Residents in November 1911 brought the issue of the land sales to a Federal level and a "draft legislation to prohibit the sale of ancestral Malay lands to non-Malays"²⁷⁴ was prepared. At about the same time, the Land Enactment of 1911 for the Federated Malay States attempted to incorporate all aspects of land administration concerning ownership, land transaction, types of land and the power of the Residents. The enactment further streamlined the marketability of land but did not specify the transfer of Malay land which was still ongoing.

After two more years of discussion, in November 1913, the Malay Reservations Enactment was adopted and passed in 1914. In its core, the law stipulated that land defined as Malay Reservation Areas (MRA) was not allowed to be sold to non-Malays. In the first section of the law, Malays were defined as people of Malay race and of Islamic faith. Interestingly, the initial proposal of the enactment was quite different from its final version. "The first draft had sought to impose limitations on the disposal of kampong lands which were defined as all country land held by Malays and such land as the Ruler of the State declared. The final draft, however, sought only to impose limitations on land with gazetted MRA's and appears to have worked on the assumption that all Malay lands were not necessarily kampong lands; that protection would only be required within certain selected localities and that Malays should be able to take up land with a view to disposal."²⁷⁵ This is a significant difference and reveals that the initial idea was the universal protection of all land occupied by Malay people. The status quo of all existing Malay areas would have been the basis for the reservations. But the final law only refers to areas that are selected by the British Residents who were empowered to declare any land in their state as Malay reserve land. As a result, it was the British who picked 'suitable' land to announce as Malay reservations.

At first, the land chosen was mainly in remote areas away from the dynamic economic spheres. A strategy about the location of reservation areas was clearly missing. Surprisingly, the alienation

²⁷³ Voon, Phin Keong (1976). *Malay Reservations and Malay Land Ownership in Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih Mukims Selangor*. Modern Asian Studies, Volume 10, Number 4 : 516f

²⁷⁴ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 151

²⁷⁵ Ibid. : 152

process developed very slowly. It is difficult to say why and it can only be speculated that the British administration was simply not willing nor prepared for the additional and complex selection, subdivision and alienation of reserve land. Most likely, priority was given to the subdivision of marketable land for foreign estate plantations. "In August 1917, there were 35 Malay reservations throughout the state [of Selangor]. A notable feature of these reservations was their small area – the largest was a 3,700 acre reservation in Klang – indicating the small number of indigenous peasants and also the growing scarcity of land due to the rapid strides in plantation and mining development."²⁷⁶ Another factor that slowed down progress was the economic downturn caused by the First World War. As a result, Malay Reservations were too small to be agriculturally significant and too isolated to integrate the Malay peasants into the local economic cycle. Furthermore, they were designated by so-called cultivation conditions such as *tanah kampung* (kampung land), *dusun* (orchard), *sawah* (rice), *kelapa* (coconut) or *getah* (rubber) land (06.24 p.30).²⁷⁷ A buyer had to decide on the intended cultivation beforehand. Rubber cultivation was taxed significantly higher as it was a 'non-food' condition.

I will argue that MRAs can be divided in roughly three groups. Historically, the first two groups were located in rural areas. They were either set up on empty land where settlers built new kampungs on the land acquired. Or, MRAs were simply existing traditional kampungs in rural areas that were declared as reservations. The settlement pattern for both groups was similar to traditional kampungs. It was influenced by the overall size of the area, the topography and the distribution of individual land lots which were sized between 2.5 acres to 3.5 acres. Houses were built in the traditional Malay style, with fruit trees and vegetable gardens in between. The agricultural subdivision was laid out in rectangular plots, a clear difference to the irregular patterns of traditional kampungs from the past. Rubber trees were common sight, especially at the fringes. The third group were MRAs near or in urbanised areas which had only limited space for agricultural use. The subdivision was purely residential and resulted in uniform settlement patterns of same sized housing plots. Rare examples of such settlements are Kampung Baru or Kampung Datuk Keramat.²⁷⁸

Land applications for MRAs had to be made to the government through a local penghulu who then forwarded the requests to the district office. In effect, many Malay peasants either applied for land outside reservations or breached the cultivation conditions.²⁷⁹ Others preferred reservation land as it offered an undisturbed lifestyle set apart from the plantation and mining activities of foreigners. Acquiring land in a reservation was a trade-off because there were two main drawbacks. First, the lower resale value compared to unrestricted land as it was only sellable or transferable to Malays. Second, the cultivation conditions which limited the freedom of land use. What started as an attempt to protect the local Malays by halting the transfer of ancestral land

²⁷⁶ Ibid. : 155

²⁷⁷ Shamsul, A. B. (1986). *From British to Bumiputera Rule - Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*. Singapore : 30

²⁷⁸ See Chapter 2.2.2.

²⁷⁹ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 159

ended in the restriction of cultivation rights. Of course, this argument does not hold true for the few MRA's in urban areas.

At first, the impact of MRAs on land ownership and agricultural production was relatively insignificant. Between 1911 and 1916, the Federated Malay States imported an average of 190,000 tons of rice annually or approximately 82 per cent of its annual consumption.²⁸⁰ In essence, all foreign labour was fed by imported foodstuff. This was only possible as long as the export economy was heavily benefitting from the surplus of the main commodities tin and rubber. Several enactments (Rice Lands Enactment, Coconut Palms Preservation Enactment and Food Production Enactment) were installed in 1917 and 1918 to foster agricultural production and simultaneously stem the production of rubber. Yet, none of these measures significantly changed the local food production. There was a limited growth from so-called market gardening activities of Chinese peasants, a type of cultivation which originated from the pig and poultry farms established during the heydays of mining. But overall, the provision of agricultural products for the local market remained low.

The demand for rubber rose again after the First World War and led to increasing planting activities. The existing smallholdings continued with their rubber output and more estates were opened, mostly by foreign investors. At the time, all plantations were producing at a maximum output and in 1920, there were roughly 1.7 million acres of rubber planted in Malaya. This renewed boom led to an overproduction and caused prices to fall drastically. Although the British controlled close to three-quarter of the total world rubber market, they found strong competition from plantations in the Dutch East Indies and attempts to produce synthetic rubber in Russia and the United States. The Stevenson Rubber Restriction Scheme from 1922 to 1928 aimed for a limitation of global production in the hope for rising prices. The export of rubber from Malaya (and Ceylon) was restricted successfully and prices increased, reaching new heights in 1929 before falling steeply during the world economic crisis. "The depression lasted for more than four years and, during this locust period in the country's economic history, exports fetched less than one quarter the value they attained in the dizzy years of the 20s."²⁸¹

The constant economic ups and downs caused two crises that developed gradually and rather unnoticed. In research, both issues are described as isolated events. But I will argue that both events are connected as they had a common origin which is the problematic and irresponsible dealings of the government with the resource of land. More importantly, both events had unforeseen consequences, especially for the future development of new settlements.

The first issue concerned the Chinese *squatters*. The incalculable economic situation during the 1920s and 1930s left many Chinese labourers in dire straits. As a consequence, a significant part of them became squatters. Historically, the term was used for (European) immigrants in Australia

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid. : 212

that settled on unoccupied land. In Malaya, squatters first appeared during the early mining activities. When Chinese miners faced economic hardship or transformation, their strategy of survival was to settle on empty land to cultivate food for their own or community use.²⁸² In the formative years of British colonial rule, this was not an unusual practise. Land was available in abundance and the Chinese immigrants were considered labour that did not deserve much attention. "The only title to their land which they could hope for was a temporary occupation license (TOL) renewable from year to year, if so approved, for it was government policy not to alienate land for smallholdings to peasants other than Malays".²⁸³ The location of the squatter settlements was in remote areas between towns and unoccupied jungle land. With each economic slump, their number increased. Squatters made a strong contrast compared to the wealthy Chinese merchants and business owners in urban areas. But squatters were not necessarily poor or unproductive. Most of them worked as wage labourers in mines or on estate farms. Their lack of legal land ownership only became visible after Malay reservations were introduced. Compared to the governments efforts towards Malay settlers, the Chinese squatters did not receive any attention. It is estimated that at the end of the 1930s 150,000 squatters lived in Malaya,²⁸⁴ forming a very large group among the overall Chinese population. The future outcome of this 'illegal' settlement practise will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1.2.3.

The second issue concerned the gradual indebtedness of Malay peasants. In general, their fortune was depending on the advancement of the global economy and they had to go along with its rational. Many were flexible enough to adjust their farming efforts between homestead production, cash crops and rubber. This success was mostly enjoyed by owners of smallholdings. This type of plantation was manageable in size, required low capital investments and allowed for a variation in crops. But there were many others who "easily became indebted – to pay for daily and occasional needs, to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca or for other commitments"²⁸⁵ This indebtedness was caused by a common habit of using land as security for loans. At the time, moneylenders from India, so-called *chettiers*, and Chinese money traders, were a common sight in Malaya. The local peasants, still learning the trades of the monetary economy, were an easy target. All peasants were affected by this, but the ones in reservation areas were especially prone to mortgaging their land. It seems that the legal situation was not fully clarified either. Reservation land could not be sold to foreigners but apparently mortgaged. It is revealing that in 1933, the colonial government imposed amendments to the existing Malay Reservations Enactment. The declared goal of the law was to prevent moneylenders from holding land in reservations as security. "The long-term effect of the [amended Malay Reservations Enactment] was to completely destroy the use of reservation land as a source of security for loans."²⁸⁶ This suggests

²⁸² Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 20

²⁸³ Gullick, John Michael (1963). *Malaya*. London

²⁸⁴ Lim, Hin Fui and Fong, Tian Yong (2005). *The New Villages in Malaysia - the Journey Ahead*. Kuala Lumpur

²⁸⁵ Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - In-Situ Urbanization of Villages and their Land around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore : 38

²⁸⁶ Ghee, Lim Teck (1971). *Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malaya - Its Development in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang*. Thesis, Australian National University : 259

that the indebtedness of peasants was especially common in Malay reservations. And that the loss of land must have advanced over the past 20 years. The law was a significant intrusion to the economic development of MRAs and makes dealings with reserve land very problematic, until today.

The years before the Second World War were determined by unpredictable prices for tin and rubber. This ongoing challenge was met with the International Rubber Regulation Scheme between 1934 and 1943. During this period, no additional land was alienated for rubber in Malaya. The existing estates produced more than enough output. As food imports were becoming a serious cost factor, the colonial government tried to support the local rice production with publicly funded rice mills and improvements of drainage and irrigation schemes. In the mid 1930s, the government undertook sawah cultivation projects in Sungai Manik (Perak) and Panchang Bedena (Selangor), two large areas located on flat land close to the coast. For the first time, rice was cultivated in a collective form and at a large scale in contrast to the homestead farming of the kampungs. This was a clear indication that the sole effort of traditional kampung agriculture was not a successful path for the future. The Federated States were shifting from pioneering towards planned cultivation and made kampungs in its traditional form look outdated. The development towards collective forms of agriculture was further enhanced in the so-called *FELDA* (Federal Land Development Authority) schemes in the 1950s.²⁸⁷

Before the Second World War, the total area of Malay Reservations stood at around 15–20 per cent of all land. This percentage differed significantly from state to state. At the time, MRAs can be characterised as introverted and economically stagnant. They benefitted from protection but with the effect of being isolated from the dynamics of economic development. Today, there are still six Malay Reservation Areas in Kuala Lumpur. Their character ranges from urbanised inner city neighbourhoods to isolated quarters in the tradition of agricultural kampungs.

²⁸⁷ Shamsul, A.B. and Athi, S.M. (2015) *Ethnicity and identity formation - Colonial knowledge, colonial structures and transition*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 273

1.2.3. Briggs Plan – New Villages

Simultaneously to the attacks on Pearl Harbour on December 7th 1941, Malaya was attacked by the Japanese Imperial Army. The first landing was in Kota Bahru, a town on the East coast close to the Thai border. After a daylong battle the city fell in the hands of Japanese troops. Within just two months, British Malaya was under Japanese control. "As the British retreated to Singapore from which to mount a counter-attack, they carried out a 'scorched earth' policy. Various government and industrial installations were burned and destroyed so as to prevent them falling into the hands of the Japanese."²⁸⁸ This affected especially the tin mines which were sabotaged and rendered unusable. The counter-attack never happened and with the fall of Singapore on February 15th 1942, the British Colonial government was forced to surrender. From the start, the Chinese population was treated with particular cruelty. Malays and Indians were spared from this treatment as they largely cooperated with the Japanese. During the Sook Ching massacres, tens of thousands of Chinese were killed by the Japanese army. This was mainly motivated by the Japanese resentment against Chinese going back to the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. During the occupation of Malaya, the Japanese aimed to put an end to any support of Communist power in mainland China.

Under British colonial rule, there were only few active political organisations in Malaya. The most prominent was the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which was officially forbidden and operated undercover. During the Japanese occupation, MCP members retreated to the jungle and started to organise a paramilitary guerrilla that soon became known as the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, MPAJA. It developed into a crucial resistance organisation fighting against the Japanese, supported and partially trained by British SOE (Special Operations Executive) agents.²⁸⁹ The anti-Japanese resentment among Chinese helped the MPAJA to draw large support from the Chinese population in Malaya. The paramilitary organisation grew quickly and was supported by local Chinese with "food, supplies, intelligence and recruits".²⁹⁰ The suppressive methods of the Japanese and the problematic supply of food caused many Chinese workers to flee to remote areas outside the cities where they squatted. "What was novel was that these mine workers were joined by many thousands of other urban Chinese, who like themselves feared the Japanese, and were faced with food shortages in the urban areas."²⁹¹ Within just a few months of Japanese occupation, a massive urban to rural migration took place. Their number increased dramatically and it was especially the squatters under which the MPAJA was able to establish a stronghold. At the end of the Japanese occupation, Malaya was in a dreadful state. Many villages and cities were destroyed and many tin mines and rubber plantations ceased

²⁸⁸ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 57

²⁸⁹ Burleigh, Michael (2013). *Small Wars, Faraway Places - Global Insurrection and the Making of the Modern World, 1945-1965*. New York

²⁹⁰ Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1973). *Emergency Settlement in Malaya*. In: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore : xxxii

²⁹¹ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 59

operation. Tens of thousands of people were displaced.²⁹² The supply of food was especially problematic and caused inflationary prices on the black market. The number of squatters had risen to about 400,000 people.²⁹³

When the Japanese army surrendered on August 15th 1945, the British returned to their former colony. Their main interest was to quickly establish political stability and rebuild the country in order to exploit raw materials. After all, Malaya was their biggest source of income and it was expected to become an essential factor to ease the grim debts of the Second World War. But evidently, the war had changed the socio-political context in Asia and the British came to the realisation that political stability had to be built up from inside. With this in mind, the short-lived Malayan Union was established in 1946. It was based on the idea of a gradual decolonisation and granting extensive citizenship to Chinese and Indians who already lived in Malaya. This idea was opposed by the Malay administration and formed the beginning of a Malay "nationalism [that] became Malaya-wide as its appeal transcended traditional political boundaries."²⁹⁴ For the first time, Malay independence was publicly discussed as a medium-term possibility and Malay nationalist started to work for this goal. With growing pressure from this Malay nationalist movement and its political leadership in form of the newly found United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Union was replaced in early 1948 by the Federation of Malaya. Its government was headed by a British High Commissioner and assisted by an appointed Legislative Council. The local Sultans were reinstalled to direct the individual States,²⁹⁵ resulting in a central government with a strong emphasis on Malay tradition and legislative power.

A narrow majority of the population was supportive of this development, although the local Chinese population clearly felt denounced. At the time, Malaya had a population of about 5.3 million of which 46 per cent were Malays, 38 per cent Chinese, eleven per cent Indians and four per cent other ethnics.²⁹⁶ The Chinese saw that their long standing loyalty towards the British and Malays was not taken seriously and they didn't feel adequately represented by the new government. The feeling of betrayal was strongest among the MCP and members of the dissolved MPAJA. In 1946, they had been honoured and decorated by the British for their efforts in fighting the Japanese and now they were politically dismissed.²⁹⁷ The Communists countered this shortfall rather sooner than later and began to carry out armed attacks. Their goal was a Communist takeover and until early 1948, they had murdered 298 individuals, a significant number that caused widespread fear among the population. "An atmosphere of bitterness and

²⁹² Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 41

²⁹³ Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

²⁹⁴ Watson Andaya, Barbara and Andaya, Leonard Y. (1982). *A History of Malaysia*. London : 248

²⁹⁵ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 12

²⁹⁶ Burleigh, Michael (2013). *Small Wars, Faraway Places - Global Insurrection and the Making of the Modern World, 1945-1965*. New York : 51

²⁹⁷ Shamsul, A. B. (1986). *From British to Bumiputera Rule - Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*. Singapore

defiance grew rapidly."²⁹⁸

As the economy was slowly restored over the next years, about 100,000 Chinese squatters²⁹⁹ moved back to their old jobs in the city or to revived rubber plantations and tin mines. However, about 300,000 of them remained on unregistered land where they cultivated vegetables and fruits and reared pigs or poultry. The unsolved issue of this illegal land occupation was not given much attention by the British. The first reason was that land was a matter of the individual States and the second was the squatters' valuable contribution to rebuilding the economy. The squatters' thriving cultivation activities brought some relief to the problematic supply of food.

Meanwhile, the Communists gained widespread influence, especially among labour organisations. They successfully organised strikes which caused serious economic disruptions³⁰⁰ and opposed the British rule of colonial exploitation. The MCP and its civilian arm, the so-called Min Yuen movement, were able to fill the lack of appreciation experienced by the Chinese during the formation of the post-war government. Because of the increasing anti-colonial distinction and agitation the MCP was once more forbidden. As a result, the party shifted its activities to an undercover organisation. "In early 1948, the communists decided to resort once again to armed struggle and set its bases in the jungles. It re-established its ties with the rural folks and renamed the MPAJA the Malay Races Liberation Army [MRLA]."³⁰¹ The former anti-Japanese guerrilla still had a stronghold in rural areas and was able to draw support, especially from Chinese squatters. Their location at the fringes of jungle land allowed for an easy exchange of food, intelligence or medical supplies. Squatters that refused to cooperate were forcefully compelled by the MRLA. In 1948, the MRLA intensified terror attacks "to strike at the vitally important tin and rubber industries, bring production to a standstill and thereby reduce the economic life of the country to chaos. [...] The avowed objective of the Malayan Communist Party was the establishment of an independent 'People's Democratic Republic' in Malaya. The sine qua non for this was the destruction of British control."³⁰² At this point, attacks on estates and mines with many casualties occurred almost daily.

By mid 1948, the government was increasingly unable to protect the civilian population. The authorities realised that the situation had gotten out of control. In June 1948, after the murder of three European planters in Perak, the Government of the Malay Federation reacted and declared a State of Emergency.³⁰³ The term 'war' or 'civil war' was avoided because insurance companies would have denied payouts for damages on infrastructure, mines or estates under the condition of wartime. A so-called Emergency Regulations Ordinance came into effect and gave the

²⁹⁸ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 5

²⁹⁹ Lim, Hin Fui and Fong, Tian Yong (2005). *The New Villages in Malaysia - the Journey Ahead*. Kuala Lumpur : 26

³⁰⁰ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica

³⁰¹ Lim, Hin Fui and Fong, Tian Yong (2005). *The New Villages in Malaysia - the Journey Ahead*. Kuala Lumpur : 26

³⁰² Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1973). *Emergency Settlement in Malaya*. In: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore : xxxiii

³⁰³ Souchou, Yao (2016). *The Malayan Emergency - A Small, Distant War*. Copenhagen

government unrestricted power to search, detain, evict and deport individuals without trial. But the guerrilla fighters in the jungle were untraceable and hard to come by. Therefore, the British started to randomly detain and deport Chinese squatters. It turned out that the detention of thousands of Chinese did not significantly improve the security of the civil population. And deportation had to be stopped in 1949 when the newly proclaimed People's Republic of China closed all seaports. Moreover, the number of squatters was simply too large and it was impossible to decide who is a supporter of the Communists. A so-called Squatter Committee was formed by the government to analyse the situation and recommend possible solutions. It was confirmed that the guerrilla fighters had strong ties with the Chinese population, especially to squatters. Food and equipment was transferred to the jungle as well as intelligence about the movement of service men and police forces. The Communists were well informed about the governments' whereabouts.

Instead of removing the squatters by detention and deportation, the recommendation of the Squatter Committee was to isolate them in order to cut off any contact with the Communist guerrilla. This could be achieved by resettlement. The committee also realised that wage labourers in mines and plantations would not return to their home country once they have saved some money. They were here to stay and in need of permanent settlement. Therefore, squatters should be placed in areas that are provided by the government. Challenging to this idea was the unsolved allocation of land. "The provision of legal titles, a real stake in the land, was seen by the Committee as the only long-term solution to the problem."³⁰⁴ This was accepted by the Federal Government, but opposed by the various Malay State governments. Land allocation was under their jurisdiction and they "were reluctant to appropriate funds or give up lands reserved for Malays to take care of Chinese squatters."³⁰⁵ It is safe to say that this view was guided by the ethnic resentment of the nationalist movement which spread amidst the Malay State governments. Thus, resettlement turned into a consideration which focussed on short-term security, not long-term integration.

The organisation, funding and responsibilities of the resettlement had to be clarified. This was a challenge for a government which was still about to find its role. In addition, police and military forces were hopelessly understaffed and not set up to ensure the necessary security. Therefore, the immediate implementation of the Squatter Committee's recommendations was difficult. For the time being, support came from the newly formed Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), a political party that was formed in February 1949 by members of the elitist Chinese business community. The MCA feared Communist influence and further economic disruption. They also sought to gain influence among rural Chinese, a group that was disconnected from their wealthy urban countrymen. "The cause of the squatters soon became the cause of the MCA, which offered financial aid for their resettlement as soon as action was taken on the recommendations

³⁰⁴ Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 174

³⁰⁵ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 54

of the Squatter Committee."³⁰⁶ Together with the state government of Johore, land was bought to settle detained squatters. In retrospect, one could argue that this was an early form of public-private partnership in Malaya. But unfortunately, the efforts of resettlement soon subsided. Having to deal with each state separately turned out to be complicated and the MCA's funding was limited. Meanwhile, the Communist guerrilla intensified their ambushes on army patrols, railways and buses across the entire country. Targeted were also tin mines and rubber plantations where technical equipment was sabotaged and raw material destroyed.

The British realised that the present piecemeal approach was not effective and that the unresolved funding of relocation efforts and land allocation caused a standstill of ongoing operations. Ultimately, local socio-economic and global political interests were at stake and the British ordered the Federal Government to take on a more active role.³⁰⁷

In May 1950, Sir Harold Briggs, a British General with profound experience in various foreign military missions was put in charge as Director of Operations and started to develop a plan of action. "The plan was based on the premise that the MRLA relied 'very largely for food, money, information and propaganda on the Min Yuen in the populated areas including towns and villages as well as uncontrolled squatter areas, unsupervised Chinese estates and small holdings, estate labour lines and timber kongsis'."³⁰⁸ The goal of the newly coined *Briggs Plan* was to gain back control over the security of Malaya.³⁰⁹ From now on, the responsibility and financing of operations lay with the Federal Government, whereas implementation lay with the corresponding State. This primary decision was accompanied by an organisational and operational framework of counter-insurgency techniques. "The Briggs Plan had four key components. He intended to clear the country, step by step, from South to North, by: A. dominating the populated areas and building up a feeling of complete security in them, with the object of obtaining a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources; B. breaking up with Min Yuen within the populated areas; C. thereby isolating the bandits from their food and information supply organisation in the populated areas; D. and finally destroying the bandits by forcing them to attack us on our own ground."³¹⁰

The coordination and close cooperation of civil administration and security forces became a crucial feature of counter-insurgency. Information was shared across all members of civil and military units and special police forces were formed to improve intelligence. This was a key component to understand the guerrillas course of action. Every state and every district started to build up designated security forces. The smallest units were Home Guards which were formed in each village. Briggs also changed the overall tone of the actions. The Chinese settlers should

³⁰⁶ Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1973). *Emergency Settlement in Malaya*. In: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore : xxxvi

³⁰⁷ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica

³⁰⁸ Arditti, Roger C. (2019). *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*. London : 135

³⁰⁹ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 19

³¹⁰ Arditti, Roger C. (2019). *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*. London : 135

rather be persuaded than forced in order to trust and work with the government. In reality, any resettlement was a severe and forced intrusion to the people affected and there is no account that the squatters had any right to a share in decisions. All these efforts required a high amount of logistics and money and the Malay government was willing and able to afford these costs. The reason was the onset of the Korean War that spurred the demand for rubber and tin. In 1950, the value of both commodities were at a record high and Malaya's treasury was well filled.³¹¹ At the core of Briggs strategy was the mass resettlement of squatters "in self-contained communities".³¹² Two kinds of resettlement need to be distinguished: relocation and regroupment.

Relocation was the transfer of mainly squatters but also dispersed legal settlers to confined, guarded and newly built relocation centres, soon called *New Villages*. In this approach "emphasis was given to resettlement in compact villages which although intrinsically different from the traditional loosely-knot kampungs or villages, could easily be defended."³¹³ In most cases, agricultural land around these New Villages was allocated to the settlers in addition to smaller plots inside the village. New Villages were guarded day and night and enclosed in form of a barbed wire fence. Inhabitants were still able to cultivate their agricultural fields outside the village, although under tight security measures. Within this relocation process fell the integration of squatters into existing kampungs, so-called close-settlement. This happened in areas where squatters lived just outside an existing kampung. The relocation successfully cut the ties to the Communists who then changed their strategy by infiltrating workers in mines and estates. This prompted a second resettlement process, called regroupment, starting in late 1951.

Regroupment was the transfer of dispersed workers of tin mines and rubber estates to guarded houses on the owners property. This process was in the responsibility of the individual mine or estate owner. The idea was to closely attach the workers and their families to their place of occupation. Simple and compact housing units, similar to the earlier kongsi houses, were built so that home guards were able to control the movement of the workers. Privately organised defence units were placed at estates, mines or factories at risk of attacks. It is estimated that about 650,000 persons had been regrouped during the Emergency.³¹⁴ The majority were Indian estate workers with 50 per cent, the rest were Chinese with 25 per cent, Malays with 16 per cent and Javanese with five per cent.³¹⁵ Despite this vast number of resettled persons, regroupment did not leave a lasting impact on the rural or urban settlement patterns in Malaya. The reason is a further transformation after Malaya's independence when so-called FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority) schemes were introduced and the nationalisation of private estates spurred once more an internal migration of workers. For this reason, I will only describe the process of relocation in greater detail as it has led to the lasting development of New Villages.

311 Souchou, Yao (2016). *The Malayan Emergency - A Small, Distant War*. Copenhagen : 103

312 Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 54

313 Sendut, Hamzah (1966). *Planning Resettlement Villages in Malaya*. Planning Outlook, Volume 1, Number 1-2 : 59

314 Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1973). *Emergency Settlement in Malaya*. In: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore : li

315 Coates, Henry John (1976). *An Operational Analysis of the Emergency in Malaya 1948-1954*. Thesis, Australian National University : 99

The entire relocation process took only two years. From 1950 to 1952, 573,000 people were transferred to 480 New Villages. 300,000 of these were squatters, 273,000 were legal land owners. The majority were farmers in rural areas who cultivated crops and wage labourers who worked in mines or on estates. 86 per cent of the New Village population were Chinese, nine per cent Malay, four per cent Indian and one per cent others.³¹⁶ In the state of Selangor, the total population for 49 New Villages was 97,346. These numbers derive from fieldwork in 1954.³¹⁷ The staggering speed in which New Villages were set up suggests an ad hoc planning process that was backed up by a tight and effective organisation on site. Responsible for planning and execution were so-called *District War Executive Committees* (DWEC), led by district officers. The committees were able to take civil and military decisions and worked in close cooperation with *State War Executive Committees* (SWEC) of similar stature.

After a squatter area had been identified for relocation, site surveys were done in order to determine a suitable alternative location. Sites in higher lying areas were preferred because they were not prone to floods and generally easier to control. Also preferred was a location on clear crossroads or close to main roads. In case of an attack, such locations had a better accessibility for security forces. Of course, these preferences were not always met. New Villages were built "in great haste and without any plan and, at the time of resettlement, meant to accommodate as many families as possible in a given area."³¹⁸ The existing number of persons living in a squatter area to be relocated determined the approximate size of a New Village. Ideally, the new settlements were erected in areas close to existing agricultural fields so that farmers were able to walk or bike from the village to these fields. In some instances settlers were moved too far from existing fields and were therefore given about two acres of alternative land within approximately two miles of the new location. In reality, many settlers had to abandon their previous fields and took on new job opportunities as wage earners in the tin and rubber industry or as workers in urbanised areas. Despite the initial emphasis on agricultural production, its output declined.³¹⁹ Sixty per cent of the villages had a population between 100 to 1,000 persons, 35 per cent between 1,000 to 5,000 persons. The remaining few were above these numbers. The largest New Village with 13,000 persons was Jinjang, located in the north of Kuala Lumpur's city centre. On average, the plot sizes were about one-sixth of an acre per family. This included a house and garden to plant vegetables and fruits. The necessary land was acquired by the Federal Government and allocated by the individual States. In most cases, settlers were only given a Temporary Occupation Licence (TOL). This shows that the initial intention to improve the social condition of squatters was reduced to the primary agenda of resettlement as a military effort to fight Communist infiltration.

³¹⁶ Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1973). *Emergency Settlement in Malaya*. In: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore : xli

³¹⁷ Sandhu, Kernial Singh (1964). *The Saga of the 'Squatter' in Malaya: A Preliminary Survey of the Causes, Characteristics and Consequences of the Resettlement of Rural Dwellers During the Emergency Between 1948 and 1960*. *Journal of Southeast Asia History*, Volume 5, Number 1

³¹⁸ Khoo, S. H. and Voon, P. K. (1975). *Rural-Urban Migration in Peninsular Malaysia - A Case Study of Sungei Ruan New Village, Pahang*. *Ekistics*, Volume 39, Number 235 : 406

³¹⁹ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore

The layout of a New Village was based on a Cartesian grid, mostly parallel rows of houses with alternating roads and pathways in between. This simple and rigid pattern was adjusted according to the natural topography and outline of the proposed site. These elementary principles of design were used "because of the need for quick implementation and the lack of available trained staff."³²⁰ The building process was equally simple, yet notable. "The government supplied the sites and basic construction materials (walls, posts and roofs), while the settlers were expected to find their own materials and labour to complete the houses."³²¹ Other sources mention the reuse of building material from old squatter houses.³²² This process resulted in a hybrid mix of standardised and individual do-it-yourself construction made of wood with atap or zinc roofs. The overall look of the houses varied from village to village, yet the layout of the street grid made for a uniform appearance. Some sources imply that all New Villages looked alike.³²³ This is incorrect, because only a brief research of available photographs from various sources^{324, 325} reveals a high degree of differentiation that reflects the practice of the construction mentioned above. It can be assumed that the planning and building process strongly depended on the local condition of the site, the practical skills of the builders and the availability of materials.

In order to cut any contact between the Communist insurgents and the settlers, every New Village was surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Entry and exit was strictly monitored and a police post, sometimes with watchtower, was built near the entrance or guard house. It is no surprise that the local Malays called the villages internment camps. A general curfew was imposed and settlers were only allowed to leave for their jobs or work in the fields between 6am and 6pm. It was not allowed to bring any food or supplies outside the village. An eye witness reported, "the fence of our village opened only at 6.00 a.m. We could bring water and 10 cigarettes. No food or medicine was allowed to be brought along. Bicycle- and body-check were carried out at the gate (check point) to prevent any possible delivery of foodstuff or medical supply that may find its way to the communist insurgents. The gate opened from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. As such we must return before the closing hour."³²⁶

The completion of hundreds of New Villages was immediately cutting ties between squatters and guerrilla. "The Communists were forced into a desperate search for recruits, money, information, food and other supplies".³²⁷ Chin Peng, the Communist Party Secretary conceded "The Briggs

³²⁰ Home, Robert (1997). *Of Planting and Planning - The Making of British Colonial Cities*. London : 239

³²¹ Ibid. : 238

³²² Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 176

³²³ Home, Robert (1997). *Of Planting and Planning - The Making of British Colonial Cities*. London : 198

³²⁴ Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

³²⁵ Lim, Hin Fui and Fong, Tian Yong (2005). *The New Villages in Malaysia - the Journey Ahead*. Kuala Lumpur

³²⁶ Lim, Hin Fui and Fong, Tian Yong (2005). *The New Villages in Malaysia - the Journey Ahead*. Kuala Lumpur : 32

³²⁷ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 135

Plan [...] began directly affecting our food supplies by the first half of 1951."³²⁸ Briggs ended his 18 month term at the end of 1951. But the confrontation was far from over. In October 1951, Communist fighters carried out the assassination of British High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney. The killing was a shock for Malaya and made the Communists appear stronger and more unpredictable than ever. The newly elected government in London under Prime Minister Winston Churchill reacted with heightened efforts³²⁹ to stop the Communist insurgents. In February 1952, Sir Gerald Templer was appointed as High Commissioner and Director of Operations. With both top civil and military posts in one hand for the first time, Templer's power was almost limitless and he spared no effort to achieve the defeat of the Communists. "He tightened the Emergency Regulations, intensified intelligence gathering, and boosted the training of troops and police. The resettlement and regrouping of squatter-farmers had been completed, and now Templer would turn the New Villages into a 'battleground' in which food denial, collective punishment and the winning of hearts and minds were to be carried out."³³⁰

Templer divided Malaya in 'black' and 'white' areas and became notorious for his carrot-and-stick approach. In black areas, Communist insurgency or support thereof was still prevalent and had to be dried up. Entire villages were held accountable and all of its residents interrogated. They were forced to make confessions of the whereabouts of collaborators or guerrilla fighters. Nobody was allowed to leave the village and food was rationed to a minimum. These strict measures were in addition to the mandatory identity card registration that had been introduced in order to uncover collaborators of the Min Yuen movement. Its members had infiltrated the Chinese population and proved to be the main source of information for the Communists. If collaborators were uncovered or guerrilla fighters surrendered, the harsh Emergency regulations were slowly lifted and eventually the area was declared white. In the case of New Villages, barbed wire fences were put down and guard houses dismantled. The measures soon showed the desired effects. By the end of 1953, Communist support had died down and more and more areas were declared as white.

From 1953 onwards New Villages were equipped with a variety of social, educational and medical facilities.³³¹ This was part of the development plan already initiated by Briggs but only implemented over time and after the primary goal of cutting the ties to the Communist guerrilla was achieved. An additional aspect was the organisation towards self-government. "The District Office appointed members of the village committee that ran a New Village's daily affairs under the guidance of the Resettlement Officer, usually a Chinese-speaking British civil servant."³³² The settlers were given certain freedoms to organise themselves, supported by British schooling in how to become 'good citizens'. In order to support this civic development, community

³²⁸ Peng, Chin (2003). *My Side of History*. Singapore : 268

³²⁹ Komer, R. W. (1972). *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*. Santa Monica : 19f

³³⁰ Souchou, Yao (2016). *The Malayan Emergency - A Small, Distant War*. Copenhagen : 81

³³¹ Aun, Gwee Hock (1966). *The Emergency in Malaya*. Penang

³³² Souchou, Yao (2016). *The Malayan Emergency - A Small, Distant War*. Copenhagen : 106

centres, places of worship and village schools were built. These structures, often not more than simple sheds, were used for multiple functions serving the entire community.³³³ A *padang* (open field) was laid out for open air gatherings and sports activities. Shop owners were encouraged to set up small businesses at a central location, including dispensaries for basic medical supply. If necessary, food processing and storage facilities were built. A basic infrastructure was set up and the majority of settlements were provided with piped water, laterite roads and electricity. The basic ideas of this program was clearly influenced by the British New Towns Act of 1946, especially the recommendations of the Reith Commission. Several of its aspects can be recognised in New Villages eg, the development of single family houses on green fields in relative low density, the emphasis on community building and its spatial organisation, the importance for employment and the aim of political stabilisation.³³⁴

Such amenities were only implemented over time and slowly lifted the standard of New Villages above rural kampungs in Malaya. This in turn led to a heated political debate about the development of traditional Malay kampungs and the rural sector altogether. Nationalist UMNO leaders criticised "that large sums of money had already been spent on the New Villages at the expense of the rural Malay sector."³³⁵ The economic situation in 1953 had changed, too. Prices for tin and rubber had fallen drastically and the government had difficulties to afford the further development of New Villages. In the mid 1950s, the government started to roll out social and economic development plans for the rest of the country, for example the *Federation Development Plan*, the *Rural Industrial Development Authority* (RIDA) and the *Federal Land Development Authority* (FELDA), all targeting at an improvement of living conditions of the Malay population.

It is important to note that in the mid 1950s the statistic threshold for urban areas in Malaya was lowered to 1,000 persons.³³⁶ All of a sudden, New Villages were considered urban areas with the effect that Chinese residents were excluded from rural development programmes.³³⁷ This caused social and economic hardship among Chinese settlers.

The British initiated further political reforms towards self-government and the public debates were centred on Malay efforts for independence. The local administration grew continuously and the political Alliance of UMNO and MCA was successfully winning municipal and local council elections in 1953, state elections in 1954 and Federal elections in 1955. In December 1955, peace talks between the Communist leader Chin Peng and Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman took place in Kedah. The negotiations ended inconclusively with both sides in disagreement. By then it was clear that the Communists were severely weakened and many surrendered under an amnesty program. By forcing back the Communist enemy successfully, Malaya's towns soon

³³³ Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

³³⁴ Wakeman, Rosemary (2016). *Practicing Utopia - An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement*. Chicago

³³⁵ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 140

³³⁶ Yaakob, Usman and Masron, Tarmiji and Fujimaki, Masami (2000). *Ninety Years of Urbanization in Malaysia: A Geographical Investigation of Its Trends and Characteristics*. Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities Volume 4, Number 3 : 81

³³⁷ Loh, Francis Kok Wah (1988). *Beyond the Tin Mines - Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c 1880-1980*. Singapore : 179

started to flourish. "A British visitor to Malaya in 1955 was amazed at how open a city Kuala Lumpur was – cafes are full, cinemas crammed."³³⁸

This strive for independence made continued progress and on August 31st 1957 Malaya became an independent state. Merdeka (freedom and independence) was finally there. The Emergency only ended in July 1960 when the Malayan National Liberation Army retreated to areas along the Thai border. By then, Malaya was the most urbanised country in Southeast Asia, probably with a little help from statistics. A study in 1976 showed that particularly in Kuala Lumpur the number of squatters was increasing.³³⁹ The reasons were different from the past. It was the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation that pushed many urban dwellers into hardship.

Initially, the government considered New Villages as a temporary phenomenon because it was expected that settlers would move to other areas after the Emergency ended. But despite many problems during the initial set up of the settlements and the harsh living conditions, most New Villages developed into stable communities. Especially the ones in or near urbanised areas where residents switched to jobs in the thriving industrial sector. Over time, the state administrations allowed permanent titles and leasehold titles for New Villages.³⁴⁰

With a population of 1.2 million of which 82 per cent are ethnic Chinese, New Villages represent a special settlement form in Malaysia. They represent an important part of the Chinese social, economic, cultural and religious ways of life thus enriching the multicultural and multiethnic society in Malaysia. Today, there are four New Villages within the city limits of Kuala Lumpur. They are relatively large quarters that have maintained a distinct Chinese character.

³³⁸ Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 214

³³⁹ Friel-Simon, V. and Kim, Khoo Kay (1976). *The Squatter as a Problem to Urban Development: A Historical Perspective*. Unpublished Paper, Third Convention to the Malaysian Economic Association, Penang

³⁴⁰ Harper, Timothy Norman (1999). *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge : 180

1.3. Current Situation

1.3.1. Governance and Ethnicity

Political System

Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy based on the (British) Westminster system. The King is head of state and the Prime Minister is head of the government. Executive power is vested in the Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister. Legislative power is split between federal and state legislatures. The federal parliament consists of the House of Representatives, *Dewan Rakyat*, and the Senate, *Dewan Negara*. The House of Representatives is elected for a maximum term of five years.³⁴¹ Malaysia consists of 13 states and three Federal Territories. Kuala Lumpur is one of the Federal Territories and therefore directly governed by the Federal Government. Nine of the 13 states are sultanates. A distinctive feature of the states is their limited role compared to the Federal Government. In contrast, they exercise considerable power over local affairs eg, appointing local councils, council presidents and mayors. Local authorities are therefore not elected by the citizens and accountability has proven to be a critical issue in Malaysian local governance. The responsibility of local authorities include actual planning and regulation of development at city level.³⁴² However, they face tight financial constraints and limitations in recruiting a capable workforce.

The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* or King of Malaysia is the constitutional monarch and head of state. Every five years, the Agong is elected by the Conference of Rulers comprising of the nine rulers of the Malay sultanates. The office is de facto rotated between them, making Malaysia one of the few elective monarchies in the world. Remarkably, the Agong has discretionary powers to choose the Prime Minister if no political party has won a majority vote. This has become of great importance during the political crisis between 2020 and 2022, when the King became a central figure to choose a Prime Minister supported by the parliament.

Race, Religion and Affirmative Action

Malaysia's population of 32 million people is multiracial and multi-religious. The constructed ethnic categories Malay, Chinese and Indian are omnipresent in daily life, media and the socio-political discourse of Malaysia. In a rough outline: Malays dominate the local administration and civil service, Chinese and Indians are mostly active in the commercial sector. Chinese still dominate the urban economy, clearly seen in large development conglomerates like *YTL*, *IOI* or *S P Setia*, which are lead by powerful Chinese lobby groups.

Factually, the population is divided into two categories: *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera*. The first

³⁴¹ Funston, John (ed.) (2001). *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*. Singapore

³⁴² Malaysia (2016). *Malaysia National Report, Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)*. Kuala Lumpur

category is made up of Malays and other indigenous peoples, while the latter consists of Malaysians of ethnic-Chinese and ethnic-Indian descent. Bumiputeras, literally *sons of the soil*, make up for a majority of 70 per cent, followed by ethnic Chinese with 23 per cent and Indians with seven per cent.³⁴³ However, this summary tells little about Malaysia's actual ethnic diversity. Among the 70 per cent bumiputeras are 57 per cent Malay and 13 per cent indigenous or 'other' ethnicities, mainly populating the states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. There, bumiputera people count for two-thirds of the population. They include the Kadazan Dusun in Sabah and the Iban in Sarawak, as well as other sub-ethnic groups. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia defines a Malay as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom" (Article 160).

Bumiputeras enjoy political, cultural and economic privileges guaranteed by a 'special position' (Article 153) in the constitution. These guarantees are sided by affirmative action policies eg. access to public service positions, university enrolment, scholarships, and trade or business licences. The origins of affirmative action policies can be traced to a historic *quid pro quo* agreement which grants citizenship to non-bumiputeras and in return guarantees special rights to bumiputeras. The agreement was legitimated in the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was implemented in the 1970s. The concept is known as *Ketuanan Melayu* or 'Malay supremacy' and is a crucial part of Malay self-conception. Regrettably, the concept is contested in it is "creating a juxtaposition of 'us' and 'other' in which non-Malay Malaysian citizens constitute 'others'."³⁴⁴ This notion contributes to divisions among citizens, frequently leading to interethnic hostility.

Most Chinese in Malaysia are descendants of Southern Chinese immigrants, consisting of various ethnic subgroups eg. Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew or Hainan. In addition, early Chinese migrants assimilated with local Malay cultures and formed distinct subgroups, such as the Peranakan or the Baba-Nyonya. Malaysian Indians are mostly descendants of migrants from India that migrated during the British colonisation of Malaya. The majority of them are ethnic Tamils, others being Malayalees, Telugus, or Sikhs. Chinese play an important role in the country's economy and business, Indians represent a disproportionately large percentage of professionals per capita. Both groups mainly live in urban centres. People from Europe, the Middle East, Cambodia and Vietnam are other significant minorities in Malaysia. About ten per cent of the population are migrant workers, mainly from Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nepal.³⁴⁵

Similarly multilayered is Malaysia's religious composition. Its multi-faith population consists of 61 per cent Muslims, 20 per cent Buddhists, nine per cent Christians, six per cent Hindus and three per cent other beliefs. Although Islam is predominant in Peninsular Malaysia, Christianity is the largest religion in Sarawak and the second largest in Sabah. In Sarawak, 43 per cent are Christians, 32 per cent Muslims and 14 per cent Buddhists. In Sabah, Muslims account for 65 per cent,

³⁴³ Malaysia (2022). *Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2020*. Putrajaya

³⁴⁴ López, Carolina (2015). *Interfaith relations in Malaysia - Moving beyond Muslims versus 'others'*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 327

³⁴⁵ Malaysia (2021b). *Migration Survey Report, Malaysia, 2020*. Putrajaya

Christians 27 per cent and Buddhists six per cent.³⁴⁶

This diverse setting is not only unique in composition but also in spatial distribution across different states of the country. More so, the irregularities continue down to constituencies, districts or neighbourhoods. This has a wide-reaching influence on politics. One could argue that the political landscape in Malaysia is predominantly formed in the urban centres of Peninsular Malaysia, mainly in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, the seat of the Federal Government. However, the historic political shift of 2018 from the ruling BN (Barisan Nasional) to the opposition Pakatan Harapan (Coalition of Hope) was orchestrated by the Sabah Heritage Party (WARISAN) which joined the opposition coalition. In other words, it was a rural and multiracial party from East Malaysia that tipped the balance. This example illustrates that it is difficult to predict guiding principles in Malay politics. It is rather a careful and sensible—and at times careless and insensible—negotiation along ethnic and religious lines and along urban and rural mentalities. Due to this unique character, issues of race, religion and place have always been a focal point of political debate. "Race shapes nearly every aspect of public and private life, from the micro-bureaucratic requirement that all Malaysians carry an identity card (IC) baring their official race to racial quotas and targets in education, housing assistance, and initial public offerings of publicly listed companies."³⁴⁷ In town planning, restrictions and quotas for eg, publicly funded residential projects, business allocation or the sizing of school districts need to be taken into consideration. More often than not, kampungs are at the centre of racial or religious squabbles. Supposedly, the settlements are racially homogeneous and therefore sensitive in terms of pride, identity or belief.³⁴⁸ But this notion is only true for some Malay Reservation Areas and some Chinese New Villages. My research found that the majority of kampungs, especially the ones in urban areas, are less homogeneous than the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan makes us believe.

Today, most aspects of the affirmative action policies mentioned above are still in place and determine current affairs in Malaysia.³⁴⁹ Among them are preferential access to schools and universities, quotas for business representation, or real estate discounts, all benefitting Malays. The policies are seen increasingly controversial, even within the government. An ongoing political debate to repeal the benefits is still unresolved. As a consequence of the "racially discriminatory policies",³⁵⁰ many non-Malay students, skilled workers and well-educated professionals have left Malaysia since the early 1990s. This brain drain has caused crucial migration, especially "among Chinese-Malaysian and Indian-Malaysian minorities."³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ Puyok, Arnold (2015). *Rise of Christian political consciousness and mobilisation*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 60

³⁴⁷ Thompson, Eric (2013). *Urban Cosmopolitan Chauvinism and the Politics of Rural Identity*. In: Bunnell, Tim and Parthasarathy, D. and Thompson, Eric (eds.) (2013). *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia*. Dordrecht : 163

³⁴⁸ Malaysia (2004). *Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³⁴⁹ The Economist (2013). *A Never Ending Policy*. 27 April 2013. Volume 407, Number 8833

³⁵⁰ The Economist (2017). *Race-based affirmative action is failing poor Malaysians*. 20 May 2017. Volume 423, Number 9041

³⁵¹ Harnoss, Johann Daniel (2011). *Economic Costs of the Malaysian Brain Drain: Implications from an Endogenous Growth Model*. Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies, Volume 48, Number 2 : 117

Political Parties and General Elections

Almost all political parties in Malaysia have been formed along racial lines in order to represent ethnic groups. The most prominent, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), is focused on the interests of the Malay majority whereas the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) leans towards the Chinese and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) towards the Indian voters. In 1957, UMNO launched a coalition with both MCA and MIC to form the first government after Merdeka (independence) under Tunku Abdul Rahman. After the race riots of 1969, the coalition renamed to *Barisan Nasional* (BN) or National Front and included several other parties, especially from Sabah and Sarawak to secure a two-thirds majority. Since then, a number of parties and coalitions have been established and revoked although the leading BN coalition has dominated the political landscape in Malaysia. This only changed in 2008, when BN failed to maintain a two-thirds majority in parliament. BN continued to stage the Prime Minister, but the coalition was seriously weakened. The reasons are multifarious and I will only give brief grounds for explanation.

Most crucial were the *Reformasi* protests of 1998 against the BN government under then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. It drew considerable support from less well-to-do Malays in the urban as well as rural areas. In 2007, the Indian community was highly mobilised over issues of religious freedom, forming HINDRAF, a non-governmental movement. Similarly, the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, Bersih (clean) started to demand free and fair elections, among other reforms. The protests put pressure on the ruling BN government and caused the formation of new coalitions during the General Election of 2008 and again in 2013. Reformasi continued to play an active role in Malay politics, mainly demanding for social equality and justice. Malay support shifted to the right-wing Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and the centre-left People's Justice Party (PKR), which has its roots in the Reformasi movement. Chinese support shifted towards the Democratic Action Party (DAP). Interestingly, all three parties stand at the centre of the recent Pakatan Harapan (PH) or Alliance of Hope coalition which achieved an unprecedented victory in the 2018 General Election. The election marked the first regime change when the ruling BN government under Prime Minister Najib Razak was voted out of power. The PH-leader Mahathir Mohamad, who previously served as Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, switched sides to become Prime Minister for the second time in 2018. The decisive factor of BN's election defeat was the ongoing *1Malaysia Development Berhad* (1MDB) scandal in which Najib Razak and a close circle of family members and political aides were involved. The scandal about the misappropriation of several billion ringgit from the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB has been described by the United States Department of Justice as the "largest kleptocracy case to date".³⁵² It was first uncovered in 2015 and is still under international investigation. In 2018, Najib was convicted of corruption charges and in 2022, sentenced to

³⁵² Bowie, Nile (2018). *Kleptocracy at its Worst in Malaysia*. Penang Institute, 2018 March 9. Retrieved from: www.penanginstitute.org/happenings/in-the-mass-media/1042-kleptocracy-at-its-worst-in-malaysia

twelve years in prison.³⁵³

The positive momentum of the 2018 regime change ended abruptly in early 2020 when Mahathir resigned over the subsequent breakup of the PH government, paralysing Malaysia at a time of the historic COVID-19 pandemic. The subsequent shift to a nationalist and conservative BN coalition under Muhyiddin Yassin and Ismail Sabri Yaakob was a disappointment for many Malaysians as it was orchestrated by Members of Parliament and endorsed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*. Without a clear parliamentary majority from early 2020 to late 2022, a tumultuous Malaysia was paralysed with shock. The painful toing and froing ended with the 2022 General Election that reversed the previous political shift. In November 2022, although with a very slim margin, the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition won most seats and made Anwar Ibrahim the new Prime Minister.

The political ideology of *Ketuanan Melayu* among the conservative Malay establishment attributes to an electoral system and gerrymandering practise that overemphasises Malay constituencies in rural areas which are strongholds for UMNO und PAS. Constituencies in urban areas which are populated by Chinese and Indians account for only 36 per cent of parliament seats although three-quarters of the entire population live in urban areas.³⁵⁴ The imbalance is seen as controversial but is accepted. In this context, kampungs in Kuala Lumpur play a significant role in the gerrymandering practise³⁵⁵ because most of them are considered "Malay-majority areas"³⁵⁶ and thus strongholds for Barisan Nasional candidates. In Traditional Kampungs and Malay Reservation Areas, BN representation and political banners are a common sight. However, Chinese New Villages are considered strongholds for MCA candidates who support the local interests of Chinese.³⁵⁷ In sum, kampungs are politically as contested as any other constituency, if not more so.

Prospect

Since 2008, I had the privilege to witness all public debates during General Elections in Malaysia. There are several takeaway messages. In newspaper articles or TV discussions, topics related to race, religion and place often override other matters and cause ideological division. At the same time, a young and informed generation of Malaysians is starting to become more interested in the topics of justice and diversity, rather than race and religion.³⁵⁸ In urban centres like KL, Penang or Ipoh, the tradition of political grass roots movement is becoming more pronounced

³⁵³ The Economist (2020). *Impunity at bay - A corrupt politician has gone to jail in Malaysia. He must stay there.* 25 August 2022, Volume 444, Number 9310

³⁵⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022). *BTI 2022 Country Report Malaysia.* Gütersloh

³⁵⁵ Kumar, Prem P (2018). *Uphill task awaits Johari in Tituwangsa.* The Malaysian Reserve, 23 April 2018

³⁵⁶ FMT Reporters (2022). *The 'real war' in GE15 will be in Malay strongholds, says Pejuang man.* Free Malaysia Today, Kuala Lumpur, 6 August 2022. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/08/06/the-real-war-in-ge15-will-be-in-malay-strongholds-says-pejuang-man

³⁵⁷ Wee, Jeck Seng and Phang, Siew Nooi and Samihah, Khalil (2018). *The Role of Political Elites in the Development of New Villages in Malaysia.* Journal of Public Administration and Governance, Volume 8, Number 2

³⁵⁸ Weiss, Meredith (ed.) (2015). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia.* New York

and continues to be an important factor in the formulation of political demands and objectives. But overall, civil society traditions remain fairly weak in Malaysia.³⁵⁹ Nepotism, leading to an inefficient public bureaucracy and corruption³⁶⁰ is a central and unfortunate element of Malaysian politics. Many voters see this critical but have accepted it as the lesser evil. However, the 1MBD scandal³⁶¹ was a tipping point. The 2022 General Election clearly showed that voters wanted change. Finally, nationalist and conservative views are widespread among bumiputera voters. Nevertheless, there is a tendency among the Malay middle-class to base decision-making processes not on race or religion. This is reflected in, for instance, an ongoing critical attitude among Malays towards affirmative action policies.

³⁵⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022). *BTI 2022 Country Report Malaysia*. Gütersloh

³⁶⁰ Bowie, Nile (2018). *'Kleptocracy at its Worst' in Malaysia*. Penang Institute, 2018 March 9. Retrieved from: www.penanginstitute.org/happenings/in-the-mass-media/1042-kleptocracy-at-its-worst-in-malaysia

³⁶¹ Ibid.

1.3.2. Landownership and Land Law

The nature of landownership in Malaysia is unique. Until the 19th century, personal laws, religious practices and local customs related to land tenure in Malaya were not changed by foreign powers. The starting point for substantial legislative change was the introduction of registered titles under British rule.³⁶² This step was necessary in order to make land commercially marketable. "The remaining customary rights over land seemed then to be merely tolerated rather than fully recognised under the new system".³⁶³ This mixture has led to a reliable yet complex system. On the one hand, rules are clearly formulated and comprehensible. On the other hand, the heritage of anachronistic privileges make for an uncommon acquisition process.

Today, landownership is governed by the Federal Constitution, the National Land Code 1965 (NLC)³⁶⁴ and the Land Acquisition Act 1960.³⁶⁵ Malaysian land law under the NLC is based on the Torrens System in which the register of land is maintained by the government and guarantees an indefeasible title to those owners listed in the register. There are three ways to become a landowner. One, by purchase, followed by transfer and registration at the corresponding land registry. Two, by inheritance from parents or ancestors. Three, by alienation, a process in which the state sets apart (alienates) land in order to make it available. The reasons for alienation are many and diverse. However, most land is alienated for urban development, especially housing and infrastructure.

There are four types of land titles, which are specified in the National Land Code.

1. A *Leasehold Title* can be leased for a period of up to 99 years from the state. Once the tenure expires, the land will return back to the state without compensation. Depending on the particular context, a lease extension is possible by paying a premium. The value of the land (and the property thereon) strongly depends on the remaining leasehold period.

2. *Freehold Titles* are indefinitely owned by the landowner and can be easily transferred.

3. *Bumiputera Lots* are units of land which can only be purchased and owned by bumiputeras. These titles were introduced with the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1970s to increase the share of bumiputera ownership. The policy also stipulates that developers in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur must allocate at least 30 per cent of the total unit numbers to bumiputeras. This applies to residential as well as commercial lots. As land matters fall under the

³⁶² See Chapter 1.2.1. and 1.2.2. for details

³⁶³ Hunud, Abia Kadouf (1998). *Aspects of Terminological Problems in Describing Proprietary Relations under Malaysian Land Law - A Critique*. Journal of Legal Pluralism, Volume 30, Number 41 : 38

³⁶⁴ Malaysia (1965). *National Land Code (Act 56 of 1965)*.

³⁶⁵ Malaysia (1960). *Land Acquisition Act 1960*.

jurisdiction of State Authorities, slight differences for quotas might apply, depending on state law. In addition, there are so-called 'bumiputera discounts' on properties, meaning an incentive for new purchases with such titles. The incentive ranges from 7 to 15 per cent.

4. *Malay Reserve Land* (MRL) titles, not to be mixed up with bumiputera lots. MRL titles can only be owned and held by Malays as stated under the Malay Reservation Enactment of 1913. With few exceptions, these titles are only transferrable within the Malay community. Title owners are not allowed to rent out property to non-Malays. Businesses within MRL must be owned by Malays.

The day-to-day dealings with land titles is all but straightforward, especially in regard to the last two categories. For example, renting out accommodation to foreigners in Malay Reservations is a common and widespread practise. Not surprisingly, documentation does not exist because such dealings are a legal grey area.

The challenge to develop Malay Reservation Areas (MRA), meaning areas which are made up of Malay Reserve Land titles, is discussed extensively.^{366,367,368} Why are MRAs, especially in urban or peri-urban locations, such a hot topic?

- Most land lots in MRAs are under multiple ownership. According to Islamic inheritance laws, lots and properties are continuously divided among heirs. Therefore, land can only be leased or sold if all heirs agree to do so, adding a layer of complication to a transfer.
- The market value of Malay Reserve Land is comparably low. The reasons are the above mentioned restrictions (transfer only among Malays) and mandatory compensation payments in case of a transfer. According to the Land Acquisition Act 1960, compensation payments must be made to match a comparable market value. This makes transfers unattractive.
- A rather intangible issue is the cultural status of MRAs. Most Malays consider reserve land as a guardian of Malay identity. Its historic origin as a stronghold against non-Malay influence is still vivid. Therefore, any development in MRAs is eyed critically and discussed on an *emotional* rather than a *practical* level. Kampung Baru, in the centre of KL, is especially contested.³⁶⁹
- Many Malays believe that development of MRAs should not come at the expense of rightful Malay identity, the heirs of the original settlers or the present landowners. Despite the general modernisation process "the image of the Malay village, or kampung, has changed from a symbol

³⁶⁶ Nor, Asiah Mohamad and Bashiran, Begum Mubarak Ali (2009). *The Prospects and Challenges of Malay Reservation Land in the 21st Century*. Malaysian Journal of Real Estate, Volume 4, Number 2

³⁶⁷ Shamsul, A. B. (1990). *From British to Bumiputera Rule - Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

³⁶⁸ Kurniawati, Kamarudin and Bernama (2018). *Malay Reserve Land Issues: No End in Sight*. Malaysiakini, 29 October 2018. Retrieved from: www.malaysiakini.com/news/449461

³⁶⁹ Hakim, Hassan (2020). *Why Malay Reserve Lands Are Subpar and How Kampung Baru Is Struggling With Progress*. The Rakyat Post, 4 February 2020. Retrieved from: www.therakyatpost.com/news/malaysia/2020/02/04/why-malay-reserve-lands-are-subpar-and-how-kampung-baru-is-struggling-with-progress

of Malay backwardness to an idealised repository of pristine Malay culture and values".³⁷⁰ This notion rarely matches with reality but comes as a perfect opportunity for political exploitation.

Any discussion about issues of landownership in MRAs is sensitive, to say the least. MRAs are seen as neglected and left behind, most people consider them to be undeveloped enclaves within the modern city. However, my field studies show that MRAs can be both, traditional and modern, representing various stages of transformation over time.

Initially, the fast urbanisation and industrialisation processes of the 1970s and early 1980s did not affect MRAs. Land of abandoned tin mines and rubber plantations was widely available and preferred for development. Many "reservation lands remained islands of underdevelopment within high-achieving areas surrounding them."³⁷¹ As long as alternative land for development was available, MRAs were left untouched. The morphological outcome was a fragmented urban landscape. As a result, the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan of 1982 was criticised to promote a "fragmented" instead of a "balanced" development.³⁷² I will argue that this fragmentation was unavoidable. MRAs—together with abandoned tin mines and rubber plantations—were a decisive component in this fragmentation.

It is important to understand that at the end of the 1970s, when the first Structure Plan was prepared, there were significantly more MRAs in KL than today.³⁷³ Because these areas were protected and therefore removed from the market, they were—initially—left undeveloped. Over time, value for non-reservation land rose sharply. For the owners of former tin mines and rubber plantations, this was a stroke of luck. They became real estate developers and property owners. Only at this point, the Federal Government started to alienate MRAs for urban development. As a consequence, many MRAs disappeared. Others became an affordable alternative for Malays. Rising costs for residential real estate pushed many low-income residents to suburban areas. However, a significant number of Malay residents decided to purchase land or rent property in MRAs located within the Federal Territory. Subsequently, many MRAs in KL gained additional housing stock and gradually densified eg, kampung Puhah in the Gombak valley.

³⁷⁰ Goh, Beng-Lan (2002). *Modern Dreams: An Inquiry into Power, Cultural Production and the Cityscape in Contemporary Urban Penang, Malaysia*. Ithaca : 49

³⁷¹ Brookfield, Harold and Hadi, Abdul Samad and Mahmud, Zaharah (1991). *The City in the Village - In-Situ Urbanization of Villages and their Land around Kuala Lumpur*. Singapore : 40

³⁷² Lee, Boon Thong (1983) *Planning the Kuala Lumpur Metropolis*. The Asian Journal of Public Administration, Volume 5, Number 1 : 85

³⁷³ See Figure 10

1.3.3. Planning and Land Use Policy

In accordance to the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172), spatial development in Malaysia is administered by three levels of government.

1. At Federal level, the *National Physical Planning Council* (NPPC) produces strategic guidelines and policies across states. Federal agencies control the plans and policies for many urban services eg, health, education, water, waste, firefighting, drainage and public transportation.
2. State governments have exclusive powers over land, agriculture and forestry. They provide land use planning policies for their respective states and are responsible for eg, property registration and religious affairs.
3. Local authorities are responsible for eg, local planning, building controls, markets, hawkers, community centres and public parks. It is important to note that local authorities depend on financial funding from the Federal government and their respective State government.

A three-stage hierarchy of land use development plans guides the urban development process. The plans include the *National Physical Plan*, *State Structure Plans* and *Local Plans*.

The local planning authority of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur is Datuk Bandar Kuala Lumpur (DBKL). DBKL is bound to prepare Structure Plans and accompanying Local Plans. To date, KL adopted two Structure Plans, one in 1984³⁷⁴ and one in 2004.³⁷⁵ The draft of the third Structure Plan (KLSP 2040) was made public in 2020. It was objected by various stakeholders and is held back since then. A revised draft version of the KLSP 2040 was issued in April 2023,³⁷⁶ but is held back for review since.³⁷⁷ The plan is expected to be gazetted by end of 2023.³⁷⁸ There are several reasons for this unusual long process. One, by law,³⁷⁹ a draft must be issued first to give the public the opportunity to comment. At local level, public participation is especially attentive because land use development also concerns privately owned land. Two, the political shift in 2018 and 2022 has motivated more stakeholders to speak out. Three, the COVID-19 pandemic with a strict (and controversial) Movement Control Order in 2020 and 2021 has prompted a critical attitude towards state controlled urban policies. Lastly, a reasonably small but increasing number of individuals and civil society organisations demand a greater share of

³⁷⁴ Malaysia (1982b). *Draft Structure Plan 1984*. Kuala Lumpur

³⁷⁵ Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

³⁷⁶ Lim, Jarod (2023). *DBKL announces revised draft plan will go online from tomorrow*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 12 April 2023

³⁷⁷ Soo, Wern Jun (2023). *Gazettement of KL Structure Plan 2040 delayed until end of May, says PM Anwar*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 8 April 2023

³⁷⁸ Sallehuddin, Qistina (2023). *PM wants City Hall to gazette KLSP 2040 before year end*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 18 July 2023

³⁷⁹ As stipulated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1976

participation and engagement in planning issues.³⁸⁰

Although this sequence of events implies a rather confusing implementation process, I regard it as a positive indication that the present top-down planning process is challenged by the public. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's assurance that "the government is also committed to ensuring that the preparation of the plan is comprehensive and inclusive for the people",³⁸¹ also indicates a people-centric approach. It implies that the new government values public opinion higher than previous administrations. However, numerous challenges remain. Although the quality of the Structure Plans in terms of depth and detail has improved over time, they lack a contextual approach as they have been developed during very different economic and political circumstances. The implementation of Local Plans is especially challenging. Most documents have been prepared by external planning consultants. Therefore, it cannot be expected that DBKL is able to seamlessly implement the plans. A final challenge is the powerful position of the Federal government over DBKL. The land use of the Federal territory of KL is regulated by the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982.³⁸² Urban development, changes of land use or density, plot ratio, use of government land are reviewed by Urban Planning Committees. Changes in eg, plot ratio, density, or use, can be achieved by compensation payments. As a result, developers and owners can achieve much higher plot ratios, especially for residential developments. In summary, one can conclude that land use in the Federal Territory of KL is directed by the government. But it is mostly the private market that puts development into practice.

³⁸⁰ A good overview of the review process offers: Kamal, Mustapha (2020). *Review of Draft KLSP 2040*. Presentation for Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM), Kuala Lumpur, 21 July 2020

³⁸¹ Sallehuddin, Qistina (2023). *PM wants City Hall to gazette KLSP 2040 before year end*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 18 July 2023

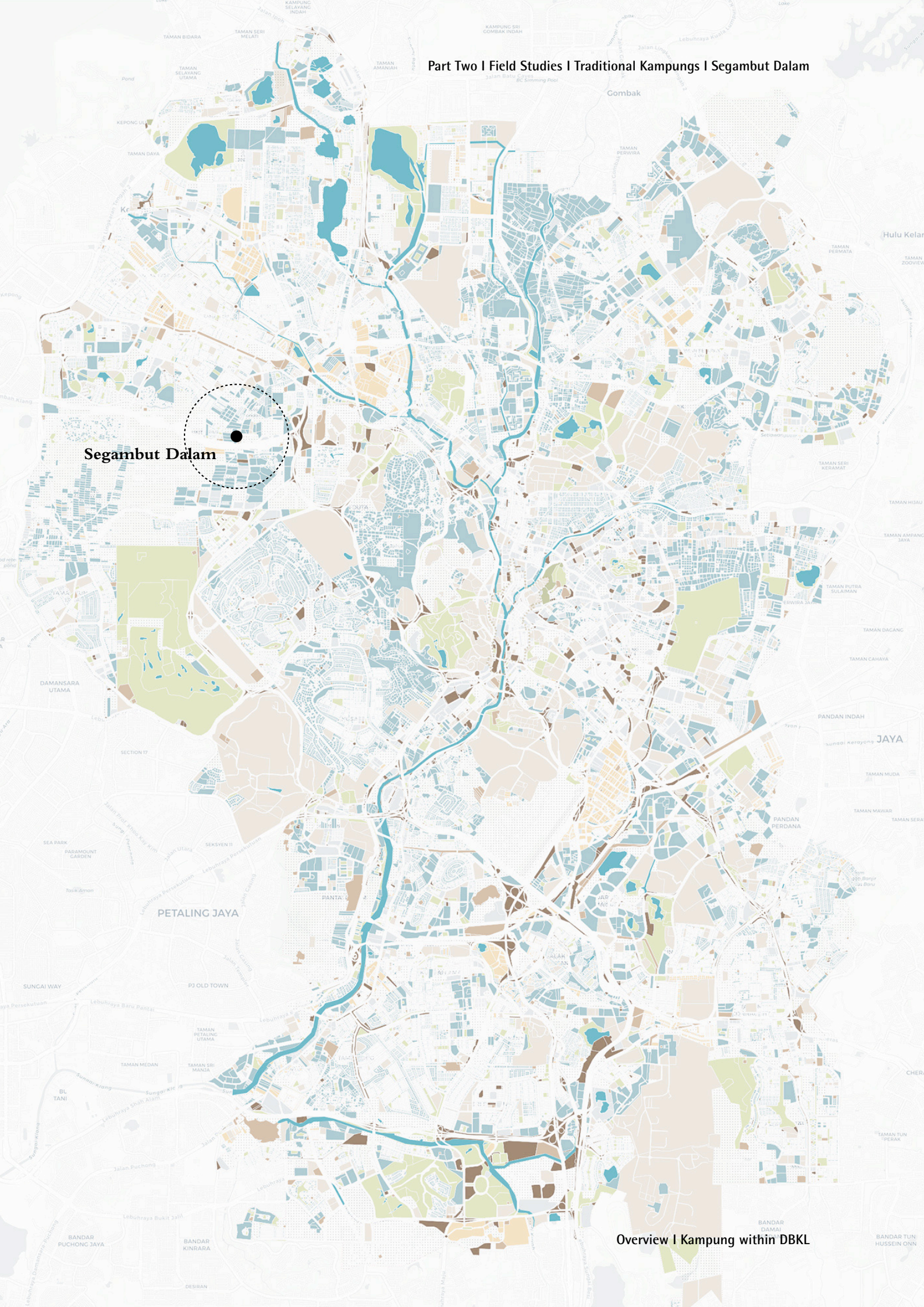
³⁸² Malaysia (1982a). Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 (Act 267)

Part Two

Field Studies

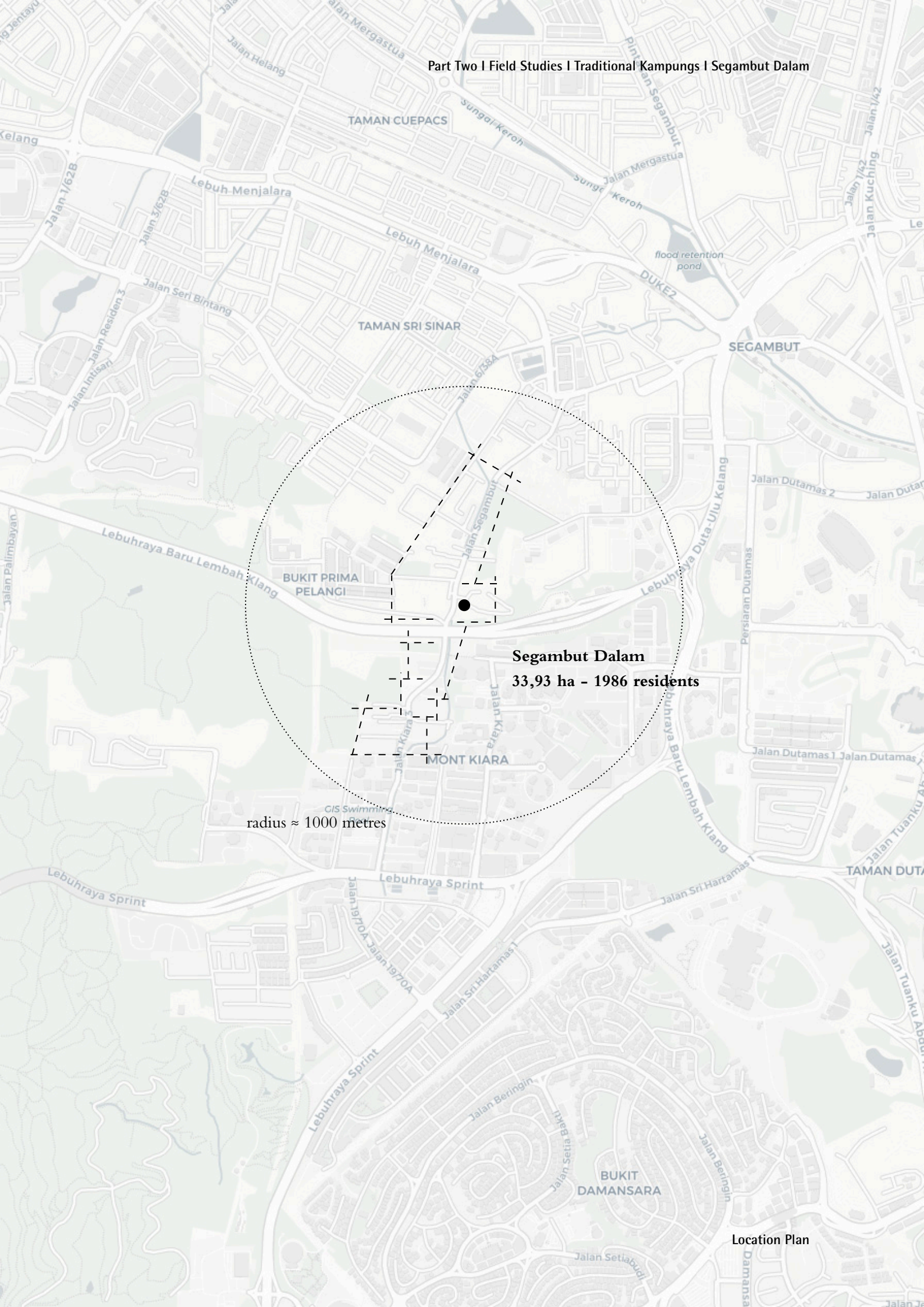
2.1. Traditional Kampung

Part Two | Field Studies | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



Segambut Dalam

Overview | Kampung within DBKL



radius \approx 1000 metres

Segambut Dalam
33,93 ha - 1986 residents



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship

25 | 25 | 50
100 metres



2.1.1. Segambut Dalam

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

The valley of Sungai Keroh makes for a significant topographic feature in the larger Bukit Kiara area.^{P-11-01} Its overall length is about three kilometres, stretching from Segambut Bahagia in the north, to Sri Hartamas in the south.^{P-11-02} Kampung Segambut Dalam is located at the halfway of this valley. The hills on both sides of the valley are approximately 30 metres to 80 metres in height, forming a varied and green landscape. Keroh, the creek that runs north-south, is constricted to a concrete channel, partially put underground.^{P-11-03} The main but narrow thoroughfare, Jalan Segambut Dalam, is laden with heavy through traffic. The kampung is divided by a large concrete bridge of the North-South Expressway.^{P-11-04} It spans the entire valley at a height of about 25 metres and was built in the early 1990s. A large part of the kampung was destroyed during its construction. The massive foothills of the bridge and its concrete pillars divide the settlement into a northern and a southern part. The kampung is further fragmented by several residential high-rise and town-house developments.^{P-11-05} In the late 1980s, the first luxury condominiums were built in nearby Mont Kiara, a dense township to the south of the kampung. Today, Mont Kiara is one of the most popular high-end residential neighbourhoods in KL which is especially popular among foreign expats. In recent years, several parts of Segambut Dalam were further eaten up by rows of gated town houses, apartment complexes and high-rise condominiums. This process has advanced especially to the south of the expressway bridge where several housing clusters of the kampung have been demolished recently and replaced by large high-rise condominiums.^{P-11-06} Despite this destructive practice, Segambut Dalam has maintained a unique settlement pattern. Its main street is dotted on both sides with small houses, often just sheds owned by fruit and vegetable vendors.^{P-11-07} All streets and paths of the kampung branch off perpendicularly from this thoroughfare and run uphill, ending in dead ends at a higher level where forest marks the boundary of the kampung.^{P-11-08} The length of a pathway going uphill is between 50 metres to 200 metres. Fewer houses are built on the east side of the valley because its hills are much steeper and therefore inaccessible. Here, the paths reach not more than 20 metres to 50 metres.^{P-11-09} Residential houses are built irregularly on both sides of each pathway. As a result, each path with its adjacent houses form an organic cluster, similar to a bunch of grapes on a vine.^{P-11-10} This pattern derives from the settlement's past as an agricultural kampung for rubber smallholders.³⁸³ The smallholdings were located at the fringes of the kampung. Today, one can still find rubber trees in the surrounding forests.^{P-11-11} The vegetable gardens for subsistence farming were located between the building clusters.^{P-11-12} Over time, these garden plots have been converted to building lots and filled with houses, often in a random fashion. This explains

³⁸³ Nagarajan, S. and Willford, Andrew (2014). *The last plantations in Kuala Lumpur*. In: Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York : 190

the irregular plot layout and a higher density of building footprint between clusters.^{P-11-13} It also shows the transition from a combined subsistence and market economy to a sole market economy.

1.2 Scale of Elements

All buildings that are older than approximately 15 years are modest in size. Even though there is a great variety of differently shaped houses, their overall size is similar and rarely exceeds a 5 metres x 10 metres, 10 metres x 10 metres or 10 metres x 15 metres footprint. The height of these traditional houses never exceeds two storeys. An exception is Sekolah Rendah Agama, a school building on Jalan Segambut Dalam, which is four storeys in height.^{P-11-14} Recently added buildings stand in stark contrast to this. For example, the new mosque clearly goes beyond the building scale used so far.^{P-11-15} So do two gated town house complexes both surrounded by high walls and only accessible by car.^{P-11-16} Compared to the existing urban fabric of the kampung, the scale of these projects is massive and they feel out of place. It is clear though that these developments are not even meant to fit into the existing structure. Their target audience is not kampung folk and the existing small scale structure seems therefore not worth respecting. This is especially obvious at the southern end of the kampung where huge residential towers stand side by side small scale kampung houses.^{P-11-17} Massive retaining walls containing parking garages separate the high-rise buildings from their surroundings.^{P-11-18} Access is exclusively by car through guarded security gates.^{P-11-19} Except for Jalan Segambut Dalam, all streets and paths in the kampung are narrow dead-end streets. Any open space is similarly narrow in size and fits tightly in between the houses.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

Visually, the kampung is surprisingly complex. What looks like a uniform grain of houses in a two-dimensional plan is in reality an intricate visual experience. Every house, path and open space is different.^{P-11-20, P-21-20, P-11-22} There is a strong resemblance in the scale of elements but no house looks alike. This visual and spatial complexity stands in stark contrast to the recently built gated town house developments. Each house is an exact replica of its neighbour which results in visual monotony.^{P-11-23, P-11-24, P-11-25} Another characteristic is the harmony between built environment and natural landscape.^{P-11-26} Much of it has been transformed over the years, especially since the former smallholdings have been filled with small houses and the natural creek has been regulated.^{P-11-27} But the gentle slopes and the green vegetation still result in a concise urban landscape with open space on different levels from which views and vistas can be experienced.^{P-11-28} This characteristic is heavily disturbed by the intrusion of new developments which neglect the natural topography. The traditional structure of the kampung is very much comprehensible and balanced. But wheresoever this structure is ignored, altered or destroyed, an imbalance can be observed. It is striking that every new development has ignored the existing structure. An example is the replacement of the old Al-Ubudiah mosque. With its modest size the old building used to fit tightly into the irregular urban fabric of residential houses, paths and

minimal open space.^{P-11-29, P-11-30} It served the kampung's community well and suited in scale. In contrast, the new mosque, also called Masjid Al-Ubudiah, is a white coloured, large, free-standing solitaire on a large square footprint.^{P-11-31} The building is set back from the main street and completely surrounded by paved parking lots. The natural terrain has been heavily changed to achieve this. A tall minaret is placed in front of the main facade and the entire plot is gated. Similar buildings can be observed quite often in Malaysia; they are the result of a regained strength in Muslim self-conception. Residents reported that the old neighbourhood mosque did not fulfil the demands of a "modern" place of worship and the lack of parking was described as a problem. The new building clearly solves these issues and aims to attract residents beyond the kampung. Ongoing roadwork will connect the mosque with residential areas further north. In contrast, the old mosque was rooted in the community, with worshippers walking in and out. The new building is less easy to access by foot and lacks any resemblance with its immediate surrounding. Its conspicuousness seems its primary purpose.

1.4 Atmosphere

Passing through Jalan Segambut Dalam will not uncover the kampung in its entirety because the residential areas behind the shops and vendors are not immediately recognisable. Only residents will take the streets and pathways uphill in order to get to their houses.^{P-11-32, P-11-33, P-11-34} Outsiders move past them as they are unclear and lead to dead ends.^{P-11-35} For residents, orientation is fairly easy. All paths lead to the main street from which one moves along the valley in northern or southern direction. Depending on the location, the atmosphere greatly varies. The kampung resembles an urban or rural atmosphere just within a few metres of walking distance. The low part of the valley is dominated by the activity of the main thoroughfare. Noise, fumes and fast moving traffic make for an irksome experience, although mixed with the liveliness of people frequenting the stalls and shops or school children getting off the bus while cars honk impatiently.^{P-11-36} All of this changes just a few metres uphill, when approaching one of the residential clusters. Life is calm, relaxed and domestic. Malay family members look after their garden,^{P-11-37} Indonesian housewives hang their laundry^{P-11-38} and migrant workers chat on their mobile phones after a long day of work.^{P-11-39} The context of the busy metropolis becomes blurred although it is just a few metres away. These varying atmospheres are superimposed by the visual juxtaposition of the modern high-rise developments and the low-rise kampung, resulting in a fascinating contrast of the urban landscape.^{P-11-40} Obviously, this perception is very different for kampung residents who live right next to an out-of-scale luxury condominium with up to 40 storeys.^{P-11-41} Most residents respond to this ominous scenery with a mix of fatalism and optimism. A hobby artist with architectural taste^{P-11-42} who owns and runs a small hangout called *ARTòk Cafe* has mixed feelings about the destruction of the kampung. His house^{P-11-43} is situated on one of the last unbuilt sites in between two megastructures.^{P-11-44} He claimed that he and other landowners refused to sell their properties, at least for now. In his words, new buildings and new residents will soon have taken over the entire kampung south of the highway bridge. In general, new developments in the city are perceived with a positive connotation because they promise modernisation and progress. But the danger of eviction, especially for tenants is a realistic

threat in Segambut Dalam.

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

A quick glance on a two-dimensional plan of Segambut Dalam implies a homogeneous if not monotonous settlement. The footprints of the detached buildings are very similar and the use is, with only few exceptions, residential. But the actual variety of one-storey and two-storey houses is surprisingly substantial. They differ not only in condition but type. Single-family houses are often located at the higher levels of the slopes or hills. These houses are in very good condition and surrounded by gardens on large plots.^{P-11-45} The majority of houses in the kampung are multi-tenant buildings. They are longish in shape with individual units partitioned for up to eight families or tenants.^{P-11-46} Some have been partitioned further, with a separate walkway for the second floor.^{P-11-47} These houses originate from a time when rubber smallholdings surrounded the kampung and tappers were in need for small quarters. Nowadays, they are popular with immigrant labourers. The condition of the houses vary. Some are in very good condition, some rather neglected. But none is in a state of dilapidation or uninhabited. All buildings have been heavily altered over the years by purposeful DIY efforts.^{P-11-48} This is apparent from the use of a crude mix of recycled building materials, for example poured concrete for open spaces on ground floors, cement blocks or plywood for partition walls and simple corrugated iron for roof covers.^{P-11-49} In addition, most houses underwent changes to accommodate more tenants or storage space. The result of these efforts has led to surprising and unique typological features. For example, covered outdoor spaces with sitting areas, the integration of small shops with residential houses or, unconventional solutions to separate individual units.^{P-11-50} A few historic houses have survived without much alternations and give a good impression of the traditional building styles, for example types with raised floors on wooden stilts.^{P-11-51} Many houses are very basic and accommodate the lowest income groups. They are located directly behind the shops along the main street or in between the residential clusters.^{P-11-52} These accommodations, which can only be accessed by foot, form the densest parts in the kampung. There are only few non-residential buildings in the kampung eg, the newly built Al-Ubudiah Mosque and the Sekolah Rendah Agama. This four-storey school building is situated perpendicular to the main street. Its gated front yard functions as a parking lot, the back side is tightly fit in between a cluster of residential houses. A second mosque, Awaliah Masjid and Madrasah, is located south of the bridge. Lastly, there is an eclectic mix of tiny shops for daily needs along Jalan Segambut Dalam. Some of these are extensions to residential houses and therefore hybrid structures.^{P-11-53} Some are free-standing sheds and only activated when needed.^{P-11-54}

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

Segambut Dalam is predominantly inhabited by Malays. A minority belongs to middle-income groups who live in well-maintained single-family houses and occupy jobs in the nearby service

or industrial sector. The majority of the Malay community belongs to low-income groups who live in small single-family houses or multi-family dwellings, often with their extended families in cramped conditions. They rely on jobs in the nearby service sector. Many of the older inhabitants have been living in the kampung for their entire life. Mobility is relatively high as many household members own or have access to a car or two-wheeler. The other big group of inhabitants are migrants from Indonesia, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The social composition of this group is rather complex. Indonesian migrants can be described as well-established, with low-paid but steady jobs in the nearby construction industry or service sector. They often reside in separate units of larger houses, forming small communities of their clan.^{P-11-55} The Bangladeshi and Myanmar are mostly refugees or migrant workers that rely on a well-established diaspora community. They have low income and form the bottom part of the urban poor. Their mobility is low as they do not have the means to buy two-wheelers or use public or private transportation frequently. Many can be seen walking to construction sites nearby.^{P-11-56} The residents in the gated communities belong to high-income groups with well-paid jobs in the service sector. They are mostly of ethnic Chinese, Indian, Middle-Eastern or European descent and will only move in and out of their compounds by private cars. From afar, kampung residents seem to mingle as they live closely together. But in the coffee shops or open spaces, they mostly meet along their clan and ethnic groups.^{P-11-57} This is especially true for low-income groups as they rely on a close-knit support network where job opportunities or possible accommodation for newcomers are discussed. The result is a pronounced sense of community that is built along ethnic lines and social norms.

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

There is a wide range of existing housing stock in the kampung. The typological variety from single-room quarter to multi-family house is clearly responsible for an effective integration of residents with different socio-economic status. It seems there is an accommodation for every need. In addition, being able to provide social space for different ethnic communities is equally beneficial. Several residents reported that being among their clan is a crucial motivation to live in Segambut Dalam. Of course, the limited available space is a challenge. Although there is no overcrowding, the high occupancy rate of the houses is a clear indication of tightness for space. Also, the integration is limited to few ethnic groups. There are hardly any Indian or Chinese residents and therefore a support network for these groups is less developed. But in summary, these characteristics are surprising if one considers the small size of the settlement. Segambut Dalam might appear as a backward island in a fast growing and fast changing urban landscape. But its character is not insular. The kampung's location in relative proximity to dynamic and densely populated urban quarters offers a range of job opportunities. This is especially advantageous for migrants who play an important role in the labour-intensive construction business. In the mornings one can observe many workers leaving their accommodation by foot, two wheelers or on flatbeds of lorries. It is no surprise that the well-off residents of the gated communities do not consider themselves a part the kampung. They maintain a social life outside Segambut or inside their gated compound. The means of individual transportation, often with

one car for each adult household member, makes them independent from their immediate neighbourhood and their lifestyle includes several daily commutes to shopping centres, restaurants, schools and workplaces.

2.4 Space of Opportunities

Continuous transformation brings about new opportunities. Household helpers, shop assistants, gatekeepers and construction workers are among the many job offerings that emerge nearby, especially in the thriving service industry of Mont Kiara. Commercial activities within the kampung also remain viable. For example, hawkers that offer prepared food to go are popular among all ethnic groups who travel through the kampung on a daily basis. Such activities are often on a small scale, yet they are more refined than just a simple stall next to the street. They involve the engagement of various family members and rely on a functioning infrastructure. A mother-daughter business specialising on breakfast items for South Indian workers is a good example for this.^{P-11-58} The various food items they offer are prepared in different locations and finalised in an open area next to a vending stall along Jalan Segambut Dalam. It is a tiny but diversified business unit that fits the scale of the settlement and its specific location. I will argue that Segambut Dalam offers unique opportunities for these kind of activities. No doubt, these practises can be found in other areas in KL, too. But it is the specific condition and the dynamic of the kampung that support these highly specialised businesses especially well. This can also be demonstrated with the open stalls and coffee shops located under the expressway bridge. The high overhang of the bridge serves as a shelter from heavy rainfall and the widened street is used for passers-by to make a quick stop. Having visited the kampung many times over the years, I noticed that vendors and offerings change rather frequently. At first glance, everything seems like a short-lived operation.^{P-11-59} But it is rather enduring one. The formal architectural space of the gigantic overhang and the resulting informal space on street level offers a space of opportunity. The space offers a stable stage within a dynamic and continuously changing environment.

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

The streets in Segambut Dalam act as formal traffic space and informal activity space simultaneously. The daily delivery of the vendors' fruits and vegetables happens on the side of the street and passers-by in cars or two-wheelers stop kerbside to do their odd bits of shopping.^{P-11-60} The resulting conflicts are tolerated. The same is true for vendors who tend to extend their activities to the outside in order to prepare their offerings.^{P-11-61} Therefore, the public roam is used to a maximum and enriched with activity. Open space around private houses is used for various outdoor activities. For example, in the covered areas between multi-tenant dwellings, the profane habit of hanging laundry is often a joint undertaking of the tenants that finds continuation in chatting with neighbours on DIY sitting areas.^{P-11-62} These appropriations are temporary but not improvised. They are part of the daily routine and represent a tactical

behaviour. Open space is social space. Upon closer investigation, one can find a similar phenomenon in small ventures, hidden inside the lesser frequented residential clusters. These informal eateries make use of pathways and covered areas to serve guests.^{P-11-63} It is very much a local—but not private—affair and resembles an informal community gathering instead of a proper business. It is mostly people of the same ethnic group that eat, chat and hang out with each other. Importantly, it is the characteristics of the DIY built environment that make these ventures successful or even possible.

3.2 Ambivalence

The urban landscape of Segambut is subject to a deep transformation process. The majority of changes are destructive for the urban structure of the kampung. Many traditional houses have been destroyed and replaced by gated high-rise condominiums, town-houses or infrastructure measures.^{P-11-64} Old-established residents are confronted with eviction. Compensation for resettlement often remains unclear, involving lengthy legal battles with the authorities. Important public or private investments benefitting locals are ignored. For example, it is striking that a simple clinic for basic medical care is absent in the kampung and its vicinity. New dwellers that replace kampung folk won't integrate into the existing settlement. They belong to a very different socio-economic class and position themselves towards the internationally oriented and marketed township of Mont Kiara.³⁸⁴ Of course, these transformations^{P-11-65} have severe and negative consequences. Traffic, especially from heavy machinery of the construction sites has become overpowering. Private cars and delivery riders from and to Mont Kiara add to the congestion. Environmental damage occurs more and more frequently, especially during flash floods which are a recurring problem in Segambut Dalam. They are caused by large-scale construction developments that seal off most of the natural soil and by restricting waterways into concrete channels.^{P-11-66} In the past, the combination of natural river beds and careful placement of raised houses was able to withstand floods. Now, water levels raise much higher and stream velocity grows much faster causing floods that can lead to fatal landslides³⁸⁵ and partial building collapses.³⁸⁶ Lastly, the social composition of the settlement slowly dissolves. This is especially true for the southern part of the kampung where hardly any coherent fabric of low-rise houses has survived.^{P-11-67, P-11-68} Its residents have been relocated to other areas in KL and Selangor. Not surprisingly, even the name Segambut Dalam as geographic designation disappears is replaced with Mont Kiara, a rather generic albeit successful name to market real estate.^{P-11-69}

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

Most houses show a relative high occupancy rate, especially in clusters with multi-tenant buildings. But overall, the rates are not excessive. Single-family homes are often occupied by only

³⁸⁴ Kaur, Sharen (2018). *Mont Kiara extension: From estates to high-end haven*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 1 November 2018

³⁸⁵ Camoens, Austin (2016). *One missing, another rescued in landslide in Segambut Dalam*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 30 August 2016

³⁸⁶ Hariz, Mohd (2016). *Construction worker buried alive in Taman Segambut Landslip tragedy*. The Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 30 August 2016

two to four inhabitants. The available open space is well used but not overused. Despite the lack of formal plot divisions, like fences or walls, the residents very much respect other people's property or roam.^{P-11-70} This is a general characteristic of traditional kampungs in Malaysia and Segambut Dalam is no exception. Another characteristic is the hybrid use of space and elements. As informal open space has no designated use, it is used in different ways during the course of the day. This practise compensates for the absence of formal open space. The juxtaposition of heavy traffic, fruit and vegetable stalls, vendors for everyday necessities, repair shops and small eateries along Jalan Segambut Dalam result in a thoroughfare of high activity. The narrow but crammed street is a strenuous but lively experience. Every resident, school kid or visitor will pass by the street daily and the vendors make good use of it.^{P-11-71} Most of the stores or coffee shops are part or additions of residential houses, resulting in an efficient use of available space.

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

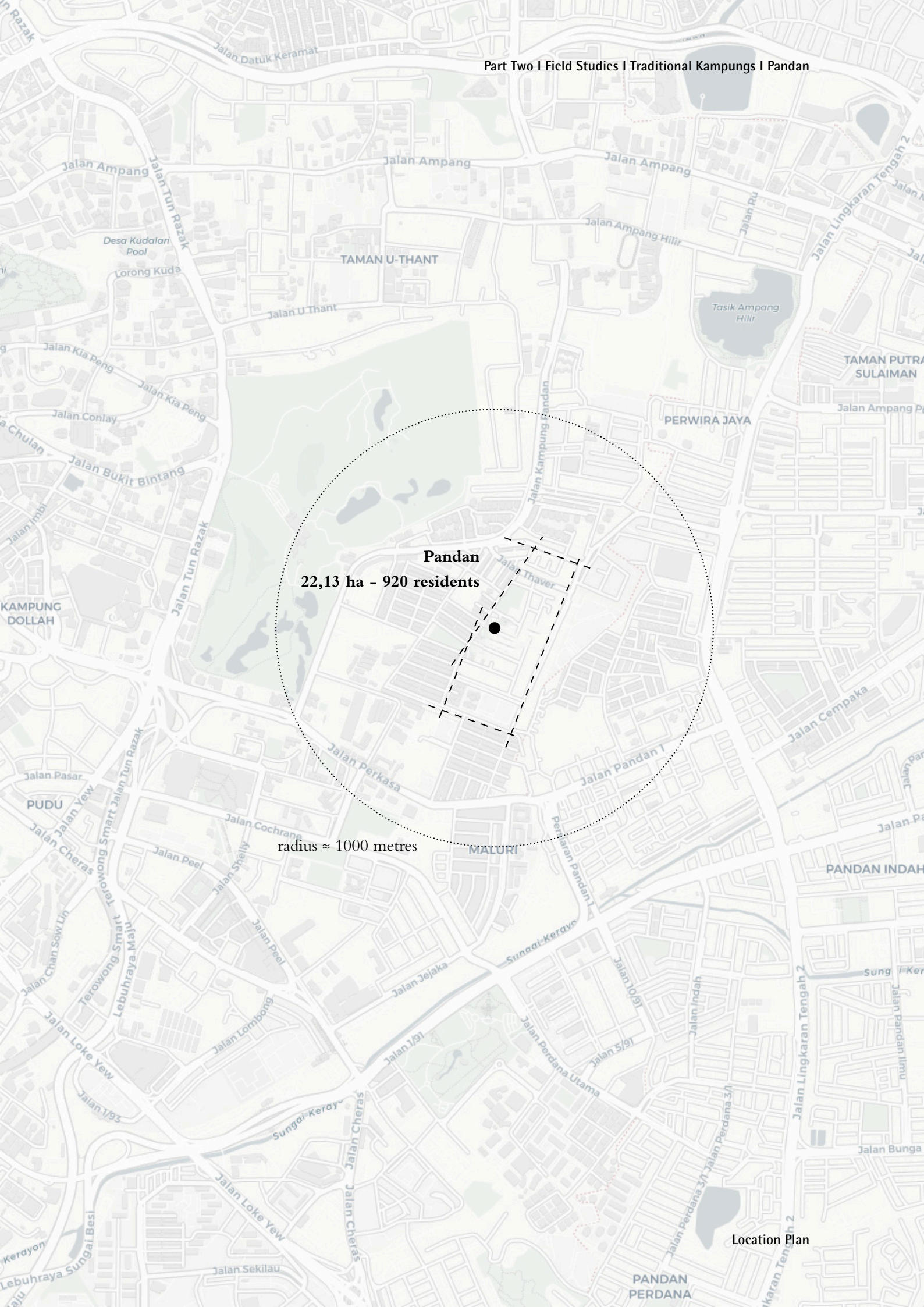
As stated above, Segambut Dalam embodies two contrasting atmospheres. This entails that the level of activity is high along the main thoroughfare and low in the housing clusters. But the activity in the calmer areas is also high. Many family members, especially female, are doing a variety of domestic work during the day and look after children. By reason of relative small housing units, most of these activities take place in the outdoors. Architectural elements like stairs, overhangs, outdoor furnitures and so on, become an integral part of this space. Most of these elements have been built, altered or adapted in simple, yet effective DIY efforts. In consequence, I will argue that the coherence between architectural elements and open space is developed much stronger in Segambut Dalam compared to a conventional settlement with intentionally designed elements.^{P-11-72} The residents have developed a close relationship with their immediate surrounding and became the makers of their immediate environment.^{P-11-73} This coherence expands to street and pathways and is reminiscent of Gordon Cullen's idea of the *Concise Townscape*.³⁸⁷ Residents experience their daily movements as a succession of events. Walking a pathway down to visit a friend or store becomes an experience with opportunities along the way, a practice in which subject and object go hand in hand.^{P-11-74, P-11-75, P-11-76} This quality is only perceived by residents that move through their kampung. An outsider will hardly experience this.

Summary

The spatial structure of the kampung offers a unique opportunity to understand and re-construct the bygone era of rubber smallholdings. It was a time that shaped the economic and social structure of KL and Malaysia at large. Unfortunately, this ingrained quality of Segambut Dalam is completely ignored by today's urban development. The narrow clusters, made of small scale elements are a result of the unique natural topography and the functional requirements of early rubber plantations. Today, these clusters represent heterogeneous residential neighbourhoods with

³⁸⁷ Cullen, Gordon (1961). *The Concise Townscape*. London

intimate open spaces. A wide variety of accommodations, many low-cost, fit the needs of immigrant workers. The human scale of the clusters facilitates the social cohesion among residents. Although often poorly equipped, the simplistic built form of shops, workshops and residences offer many opportunities for DIY individualisation. The coherence of built form and informal outdoor space allows residents to take possession of the kampung in order to make it their own. The land of the kampung is not protected in any form. Piece by piece, plots have been bought up and developed under the most adverse circumstances, including severe environmental destruction. But it appears that the remaining kampung has a distinct value beyond real estate because the residents have entered a symbiotic relationship with the dynamic surroundings. Construction companies, service industry and informal sector strongly depend on labour that calls Segambut Dalam home.



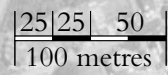
Pandan
22,13 ha - 920 residents

radius \approx 1000 metres

Location Plan



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

2.1.2. Pandan

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

Kampung Pandan is located two kilometres south of Ampang, KL's elegant diplomatic quarter and just one kilometre east of the Royal Selangor Golf Club, a traditional green space. At first, the kampung's boundary is difficult to make out. To the north and west it blends with adjacent neighbourhoods which are also called Pandan. But unlike its immediate surrounding, kampung Pandan features a street and plot layout that does not follow-through an exclusively orthogonal pattern. The settlement is a mix of regular and irregular street patterns featuring detached residential houses. In contrast, adjacent neighbourhoods are dominated by regular patterns of terraced houses^{P-12-01} and rows of commercial buildings, both typical of KL. Lorong Kampung Pandan runs through the middle of the kampung without being a particularly busy or lively street.^{P-12-02} Unusually large plots of 35 metres x 15 metres are located between Jalan Tujuh, Lorong Enam and Lorong Lima. Historically, this generous division was chosen to enable subsistence gardening. Today, large houses with maximum footprint fill these plots. Otherwise, standard plot sizes of 25 metres x 10 metres can be found all over the kampung and most houses maintain a smaller footprint allowing space for private gardens. Some houses on regular plots are lined up sideways and therefore allow for a series of two or three small units along the depth of a plot. Between Lorong Kampung Pandan and Lorong Delapan is a large cluster of smaller and irregularly placed houses.^{P-12-03} Some of them are only accessible by footpaths. This area is significantly different from the rest of the kampung and might be a remnant of a traditional settlement or squatter area. To the east of the kampung runs the administrative border of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Until 2009, the entire stretch along this border was occupied by a large squatter area^{P-12-04} which was inhabited by an Indian community. The kampung and the squatters merged along Lorong Delapan and in the past it was difficult to distinguish between the two. In news reports,³⁸⁸ squatter and kampung were often described as one settlement, although the squatter was formed many years later. The squatter area was cleared in 2009, resulting in a large open space. On the Selangor side of the border, several large-scale high-rise apartment blocks have been built recently by the government.^{P-12-05} Access to these blocks is from Lorong Delapan. At the south-east corner of the street, the remains of a desecrated Indian temple are the only reminder of the former squatter area. To the south, the kampung is visually and spatially closed off by a gated condominium complex.^{P-12-06} A generous road divider with trees along Jalan Tujuh acts as a visual buffer.

1.2 Scale of Elements

³⁸⁸ Lim, Chia Ying (2009). *Squatters to be relocated within six months, says assemblyman*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 11 June 2009

The majority of residential buildings are one-storey in height. In between are a few two-storey and three-storey buildings^{P-12-07} which clearly stick out from the rest. Non-residential buildings are mostly larger in size. The most prominent of them are a large market hall^{P-12-08} and hawker centre.^{P-12-09} Access to this complex is from Jalan Wirawati, on the far side of the kampung. So is the parking and the delivery zone. The entire complex turns its back towards the kampung and it is partially fenced. A large public open space is located to the north of the market hall. Access is also from Jalan Wirawati. There are two school buildings on the north-east corner of the kampung. One is an inconspicuous two-storey Tamil school^{P-12-10} that is located at the end of a row of residential buildings, the other is a large four-storey Muslim school which is set back from the street. Finally, there are several places of worship. An inconspicuous Sikh temple with community hall^{P-12-11} is located within a row of residential houses. A large Hindu temple^{P-12-12} which occupies three plots in between residential houses is turned at a 45 degree angle from the street and features a tower with typical ornamentation. Lastly, a free standing Christian chapel^{P-12-13} which is located at the end of a side street and surrounded by an open space mainly used for parking. All three buildings are modest in size and fit within the residential clusters. An exception is a four-storey Muslim madrasah^{P-12-14} which is located in a gated compound in the middle of the kampung.^{P-12-15} Its height, ornamental canopies and colourful roofscape is rather prominent. In summary, only few elements break away from the overall scale of the kampung. Even the large market hall and hawker centre do not feel out of place, mostly because both buildings are orientated away from the residential houses with trees and open space in between.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

The few effusive buildings that are different in dimension or the few streets with an unusual geometry have a significant effect for anybody moving around the kampung. It is especially the places of worship which contribute to this unique experience. Visible for everybody, the temples, chapel and madrasah signify the presence of the various and diverse congregations. None of these structures is outright spectacular in their architectural or visual appearance. But their calm presence in between the residential houses enriches the neighbourhood by adding a conciseness that would otherwise not exist. In that sense, the kampung is visually significantly richer compared to the adjacent residential neighbourhoods with their endless rows of terraced houses. Orientation in the kampung is fairly easy. The streets allow for a clear view and the landmarks are easy to find. The street names are numbered, written out in Malay (satu, dua, tiga, and so on) and follow a certain logic from north to south.

1.4 Atmosphere

Kampung Pandan is best described as quiet and relaxed. The lack of any through traffic is clearly responsible for this. Its central location in the city is deceiving because in reality it is rather peripheral and off the beaten path. The kampung is far away from commercial activities and the absence of job opportunities forces most residents to leave during the day, resulting in low

daytime activity. The evenings are a bit more lively, especially along Jalan Thaver, where a few restaurants and shops for daily needs are located. But overall, the atmosphere is calm and pleasant.

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

In comparison to other neighbourhoods, the substantial variety of plot sizes and house types is unusual. Furthermore, there are several clusters of similar housing types indicating different phases of development over time. For example, the area between Lorong Lima and Jalan Tujuh is subdivided with unusual large plots built up with modern single-family or multi-family houses in good condition.^{P-12-16} Along Lorong Kampung Pandan and Lorong Delapan, the plots are much smaller and the condition of the detached houses varies significantly. Here, extended families often share one house or multiple tenants live in a divided house with separate entrances. Several houses in the kampung appear unchanged since they were first built and resemble the simple and modest building style after the Second World War.^{P-12-17} But the majority of houses has been altered significantly.^{P-12-18} Their former perimeter has mostly been enlarged in DIY efforts. The gradual change of the building stock will only be noticed over a long period of observation.^{P-12-19, P-12-20} Several plots in Kampung Pandan are empty or occupied with dilapidated structures.^{P-12-21} The reason is real estate speculation of private owners who inherited the plots and hope for a future development or sale. A small number of residential houses has been modified to fit small shops or restaurants.^{P-12-22} The non-residential buildings are equally varied in their appearance. The two schools on Jalan Thaver are located across from each other. The Muslim school is large and visible from the street, the Tamil school is rather humble and unobtrusive. In addition to the schools, one can find eateries, a small clinic and a thriving recycling business along Jalan Thaver. The places of worship are spread out the entire kampung. The Indian temple, the Christian chapel and the Sikh temple have been built during the foundation of the kampung in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They were not built for representation, but to set up the communities of religious minorities.³⁸⁹ The three buildings have been heavily altered since but still resemble their past. The Muslim madrasah and its adjacent buildings are more recent additions and rather striking in their appearance. The over-decorated four-storey main building is part of a gated compound which includes a kindergarten and Muslim community centre. Pasar Dan Pusat Penjaja, the combined complex of market hall and hawker centre, is a standardised design of DBKL. Variations of this functionality intending design can be seen throughout KL. As mentioned above, the entire complex is turned towards Jalan Wirawati which represents the outer edge of the kampung and it is therefore not only a popular centre for the kampung but the Pandan area at large.

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

³⁸⁹ Sacredheartkl (2021). *History of Our Lady of Good Health, Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur*. Retrieved from: <https://sacredheartkl.org/news>

Kampung Pandan is predominantly inhabited by Indians. Confessionally, they are either Hindus, Sikh or, rather unusual, Christians. All three groups set foot in the area in the late 1940s. A good half of this Indian community belongs to middle-income groups. They occupy well-kept single-family homes and mostly hold jobs in the service sector. The other half belongs to lower-income groups, either working in the service sector or as labourers or hawkers.^{P-12-23} Malays are the second largest group. Similar to the Indians, they are represented in all income groups, from well-to-do middle-class to urban poor. With only a few families, Chinese inhabitants are strongly underrepresented in the kampung. Lastly, there are a few refugees from Myanmar. All members of these different ethnic and social groups live side by side. This is unlike many recently built urban areas where the spatial demarcation between different income groups is much more pronounced. Mobility among residents is high as the vast majority holds jobs outside the kampung.^{P-12-24}

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

Considering the small size of the kampung it is astonishing how much diversity it is able to generate. The Christian, Hindu and Sikh communities are historically rooted in the settlement and beyond their religious activities they offer services like community gatherings and educational programs. Focal points for these activities are the varied places of worship. The resulting social networks not only exist among the larger Hindu and Muslim groups but especially among minorities like Christian Indians or Sikh. The kampung is therefore not one community but consists of many small and close-knit communities. A further factor when considering the level of integration is the typological variety and condition of the housing stock which seems to allow for a straightforward integration of residents from low-income groups. For example, on Lorong Delapan a refugee family from Myanmar occupies a tiny house which is tucked away behind another residence and not visible from the street.^{P-12-25, P-12-26} Two of the three children attend a school nearby and the father^{P-12-27} works as a labourer. A conversation with the parents^{P-12-28} revealed that they experience a heightened social control in the kampung. But they also pointed out that a functioning social network helps them to cope with daily life and that they sense a belonging in the community. Compared to living in the likely anonymity of a high-rise housing project, the everyday reality of social control in the kampung seems to foster a sense of responsibility. Of course, the small size of kampung Pandan allows for the integration of only few refugees. But it seems these few are accommodated rather well.

2.4 Space of Opportunities

At first, it is surprising that Pandan lacks the round-the-clock dynamics we normally associate with a diverse urban quarter. It is, among other things, the absence of commercial activity that make for the rather mature and calm character. Being away from the hustle is clearly an asset for many residents who still enjoy the opportunity of being close to the city centre. A closer look uncovers several special interest establishments, for example a Yoga Meditation Centre,^{P-12-29} a small Sai Baba Centre and the Muslim Madrasah with various educational offerings. These facilities not just rely on the community in the kampung but draw interest from beyond. Thus,

the kampung is much more consolidated with the surrounding city than its quiet character implies. Compared to other inner-city areas, pressure from the external real estate market is low. There are two reasons. One, the kampung's peripheral location is not attractive enough for freehold projects. Two, there are not enough available plots that could be joint and bought up by a private investor. Ampang and Desa Pandan to the north are a much more popular and dynamic neighbourhoods. However, the mix of low density and high diversity and the very laid back character make for an attractive neighbourhood. There is a slow but active market for private real estate owners. Over the last ten years, many changes involved the handover of lease ownerships resulting in several new houses, mostly for affluent residents. I only became aware of this through repeated visits and observations over a longer period of time.

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

Considering the location close to the city centre, it is unexpected that the kampung is more or less closed off on two sides. One boundary is the open space towards the administrative border between the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor to the east. The other boundary is several condominium complexes on large gated plots of land to the south. The resulting street layout inside the kampung is non-hierarchical with relative short but wide streets and slow moving traffic. This is pleasant for residents to walk or cycle. The tree-lined Jalan Tujuh^{P-12-30} is particularly spacious, comparable to a shaded urban boulevard that awkwardly stops at both ends. The park-like public open space on Jalan Wirawati is a formal open space that serves Pandan and the adjacent neighbourhoods. The green space features several sports fields, tree-shaded sitting areas and a playground. It is well-used by residents of all ages. The main attraction is a large football field (Padang Bola Sepak)^{P-12-31} which is popular during the evening hours. To the south of it is an over-dimensioned open space that belongs to the market hall. It is paved and intended for additional parking but mostly vacant and unused. The large empty space where the squatter area was located has turned into uncultivated land and it can be expected that it will stay that way. The main reason is a transmission line on large steel pillars that runs along the entire east side of the kampung.^{P-12-32}

3.2 Ambivalence

A conflict involving the squatters has been smouldering in the kampung for many years and left mixed messages about the governments zero-squatter policy and its treatment of dwellers that have been living in the area for decades.³⁹⁰ The clearing resulted in an evicted community^{P-12-33} and a large piece of uncultivated land. A legal battle over the fair compensation of former squatter residents is still unresolved.³⁹¹ The recently finished gigantic high-rise apartment blocks

³⁹⁰ Wahab, Farid (2020). *Six years on and still waiting*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 17 January 2020

³⁹¹ Ibid.

do not interfere with the kampung. But the close proximity and the vast number of new residents close by might influence the future development in the kampung. Only time will tell if new commercial uses or further development along Lorong Delapan will disturb the quiet character of Pandan. A completely different but nonetheless conflicting issue might develop from a recent tussle for predominance of the settlements cultural heritage. The imam of the Ar-Rahimah mosque in Desa Pandan, a Malay quarter to the north claims that his community is the true origin of Pandan. This claim is spread and shared on social media³⁹² although it is not difficult to find evidence³⁹³ that it is misinformation. Desa Pandan was only established in the late 1970s, at a time, when the diversely populated kampung Pandan was already three decades old. It is difficult to assess the motivation of such claims and it remains to be seen what kind of repercussions such arguments will bear in the future.

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

The available open space in Pandan is well used but one cannot ignore the fact that certain areas are rather underused. Most plots contain large houses and are designated with fences or walls. This results in tight private open spaces that are used less intensive compared to other traditional kampungs. The generosity of available public open spaces compensates for that. In that sense the kampung feels more urban and mature. Prevailing is a middle-class lifestyle in which public open space is used for a daily evening walk, sports or recreation. Residents with higher income make use of their mobility and frequent other neighbourhoods or the nearby city centre.

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

Walking through kampung Pandan is a quiet experience. There is not much traffic and only few areas of intensified activity. The small shops and restaurants are not drawing much customers and everything feels rather relaxed. The market hall, which is only lively during early morning hours, is mostly deserted. It is simply too large for the area and many stalls are not occupied. This gives the entire complex a very peculiar atmosphere,^{P-12-34} especially during the day when time seems to stand still. The hawker centre^{P-12-35} is a little bit more busy as it draws customers from the surrounding areas who pass by during lunch and dinner hours. Heightened activity can be observed during religious festivals of which there are many. With four congregations – Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu – present in the kampung, festivals and celebrations can be observed almost year round. It is worth noting that the minority Christian Indian community is fairly established with gatherings and street decorations during eg, Christmas holidays extending to the streets.^{P-12-36} The same is true during the Muslim Hari Raya holidays, the Sikh Vaisakhi celebrations and the Hindu festival of Deepavali. This high visibility of religious practise and diversity is not unusual in KL, yet it is rather unique to see it in one small neighbourhood like Pandan. All these activities offer unique and performative qualities for the residents to participate.

³⁹² Harian Metro (2019, November 12). *Nostalgia Kampung Pandan*. [Video] YouTube. www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwHBw-IEMfA

³⁹³ My Village Kampung Pandan. (2015, August 3) *Boundary of Kampung Pandan India*. Facebook. www.facebook.com/people/My-Village-Kampung-Pandan/100070979423149/

Summary

Pandan represents an unusual example of traditional kampung. It was set up just after the Second World War as a multiracial and multi-religious residential community in the city or, more precisely, at the fringe of a city in the making. Its spatial composition is a mix of organic and regular street layout. It is not based on a nucleus village. This heritage is responsible for the spatial heterogeneity of the built form with different types of houses. They offer accommodation for residents from all socio-economic backgrounds. The kampung is home to refugees as well as well-established middle-class citizens. Various places of worship with diverse architectural features make the settlement visually richer than any of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Residents identify with their respective communities on a spiritual as well as spatial level. In regard to the small size of the settlement, the multi-religious composition is unique. The various places of worship are within a radius of less than 200 metres and act as subtle visual landmarks. The related communal activities offer unique and performative qualities for participating residents and visitors. An exceptional characteristic of the kampung is its separation from other areas. Spatially, it is cut off on the east and south which leads to a very calm overall atmosphere. The overall activity is low due to the absence of through traffic and very low commercial activity. The resulting tranquillity is a quality that many residents appreciate.

2.2. Malay Reservation Areas

- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship

25 | 25 | 50
100 metres



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000



2.2.1. Puah

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

Kampung Puah is located in the Gombak district to the north of the city centre. The area derived its name from the Gombak River which has its source in the mountainous highlands of Genting, 25 kilometres north of Puah. The river runs from Genting all the way to the city centre where it merges with the Klang River to form the geographic birthplace of KL.³⁹⁴ In the early 19th century, Minangkabau immigrants from West Sumatra settled along the river in traditional kampungs. In the 1920s, many of these settlements and surrounding grounds were declared as Malay Reservation Areas. Over time, the entire valley has been developed with housing and many of the traditional kampungs disappeared in the process. In the 1970s, the natural river bed with its alluvial land on both sides was replaced with a partially stepped concrete channel to prevent the valley from flooding.^{P-21-01} Since the 1990s, the west side of the river is dominated by the multi-lane DUKE highway and its feeder roads.^{P-21-02} Several kampungs in and around the valley were destroyed during the construction of the highway. Some buildings of one of these kampungs survived in the narrow leftover area between highway and river. A small bridge^{P-21-03} for pedestrians and two-wheelers connect both banks of the river. Kampung Puah is located on the east side of the river where its basin is flat on the bottom before sloping all the way up to Jalan Gombak. This unique topography results in a varied landscape with hills and slopes covered under a lush vegetation.^{P-21-04} The settlement is nestled in between. In some parts, houses are tightly packed next to each other forming irregular nuclei.^{P-21-05} Other parts are sparsely developed with randomly placed houses in between trees and vegetation.^{P-21-06} A network of narrow streets passes through the entire area, often ending in dead-ends or foot paths. The settlement pattern is best described as an irregular conglomerate village with alternating clusters of dense and sparse piles of houses. The kampung has no visible or proper boundary. It is mostly confined by lush vegetation and extends seamlessly to recently built houses and larger structures along Jalan Gombak.^{P-21-07} Strictly speaking, the houses filling the area between Jalan Puah Dalam and Jalan Gombak do not belong to the kampung.^{P-21-08} But they are part of the Malay Reserve Land.

1.2 Scale of Elements

Throughout the kampung, all built elements are universally small in scale. The settlement consists of a variety of detached single-family and multi-tenant houses. Over the years, many have been altered to accommodate the changing needs of the owners. The houses have maintained a modest

³⁹⁴ See: Chapter 1.2.1

size and rarely exceed a 5 metres x 10 metres or 10 metres x 10 metres footprint. Their height rarely exceeds one storey. Some of the multi-tenant houses have been joint, forming long and narrow structures.^{P-21-09} Streets and paths are narrow and oncoming traffic is forced to stop in order to pass each other.^{P-21-10} Many paths are only accessible by two-wheelers. Remarkable is a large Muslim cemetery^{P-21-11} which is located in the middle of the settlement. Across from it is a modern two-storey school building and a kindergarten.^{P-21-12} Both buildings are oriented irregularly in order to adjust for the sloping terrain. Next to the school is a small mosque and a tiny community hall^{P-21-12} which is located behind it. Together with an open space this group of buildings form some sort of centre point^{P-21-14} of the kampung and the modest scale of these elements fits well with the surrounding residential houses.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

The visual perception of the kampung is strongly influenced by the varied topography. Buildings, streets, paths and open spaces follow the natural terrain and result in alternately curvy, straight, narrow or wide spaces.^{P-21-15} Another component is the lush vegetation. Many houses are hidden behind trees and plants^{P-21-16} and only become noticeable when viewed closely as the terrain is overgrown with greenery. In densely built-up areas of the kampung there is minimal room to move around and the houses dominate visually.^{P-21-17} Public paths suddenly transform to private outdoor space and vice versa.^{P-21-18} The result of this interplay is a complex townscape which is a pleasure to get lost in. The settlement is a spatial continuum that will unfold only if one moves through it. Notable is the fact that this spatial complexity is achieved without any outstanding or extraordinary buildings. It is the setting of the built environment in a varied landscape which dominates the perception. A reliable reference for orientation is offered by the low-lying river which acts as a natural spine along the settlement.^{P-21-19}

1.4 Atmosphere

Kampung Puah is accessed through Jalan Gombak, one of KL's north-south arteries connecting the northern suburbs with the city. The six-lane street is dominated by heavy traffic and surrounded by high-rise apartment towers and various commercial centres.^{P-21-20} To reach the kampung, one needs to turn into Jalan Puah Hulu or Jalan Puah.^{P-21-21} There is an instant change of atmosphere. The strenuous and noisy activities of Jalan Gombak have subsided and one feels emerged in the unique setting of a Malay village.^{P-21-22} The difference is so unexpected and immediate that one forgets to be just over four kilometres away from the Petronas Towers as the crow flies. Moving further into the kampung, its atmosphere speaks to all senses. The smell of burnt firewood, the rising humidity and the visual impression of a rural village in a forest is stunning.^{P-21-23} From time to time a remote high-rise building spills into sight or a roar of traffic can be noticed. But this makes the unique atmosphere even more unique. For the most part, the kampung is a quiet and laid back place. Another distinction is the lack of diversity. Kampung Puah is entirely Malay and aside from a few immigrant workers there are no other ethnicities. Of course, the first impression of a rural village is misleading. A single fisher-man standing in the

river^{P-21-24} does not mean that the residents rely on subsistence economy. There are no orchards and nobody cultivates sawah fields. Aside from a few fruit trees, the greenery has no agricultural purpose. Most of it is neglected because residents don't use it and therefore will not put any care in it.³⁹⁵ Well-maintained private gardens around houses are an exception to this.^{P-21-25} During the day, many residents are leaving the kampung to go about their daily work routine. They are returning in the late afternoons or early evenings. The kampung will only come to life after sunset.

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

Kampung Puah is predominantly built from detached single-family and multi-tenant houses. Their condition varies significantly. Most single-family houses are well cared for, renovated, and painted in bright colours.^{P-21-26} They have been altered from their original condition and the basic construction has changed from wood frames to cement blocks. Some owners have fenced their plots and gardens, especially along Jalan Puah Dalam and Jalan Puah Hulu where buildings stand perpendicular to the streets.^{P-21-27} This is a recent practise and most of the fenced properties do not belong to the kampung. The rest of the single-family houses are less cared for and made of basic wood constructions. They occupy irregular plots without any demarcation and feature a variety of DIY alterations, for example extended rooflines and additional sheds for storage.^{P-21-28} Most of these houses are surrounded by lush vegetation and open space where owners burn firewood.^{P-21-29} One can also discover several unused plots with dilapidated structures.^{P-21-30} Malay owners keep these plots for future development or to be passed on to the next generation. Multi-tenant houses with small individual units make up the densely built-up areas of the kampung. The resulting nuclei are very basic quarters and residents live door-to-door in cramped conditions. Any outdoor space is used extensively for household work and childcare.^{P-21-31} The houses are often attached to form long rows and their condition varies. Some are well cared for with decorated windows, others expose bare brickwork and resemble simple sheds.^{P-21-32} There are a handful of non-residential buildings, most of which are grouped around the same area. The gated elementary school, Sekolah Rendah Agama, consists of three connected blocks with a small open space in between. Next to the school is a public kindergarten and at its back in a few metres walking distance is a tiny community hall. Masjid Kampung Puah is the only place of worship and located across from the school at the end of an open space.^{P-21-33} All of these buildings are very basic and do not show any elements of representation. Except for one local vendor who sells daily supplies out of a garage in front of the open space there is no proper shop in the kampung. There is no pharmacy or clinic for medical support, which is especially problematic for the elderly. Down by the river is a recently built Quran school, Pondok Mengaji Al-Quran, for children.

³⁹⁵ Kahn, Joel S. (2006) *Other Malays - Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World*. Singapore : 150

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

The kampung is almost exclusively inhabited by Malays. A minority belongs to middle-income groups who live in well cared for single-family houses and occupy jobs in the nearby service or public sector. Most of these residents live on or close to Jalan Puah Dalam. The majority of Malay residents belong to low-income groups and live in much simpler single-family or multi-family homes. They rely on jobs in the nearby service sector and share accommodation with their extended families. Among this group there are residents who fall in the category of urban poor. Thus, income disparity in Puah is quite wide. Aside from the Malay residents there are only a handful immigrant workers who live in single rooms, rented out by Malay owners. Any economic activity happens outside the kampung. The isolated location of the settlement away from public transportation requires a high degree of individual mobility. Therefore, many households own or have access to a car or two-wheeler. The latter are especially widely used and can be seen everywhere.

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

The protected status of Malay land ownership—reserved land can only be sold to other Malays—is a strong and binding component for all residents. Over the years, I have observed hardly any change of ownership. This supports the general perception³⁹⁶ that the limited dynamics of buying and selling property in Malay Reservation Areas result in low social mobility and that change will only happen at a slow pace.³⁹⁷ The protection is fostering a strong attachment of the Malay residents to bumiputera land in general and the kampung in particular. Many residents report that they feel part of a Malay community and that they strongly identify with a lifestyle that essentially means living in a village in the city. Several discussions with residents showed that this lifestyle is associated with the conception of traditional houses surrounded by trees, generous green space, a natural setting, and Malay values like family, religion and tradition. In contrast, the day-to-day reality is determined by insufficient medical service, lack of economic opportunities and sometimes cramped living conditions. Many residents accept such deficiencies and moving out of the kampung would not be an option. Of course, this notion must be specified. For poor families the kampung is the only option to reside in the city. For better off people the kampung is a choice. The ones that were able to afford real estate in other areas have left a long time ago and rent out their properties. The visual impression of a close-knit community can only be confirmed for the nuclei areas of the kampung where residents openly socialise. In other areas of the kampung, residents don't necessarily mingle and one does get the impression that most residents lead an individual rather than communal lifestyle. The daily routine of prayers and other activities in the mosque might be an exception to this.

³⁹⁶ Hanif, Noor-Rosly and Azriyati, Wan Nor and Hamzah, Abdul-Rahman and Wang, Chen and Wood, Lincoln (2015). *The challenge of rural life nostalgia: barriers in redevelopment of Malay Reserve Land (MRL) in Klang Valley*. City, Territory and Architecture, Volume 2, Number 3

³⁹⁷ Omar, Ismail (2000). *The Influence of Valuation Rules on the Supply of Indigenous Land in Kuala Lumpur*. Pacific Rim Real Estate Society, Conference Paper, Sydney

2.4 Space of Opportunities

Despite its isolated setting, kampung Puah is still a place of urban transformation and an integral part of KL's modern cityscape with its diverse population. This can be demonstrated along two examples. The first is a recently opened outdoor restaurant called *KpCafe*.^{P-21-34} The venue consists of a small makeshift kitchen and a large outdoor sitting area located on an empty plot on Jalan Desa Gombak. Opening hours are limited to late evenings. Guests come for food and drinks, but mainly hang out to socialise. Images shared over social media³⁹⁸ show a young and traditional Malay crowd enjoying popular local foods like satay and non-alcoholic beverages. The DIY furnishings and decoration with colourful parasols resemble the mellow atmosphere of a holiday destination. Interesting is the fact that most visitors are drawn from areas further away. The venue's unique blend of pastoral solitude and urban liveliness is appreciated by a young generation of Malays that aims at preserving traditional values and local authenticity. Both are attributes that become more and more rare in the globalised cityscape of Kuala Lumpur. *KpCafe* offers a traditional alternative with a contemporary look. The second example is a small Quran school and tuition centre for children. This so-called *pondok*, literally small cottage, was recently built and financed by a private donor. It is located on the banks of the Gombak river, right off the street which leads to the northern lying areas of the valley.^{P-21-35} A large paved parking area with covered waiting area for pupils make drop-off and pick-up easy.^{P-21-36} Thus, the catchment area for the school goes way beyond the kampung. The Quran school teaches religious studies in Arabic language and the tuition centre is for children that visit government funded Islamic religious schools. Religious education is an important part of children's upbringing in Malaysia. Whereas public schools are less focused on religious studies, it is the Islamic religious schools that support this kind of education. Nowadays, many Islamic schools in the form of traditional *pondoks* exist in rural areas, less so in cities. Urban kampungs in Malay Reservation Areas seem to reverse this trend.

Although these two examples are very different, they help to illustrate current transformation processes in Puah. There is similarity in the combination of spatial opportunity, expression of built form and specific demand. In the first example, a unique open air restaurant in an authentic setting is met by a young and traditionally oriented crowd. In the second example, a Quran school and tuition centre in a strategic location is met by a community that values religious education. The kampung proves to be an attractive place for offerings that are highly specialised or rarely found in other areas of the city. In addition, the attracted customers, visitors or students are mostly drawn from places further away. They deliberately look out for these venues or offerings. Thanks to a high level of individual mobility, it is not the proximity but the atmosphere and the shared interest which is crucial for the popularity of the restaurant and school.

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

³⁹⁸ See Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 13

Despite the dense arrangement of houses and the proximity to the city centre, the kampung features an abundance of open space. Most of it is unused patches of land parcels overgrown with greenery. Empty plots with unclear ownership are often filled with rubbish^{P-21-37} or used to park abandoned cars.^{P-21-38} A continuous open space can be found along the riverbank where a footpath and narrow road wind one's way.^{P-21-39} The area is quite frequented as people use it to move between different parts of the kampung and river valley, especially in northern direction. The tarred area around the mosque, community hall and cemetery carries a certain centrality and is regularly used during functions or festivities during which tents are set up temporarily to extend the limited space of the mosque.^{P-21-40} Otherwise the space is used for parking. In the evening, a futsal court next to the footbridge becomes one of the main hang outs for youngsters.^{P-21-41} They arrive on foot or by two-wheelers from areas further away which shows that the combined formal and informal pathways result in a well functioning network. By far the largest open space is the cemetery, Tanah Perkuburan Islam. It dates back to the late 19th century and is still in use. Its perimeter is fenced^{P-21-42} and the entire field is grown over with large trees. Throughout the kampung cars and two-wheelers are parked randomly or under DIY carports.

3.2 Ambivalence

In 2012, the government initiated the ambitious River of Life project³⁹⁹ to clean KL's rivers. The initial focus was the beautification of the historic city centre around Masjid Jamek where the rivers Klang and Gombak meet. Sadly, the effort was short-lived. Poor planning caused structural damages and the government came to the realisation that the scope of work needs to be extended.⁴⁰⁰ In 2016, a large retention pond for flood control was built across from kampung Puah, further downstream. Similar measures along the Gombak river were considered necessary to improve water quality. The inhabitants of the affected area east of the highway were confronted with the eviction of their houses and had to be relocated. Other objectives of the project, especially renaturation efforts to improve water quality, were abandoned or put on hold indefinitely.⁴⁰¹ This is regrettable as the entire Gombak valley would benefit greatly from such an effort. One of the main reasons for bad water quality is uncontrolled land clearance and discharge of waste water and household rubbish into KL's rivers. A process of rethinking and awareness for these topics has only begun. Unfortunately, the benefits of clean rivers are not communicated properly by the local government. Most residents are not aware of the scope of work or its consequences. There is an opportunity missed to integrate small communities like kampung Puah into the larger context of improving water quality and enhancing open space throughout the city.

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

³⁹⁹ ICOMOS (2020). *The Kuala Lumpur Heritage Agenda - Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur : 42

⁴⁰⁰ Zulzaha, Farah Fazanna (2014). *Gombak villagers living on river reserve to be relocated*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 23 May 2014

⁴⁰¹ Bavani, M. (2019). *KL's Venetian dream collapses*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 22 May 2019

In dense areas, where houses stand tightly packed, private space of residents is minimal. Therefore, daily life extends to the narrow outdoor spaces where interior and exterior merge. This results in common areas where neighbours socialise with each other and children find room to play. At the same time, these areas are often filled with cars and two-wheelers,^{P-21-43} a practise that minimises the available space unnecessarily. The ownership of a car is still associated with status and therefore a car needs to be close to the residence. It is striking that the kampung features overused and underused spaces in close proximity. There is a lot of unused space which owners do not claim. Often, these areas fall into a state of dilapidation. At the same time they represent potential space that can be revitalised at times. A large and continuous potential space is the area along the river.^{P-21-44}

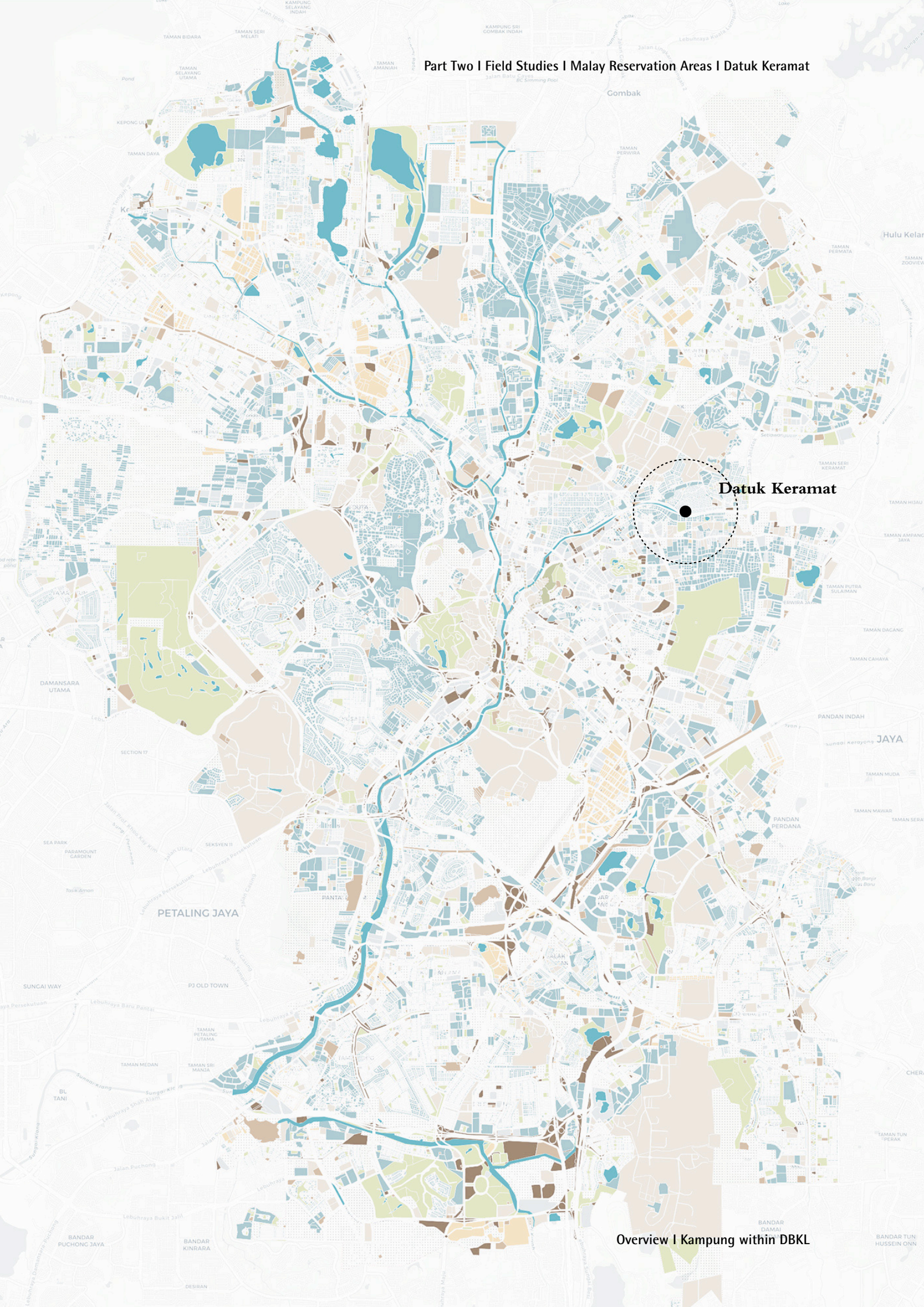
3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

In general, the kampung can be characterised as quiet and secluded. Activity is very low. Commercial undertakings are absent and residents will mostly stay around their house or garden. But the kampung is not entirely dormant. There is a high degree of social control and walking through the kampung, especially as an outsider, will not go unnoticed. Most residents take notice and approach the passer-by, often starting a conversation that evolves around the kampung, indicating a strong identification with their settlement.

Summary

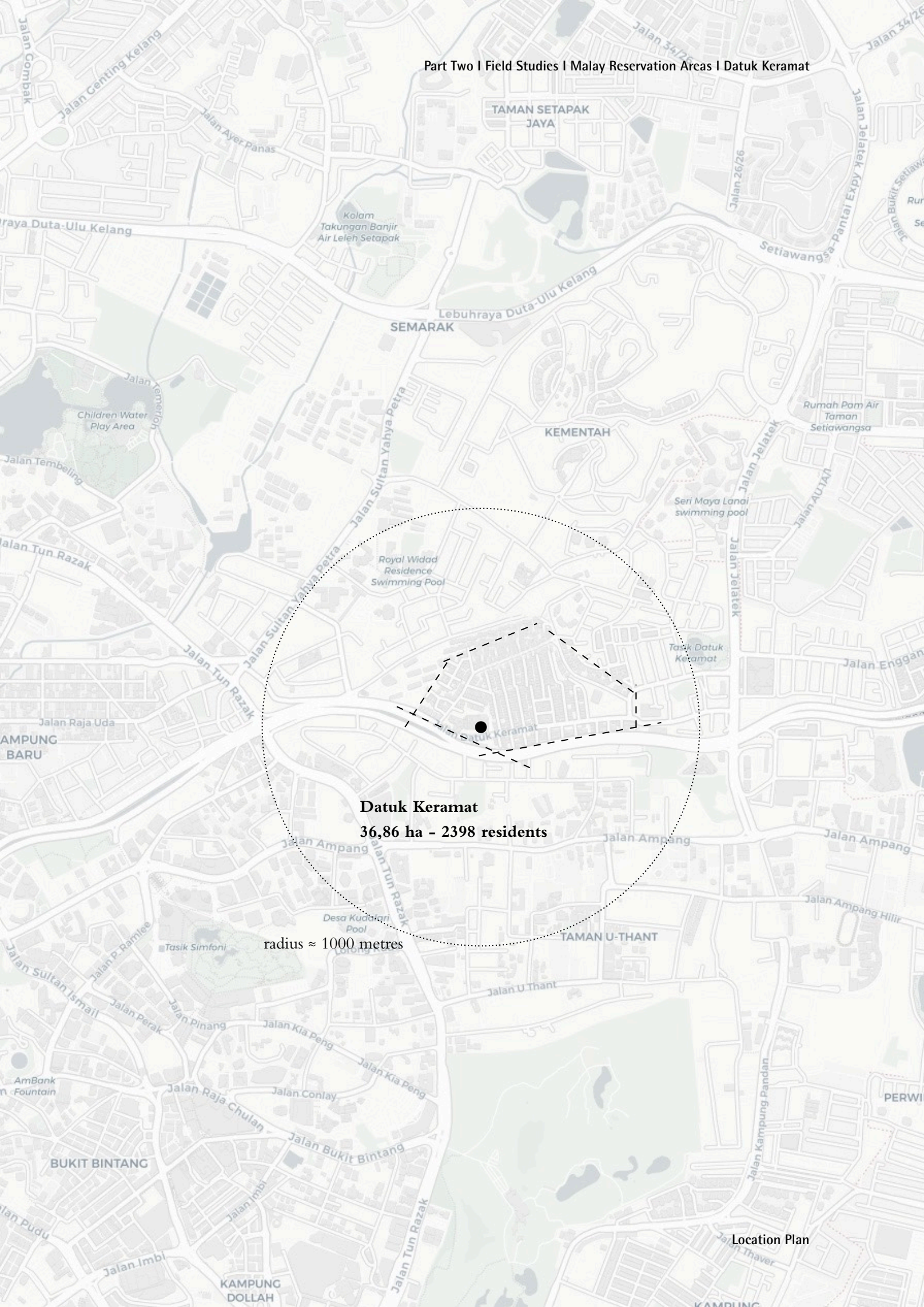
For once, the widely held preconception that a Malay kampung is a quiet and hidden backwater matches with reality—kampung Puah is a unique *village in the city*. But despite its secluded location away from the urban bustle, the kampung is not trapped in isolation. An almost invisible network of paths and walkways run through the flat valley of the Gombak river, connecting people from various small settlements. Together with these other kampungs, Puah is embedded in a spatial continuum which is a pleasure to get lost in. The disperse Malay settlement features a diverse urban fabric. In densely built-up areas, residents live closely together. In sparsely built-up areas residents live rather by themselves. A heterogeneous housing stock offers a variety of living conditions. After years of inactivity, the residents discovered the abundance of open space for new opportunities. As a result, the settlement became a popular late night retreat for young Malay urbanites who seek for an authentic experience with like-minded people. During the day, a pondok is filled with Malay pupils from the entire Gombak valley, complementing the already existing kindergarten and school.

Part Two | Field Studies | Malay Reservation Areas | Datuk Keramat



Datuk Keramat

Overview | Kampung within DBKL



Datuk Keramat
36,86 ha - 2398 residents

radius \approx 1000 metres



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship

25 | 25 | 50 |
100 metres



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

2.2.2. Datuk Keramat

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

Kampung Datuk Keramat is located four kilometres from the city centre and two kilometres from Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC).^{P-22-01} Historically a Chinese settlement area, it was gazetted and laid out as a Malay Reservation Area in the 1920s. The initial subdivision was purely residential. For this study I will concentrate on the historic core area of Keramat which is roughly bound by Jalan Keramat and the Klang river. Aside from Kampung Baru, Datuk Keramat is the only Malay Reservation Area (MRA) in close proximity to KLCC. Due to its large size and characteristic street pattern the kampung is easy to identify in the city's layout.^{P-22-02} The densely built-up settlement lies north of the Klang river on flat land. The river runs in a massive concrete channel and has been boldly superstructured by the LRT Kelana Jaya Line and the Ampang Kuala Lumpur Elevated Highway (AKLEH).^{P-22-03} The LRT line connects the north-eastern suburbs via the city centre with the south-western suburbs. The highway, which was completed in 2001, connects Ampang Jaya and the eastern lying neighbourhoods with the city centre. These infrastructure elements form an impassable border on the south side of the kampung. Crossing the river to the southern lying neighbourhoods is only possible further east on Jalan Jelatek or further west on Jalan Tun Razak. Considering the large size of the area, the street layout and the resulting settlement pattern is stunningly simple.^{P-22-04} Datuk Keramat is served by two main streets in east-west direction. To the north is Jalan Keramat which is bend at times and to the south is Jalan Datuk Keramat which runs almost in a straight line and parallel to the river. From these two main streets perpendicular dead-end streets branch off in equal distance, similar to fish bones. The narrow lorongs are numbered consecutively. Their average length is about 100 metres and never exceeds 200 metres. Three of them are connected, all others are dead-ends. Between the two resulting residential clusters is a small canal and footpath, Lorong Kiri 18, which is closed for two-wheelers and frequented by pedestrians only.^{P-22-05} This basic grid of streets contains a fine grain of regular plots with an equal size of 25 metres x 12.5 metres. For today's standards these plots are unusually large, especially considering the proximity to the city centre. Historically, a plot was laid out for a multi-family residence surrounded by a vegetable garden to practise subsistence farming.

1.2 Scale of Elements

The kampung is mainly built from one-storey and two-storey residential buildings. In recent years, several three-storey houses have been added, disrupting the otherwise low height of the rest of the buildings. Datuk Keramat appears as one coherent residential cluster^{P-22-06} especially if viewed from above and in context to the surrounding neighbourhoods which feature a variety of

high-rise buildings. The only open space is the leftover areas along the narrow footpath in the middle of the kampung. On the east end of the kampung is a cluster of larger buildings. These include a four-storey school made up of several building blocks, a mosque with minarets and domed roofs, an abandoned government office and a market hall with hawker centre.^{P-22-07} Access to these buildings is from Jalan Keramat Dalam and Jalan Datuk Keramat. By far the largest building in the entire area is the Keramat Mall at the western end of the kampung. The four-story market hall is exceeding the scale of any other building in the area and its elaborate roof design with round domes dominates the kampung visually.^{P-22-08} Lastly, the massive concrete structures of the elevated LRT tracks and elevated highways are overshadowing the south side of the entire area. In summary, there is a significant contrast in scale between the residential houses, the non-residential buildings and the infrastructural elements.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

The view from a high building or one of the elevated train stations make the kampung appear as an integral part of KL's urban landscape. The contrasting scale of highway bridges, surrounding high-rise towers and low-rise housing developments make for an interesting and varied visual experience. When approaching the kampung from afar, the uniform rows of houses seem monotonous at first. But as soon as walking in the streets one realises that the individual houses are very different and diverse.^{P-22-09} Each house seems to be prepared to tell a story and one is instantly drawn by their varied appearance and condition.^{P-22-10} This impression does not change when walking along the two main streets where several small shops, restaurants and private businesses are waiting to be discovered.^{P-22-11} This immediacy is a common characteristic throughout the kampung. Everything is accessible at ease and any interaction happens on street level.^{P-22-12, P-22-13} This distinction strongly differs from most modern developments which are gated and therefore removed from the context of street and neighbourhood. Larger buildings eg, the mosque and the schools, are located at the edge of the settlement and therefore fit to the overall scale of their respective use. An exception is the unusually large market hall which is placed very close to adjacent residential houses and carries some outlandish stylistic elements.^{P-22-14, P-22-15} The entire complex feels out of place and it is missing any logic of access, circulation and orientation. This is especially noticeable because the spatial logic of the kampung proper is the opposite.

1.4 Atmosphere

The atmosphere in the kampung is divided in two. Along the two main streets many small businesses and fast moving traffic make for a busy, hectic and lively atmosphere. The streets are wide enough so that cars and two-wheelers can stop kerbside in order for people to grab a quick lunch from the numerous eateries or run errands in one of the many tiny shops selling daily supplies.^{P-22-16} Bus stops along Jalan Keramat and two LRT stations along Jalan Datuk Keramat make for a continued flow of people.^{P-22-17} Through traffic is mostly heavy, also due to the schools and the mosques along Jalan Keramat. This busy atmosphere immediately changes when

entering any of the perpendicular lorongs. Traffic subsides and residents can be seen walking or chatting.^{P-22-18} Many houses feature open front porches where families sit and chat with neighbours or passers-by.^{P-22-19, P-22-20, P-22-21} It is a quiet and placid atmosphere. But in comparison to some other traditional settlements in KL, Datuk Keramat does not resemble a Malay village. The regular layout of the settlement, with large houses tightly built next to each other, is clearly reminiscent of a proper town or modern neighbourhood.^{P-22-22} The dualism of stringent built form and laid-back atmosphere is responsible for the distinct character of the settlement.

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

Residential buildings in Datuk Keramat show a great variety in type, style and condition. Some of the few surviving wooden houses are close to 100 years old.^{P-22-23} Others, like most of the two- or three-storey private residences, have just been rebuilt recently.^{P-22-24} There is an equal amount of single-family, multi-family and multi-tenant houses. All of them are detached and relatively large. Most houses occupy a good portion of the 25 metres x 12.5 metres plots. The majority of residents are Malays with their extended families. In contrast to other kampungs, many houses have been rebuilt over the years instead of just altered in DIY manner. This is due to the favourable location in combination with the protected status of the land plots. For that reason, many Malay owners prefer to build new residences for their own use or as long-term investment to rent out to tenants. Multi-tenant residences with up to 40 individual tenants are no rarity and located throughout the entire kampung.⁴⁰² Some of these houses are of low standard or even neglected, especially the ones that are rented out to immigrants.^{P-22-25} They are still a good investment.^{P-22-26} Small businesses, eateries and repair shops are often part of residential houses and lined up along the two main streets.^{P-22-27} Both streets meet at a cluster of larger non-residential buildings at the eastern corner of the kampung.^{P-22-28} A mixed-use four-storey structure with a clinic and several small shops is the first in sight. Next to it is the Al Akram Mosque, which is hidden at the centre of a large compound with parking lots and several smaller buildings with annexes.^{P-22-29} The main entrance of the mosque is from Jalan Keramat, a second entrance is from an open space that can be accessed through Jalan Datuk Keramat. In the corner where the two streets meet is the Sekolah Kebangsaan Datuk Keramat, a large four-storey primary and secondary school. The gated complex consists of three connected building blocks with a central courtyard.^{P-22-30} At the back side of the mosque and school is the aforementioned open space which is mainly used as an informal car park. The area is surrounded by a kindergarten, a car wash, small eateries and several hawker stalls.^{P-22-31} Towards Jalan Datuk Keramat, it is bound by an abandoned one-storey government building with a Javanese roof^{P-22-32} and a makeshift police station which is housed in two rows of portable cabins.^{P-22-33} On the opposite side of Jalan Datuk Keramat is Pasar Datuk Keramat, a traditional wet market with

⁴⁰² Bernama (2020). *Building swaying: 39 Kampung Datuk Keramat residents face anxious moments*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 8 March 2020

hawker stalls.^{P-22-34} It is known beyond the kampung's limits and a popular place for locals to socialise. The longish building which houses the market and countless hawker stalls is a very simple and run-down post-war structure covered with a corrugated steel roof. Unfortunately, the market was heavily damaged by a fire in early 2021.⁴⁰³ Discussions about rebuilding the damaged structure are ongoing while most parts of the market have been reopened.^{P-22-35} The western side of the kampung is visually dominated by Keramat Mall, a mixed-use market hall with hawker centre, shops and an office for public services. Several rows of residential and shop houses had been destroyed during its construction.^{P-22-36} The government project opened for operation in 2009 and is connected to the Damai LRT station via a pedestrian bridge. Keramat Mall is only partially occupied and not well received by the public. Another mosque, Surau Al-Ansar, can be found at the northernmost extremity of the kampung. It is surrounded by greenery and located at the end of a row of residential buildings. Close by is the old Madrasatul Kiramah,^{P-22-37} a small mosque on Jalan Keramat. It was destroyed recently and is being replaced by a larger building. Lastly, the kampung is served by two similar looking LRT stations, Dato' Keramat in the east, and Damai in the west. Both stations are housed in large concrete structures with integrated bus stops, drop-off zones and convenience stores.

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

Datuk Keramat is almost exclusively inhabited by Malays. About half of them belong to higher-income or middle-income groups and live in well-maintained single-family or multi-family houses. They mostly occupy jobs in the public service sector. The other half of the Malay community belongs to low-income groups who live in multi-tenant houses which are less well-maintained. The individual units in these houses are often occupied by large extended families whose breadwinners rely on jobs in the nearby service or industrial sector. Overall, the income disparity among Malay residents is extremely wide. The only other considerable ethnic group in the kampung are immigrants from Indonesia. They mainly live in cramped conditions in multi-tenant houses and work as low-paid workers in the construction industry or service sector. Indonesian housemaids are very common among the well-to-do Malay families. The maids live with their host families in the same house. Mobility among all residents is high as many household members own or have access to a car or two-wheeler.

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

Discussions with residents from different income groups have shown a strong and at times affectionate association with the kampung. The settlement is considered and described as a Malay stronghold in the otherwise 'multicultural' and 'commercialised' urban heart of KL. There is an outspoken determination that Malays need to 'protect' this land—in the bumiputera sense of soil—in order to pass it on to future generations. It shows that the local residents are extremely attached to the kampung and that any change of the protective status of reserved land would not

⁴⁰³ Chin, Emmanuel Santa Maria (2021). *Fire destroys several stalls at Dato Keramat market*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 17 March 2021

be welcomed. Many inhabitants are well-established and have a long-standing residency in the area. Therefore, family ties and social networks among their kin are well developed. It is worth noting that residents from different income groups live door-to-door and that there is no cluster or street that is preferred by more wealthy or less wealthy inhabitants. All income groups are more or less equally distributed across the kampung. Regular prayers in the three mosques are a daily affair for most male residents. Prayer times are equally important in order to meet up afterwards and socialise in the numerous coffee shops.^{P-22-38}

2.4 Space of Opportunities

The central location allows residents to take on jobs beyond their place of residence. This is an important factor as there are not many employment opportunities in Datuk Keramat. Access to public transportation is excellent, buses run frequently along the two main streets and along the Kelana Jaya Line. In addition, Datuk Keramat has two LRT stations. Aside from the usual eateries, repair shops or market activities there is not much economic activity in the kampung. The settlement is also missing available space for anybody who would like to venture into such activity. The kampung is primarily a place to dwell. With the exception of the traditional wet market, the kampung is not considered a destination for other city dwellers to hang out. Kampung Baru, the other large Malay reservation in KL's centre, is much more renowned and popular.⁴⁰⁴ As much as Datuk Keramat's character is embedded in the cityscape, it is not an extraordinary place. Significant public space or institutions do not exist. This is also reflected in the municipality's reluctance to invest in the area. Whereas the streetscape of Kampung Baru was continuously upgraded over the years, the public infrastructure of Datuk Keramat did not change significantly. An exception is the market hall which turned out to be a complete failure.⁴⁰⁵ There is an interesting distinction compared to other MRA's. It can be observed that a slow turnover of reserved properties result in an ongoing change in housing stock. What is more, houses tend to get rebuilt in a costly fashion^{P-22-39} instead of just renovated. This suggests that owners or groups of joint heirs were either able to agree on a sale outside their family, obtaining good value for their property. Or, they have a long-term interest in living in the kampung. It is worthwhile to rebuild properties, instead of just renovating. Therefore, the kampung becomes more upscale over time, although at a very slow pace. In contrast, the rental market is much more active. Evidently, multi-tenant buildings densely packed with tenants represent a tremendous source of income for their Malay owners.

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

The fully built-up plots result in a dense and continuous mass of built volume which leaves

⁴⁰⁴ Mustaffa, Rohana (2009). *Home is where the heartland is*. New Straits Times, 25 February 2009

⁴⁰⁵ Augustin, Robert (2016). *Keramat Mall far from thriving*. Free Malaysia Today, 29 October 2016. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/10/29/keramat-mall-far-from-thriving

hardly any room for usable open space or green areas.^{P-22-40} Vegetation is limited to trees in private gardens and along Jalan Datuk Keramat. The narrow streets seem to be carved into this compact urban mass. Especially Lorong Kiri 18, a single narrow footpath which runs above a canal and through the centre of the kampung. It is frequented by many residents as it is the only shortcut to cross the kampung in east-west direction. For the residents it is an inconspicuous yet central element.^{P-22-41} In places where the path crosses with dead-end streets people can be seen chatting with each other and it is along these tiny residual spaces where residents hang out temporarily.^{P-22-42} A gated football court on Lorong Kiri 12 is the only sports field in the kampung.^{P-22-43} The area behind the Al Akram Mosque is an interesting mishmash of uses and structures.^{P-22-44} It comes to life in the early evenings when eateries draw passers-by and at prayer times when worshippers wrestle for parking in front of the mosques' back entrance. At other times, the area is empty and unused. A hidden and rather obscure left over space is the area under the elevated highway and LRT structures along the Klang River.^{P-22-45} Some of it is neglected, inaccessible or used for the municipality's electric switch boxes. Residents have started to plant greenery, park their cars under the shade of the bridge and even built informal shelters.^{P-22-46} Basically, the entire area is a boundary along the river which runs in a massive concrete channel. It cannot be crossed at a length of almost two and a half kilometres.

3.2 Ambivalence

A conflicting issue is the modernisation and commercialisation of the surrounding areas. Pressure between private real estate firms and government-linked companies is high as they see opportunities especially for freehold high-rise developments. The recently developed *Residensi Chymes Gurney* is such an example.^{P-22-47} The gated apartment complex was built on the boundary of the kampung. Its enormous size dominates the area since.^{P-22-48} Of course, the status as a Malay reserve protects the kampung from such developments. But government-linked firms might find exemptions to this, especially in central areas. The example of Keramat Mall, a rather insensitive and as it turned out unnecessary development shows that reserve land can be developed and that a careful integration of new uses is all but guaranteed. Nevertheless, the changes in the kampung over the last ten years have been minimal. Striking is the continuous development of private residences, often maximising the height limit of three storeys. Well-to-do Malay owners clearly find value in the location and hold the Malay heritage in high esteem.

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

There is rarely any unused space in the densely built-up kampung. Most residents stick to their houses which represent the centre of social and family life. Members of lower income groups live in crowded conditions, especially in multi-tenant buildings. For socialising they rely on the numerous eateries and coffee shops that are open until late at night.^{P-22-49} Sadly, the oversized market hall is clearly underused.⁴⁰⁶ The upper floors are more or less empty and the facility is

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

considered a failure as its planners ignored the needs of the local hawkers, vendors and residents. The municipality has difficulties to rent out the market stalls and shop lots. The layout of the building is rather confusing.^{P-22-50} It is separated into several parts. Some areas feature large voids and open spaces, other areas have low ceilings and dead-end corridors. Entrances are placed in a random manner, often without considering the context between interior and exterior.^{P-22-51} The overall circulation and orientation is unclear and deters visitors. To draw more customers to the building, a public service centre was opened by the government in 2013.⁴⁰⁷ But the situation has not changed since and the entire complex remains unpopular. "It is an expensive reminder that things can go wrong when the authorities make decisions without understanding the needs of the people."⁴⁰⁸

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

The level of activity along the two main thoroughfares, Jalan Keramat and Jalan Datuk Keramat, is high. The small shops are frequented by passers-by and many residents, especially men, socialise at the eateries and coffee shops. During early morning hours and later afternoons, several hawkers offer takeaway breakfast and lunch.^{P-22-52} The stalls are mostly owned and run by women who live nearby.^{P-22-53} The most active area is Pasar Datuk Keramat, the old wet market with countless hawker stalls. Even though a fire destroyed most of its structure, most stalls are open for business. Locals clearly prefer the authentic atmosphere and easy access on street level. Especially if compared to the new Keramat Mall. The interior of kampung Datuk Keramat is calm and feels like a residential island surrounded by a ring of activity. Overall, it has the character of a quiet urban neighbourhood. DBKL has never fully recognised the potential of the area close to KLCC. I am not aware of any scholarly debate or public discussion that centres around Datuk Keramat. The opposite is true for Kampung Baru, the most well-known and publicised kampung in Malaysia which is just a few hundred metres away.

Summary

Within the otherwise fragmented messiness of KL, Datuk Keramat stands out as a recognisable residential quarter. Responsible for this is the combination of rigid street grid and individual low-rise residences. Compared to the surrounding urban fabric, the kampung shows a rarely seen conciseness of urban form. Every individual house has an explicit relationship with the street, most of which are dead-end and therefore pedestrian friendly. Despite the large size of the settlement, there is a single connecting urban element: Lorong Kiri 18, a narrow footpath that runs along a small canal, crossing the kampung from east to west. This simple yet effective element is sufficient to induce a continuous and well-used open space for locals. The social structure of residents appears close-knit, despite the observed income inequality. But it is not the liveability of the urban fabric which is responsible for this. The strength of the kampung mainly

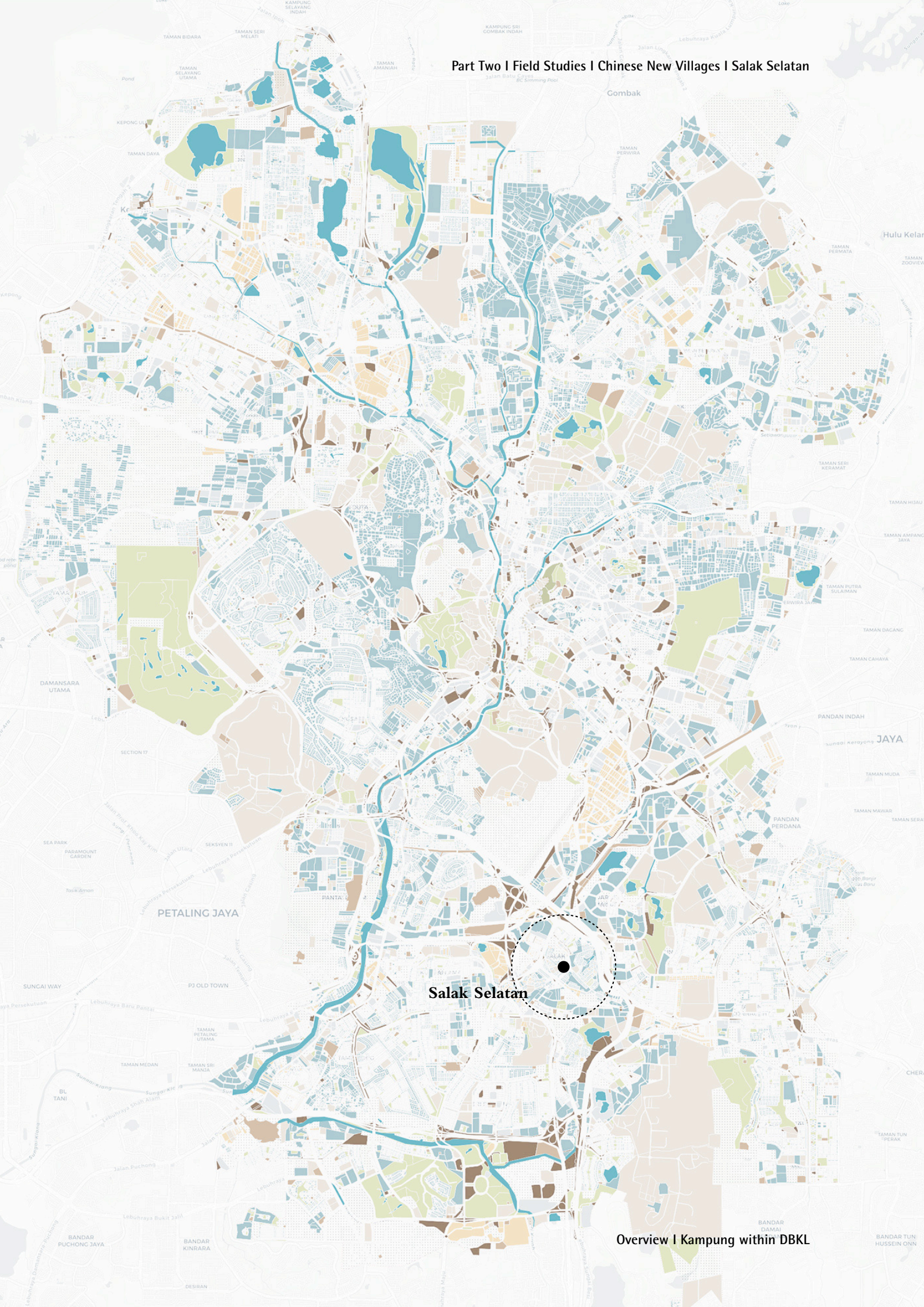
⁴⁰⁷ Zhin, Choong Mek (2013). *Mini UTC for Keramat Mall Minister hopes it will bring crowd to new establishment*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 12 June 2013

⁴⁰⁸ Augustin, Robert (2016). *Keramat Mall far from thriving*. Free Malaysia Today, 29 October 2016. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/10/29/keramat-mall-far-from-thriving

stems from its status as a protected Malay Reserve. Residents who are a part of this Malay heritage strongly identify with the settlement. Datuk Keramat is meaningful to local bumiputeras, not to other Malaysians.

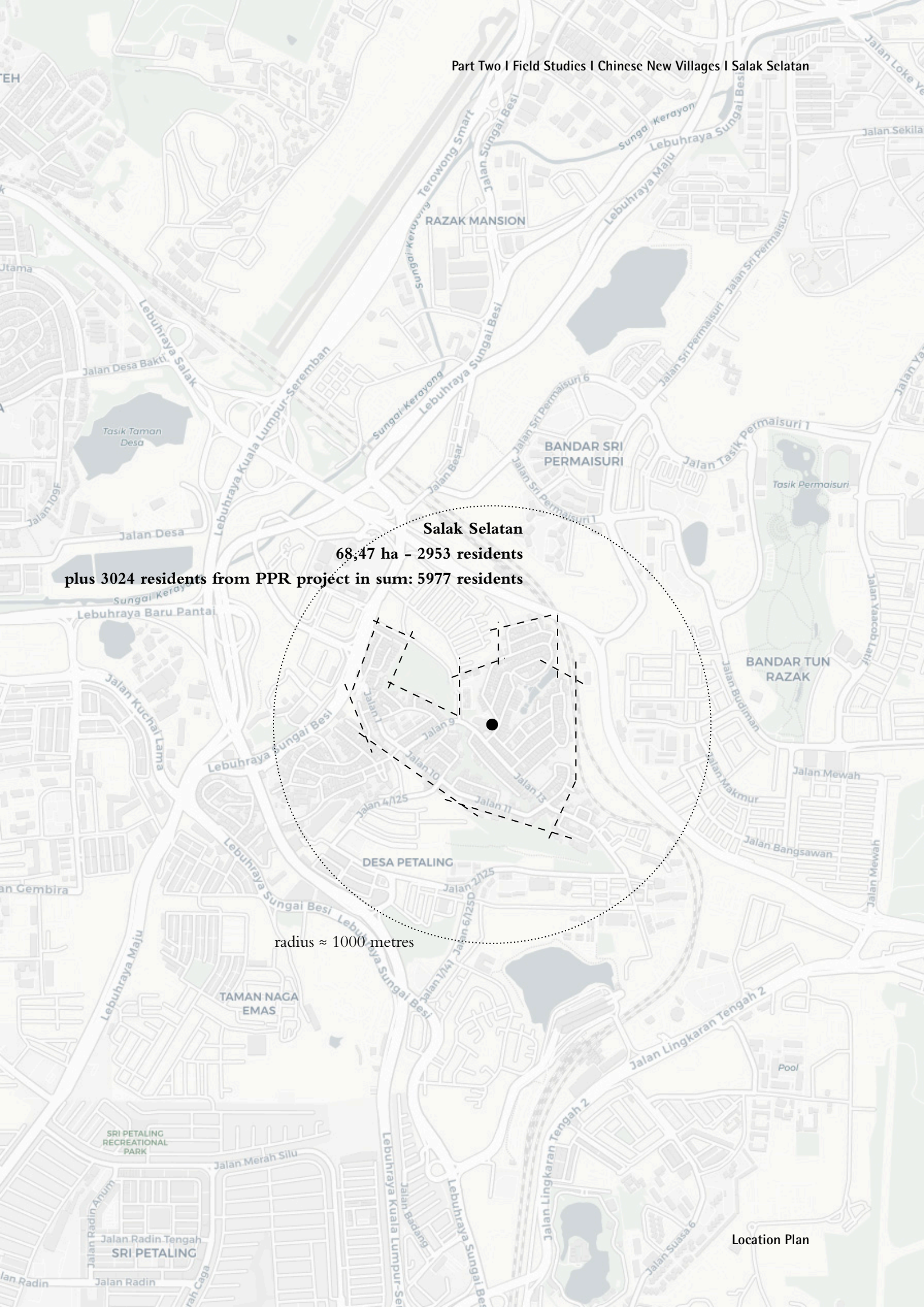
2.3. Chinese New Villages

Part Two | Field Studies | Chinese New Villages | Salak Selatan



Salak Selatan





Overview | Kampung within DBKL



Salak Selatan
68,47 ha - 2953 residents
plus 3024 residents from PPR project in sum: 5977 residents

radius \approx 1000 metres



-  residential
-  mixed use / commercial
-  education
-  places of worship

25 | 25 | 50
100 metres



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

2.3.1. Salak Selatan

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

Salak Selatan is located between Sempang Airport and Sungai Besi, some six and a half kilometres south of the city centre. The settlement is surrounded by highways, railway tracks, and industrial or residential developments. To the north and east, it is bound by the Salak Expressway towards Cheras and by the elevated tracks of the KTM commuter line, to the north-west by the Sungai Besi Expressway and to the west by the Kuala Lumpur–Seremban Expressway. None of these highways can be crossed and for the most part the kampung is completely cut off from the surrounding neighbourhoods. The terrain is generally sloping downward from south to north as it is part of the foothills of Bukit Besi, a 300 metre high rock formation three kilometres to the south.^{P-31-01} The Malay term *besi* (iron) points to the former mining town of Sungai Besi nearby which was the centre of one of the largest opencast mining areas in Malaysia.⁴⁰⁹ The origin of Salak Selatan can be traced back to the Emergency in the early 1950s. *British District War Executive Committees* (DWEC) established the settlement as a New Village to house relocated Chinese squatters and isolate them from the communist guerrilla.⁴¹⁰ Compared to other New Villages in Malaysia, Salak Selatan is large in size and the unique topography with hills and valleys was a decisive factor for the initial layout of the kampung. All houses were built on high ground and a main thoroughfare served as a connection between the entrance gates of the fenced village. Today, there are no remnants of gates and fences. Most streets follow the varied contour lines and low lying grounds are filled with a lush and impenetrable vegetation. Small creeks are running at the bottom of these valleys, one of which is filled with a series of large fish ponds. Despite this complex topography, the settlement is laid out in a simple and rational pattern. The basic elements are double rows of evenly arranged plots filled with back-to-back houses and framed by narrow streets. The plots have an equal size of around 25 metres x 15 metres and the length of the rows is between 100 metres to 250 metres. A combination of two or three rows result in a dense cluster and one could argue that each cluster forms a small spatial unit or neighbourhood. The outermost street of each cluster follows the curved contour lines of the terrain. All of this results in an organically shaped settlement that sits on different levels. The kampung is spatially divided by a long and forested valley which runs from south-east to north-west.^{P-31-02} The main street on the east side is Jalan 13^{P-31-03} where a market hall and eateries draw customers. The equivalent on the west side is Jalan 1^{P-31-04} along which several small shops and a community hall are located. At the lowest point of the valley, Jalan 9 connects both streets.^{P-31-05} The three streets make for a continuous thoroughfare through the entire kampung. To the low lying north of the

⁴⁰⁹ See Figure 14

⁴¹⁰ See Chapter 1.2.3

kampung is an area with regular rows of terraced houses and a long line of workshops. To the south, the terrain slopes steeply upward and until recently, this area was unbuilt. It is now in the process of being developed with a gated cluster of luxurious town houses and massive high-rise apartment blocks of enormous scale.^{P-31-06} Both areas don't belong to the kampung proper. The focus of this study lies on the area outlined by Jalan 1, 10 and 11 to the west and south and the railway tracks to the east and north. Remarkable is the enclave-like setting and inaccessibility of Salak Selatan. The only road access is from a short ramp off the Sungai Besi Expressway. This ramp turns into Jalan 1 and continues to run through the entire kampung. One can leave the kampung via a second ramp onto the same highway. Recently, an exit ramp from the Kuala Lumpur–Seremban Expressway was built to access the cluster of private housing developments on the south. From there, one can also reach the kampung indirectly via the new Jalan 4/125.

1.2 Scale of Elements

The majority of the detached single-family houses are one-storey in height with few two- and three-storey buildings in between.^{P-31-07} All houses are more or less based on a 10 metres x 15 metres footprint. Shops or workshops are often mixed in between residential houses and double the regular plot sizes.^{P-31-08} A few larger workshops and manufacturing facilities are located at the fringes of the residential clusters and resemble industrial buildings eg, along Jalan 11 or Jalan 27A. A large market hall and hawker centre^{P-31-09, P-31-10} is located on the east side of the kampung. The three-storey complex feels out of place and it is surrounded by parking lots and delivery zones. Two large 18-storey public housing blocks are situated at the lower grounds of the main valley.^{P-31-11, P-31-12} The blocks can be seen from afar and their sheer dimension dominates the low-rise settlement.^{P-31-13} The western side of the kampung features a community centre, food court and sports hall.^{P-31-14} This group of buildings is connected by a large parking area with an access from the Jalan 1. The buildings fit the scale of the surrounding and represent a focal point of activity for the kampung. Behind these buildings is a gated compound which houses a police station and two 5-storey and two 11-storey apartment blocks for government servicemen.^{P-31-15} The two taller blocks overlook the entire kampung and feel oversized.^{P-31-16} Except for the main thoroughfare, residential streets are narrow. Formal open space is rare. A grassy padang on Jalan 13, used as parade ground during the Emergency, is the only public open space.^{P-31-17} Aside from the aforementioned apartment blocks, the overall scale of the kampung is very modest. The low-rise houses settle naturally over the hilly terrain.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

The visual perception is strongly influenced by the complexity of the topography.^{P-31-18} The New Village was clearly built with the natural landscape in mind and this can still be experienced today. Instead of grading large amounts of soil, the settlement was adapted to the existing landscape. Steep slopes, creeks and outlying fringes were left unbuilt and became overgrown with vegetation.^{P-31-19} The settlement is well proportioned, especially the resulting clusters of house and street patterns. Orientation is easy and straight forward. The main thoroughfare is slightly

wider than the narrow residential streets and easy to recognise.^{P-31-20} Finding one's way is therefore not difficult. The many vistas overlooking the hilly landscape are unique. From certain vantage points, the city centre with its characteristic skyline^{P-31-21} can be seen as can the peak of Bukit Besi. Although basic elements like plot sizes and building footprints are roughly the same, every street is visually unique.^{P-31-22} This owes to the variety of styles and conditions of the houses,^{P-31-23} to the varied street geometries^{P-31-24} and to the different levels of the terrain.^{P-31-25} Unfortunately, later added elements eg, free-standing workshops or infill houses on land that was initially unbuilt, obstruct this characteristic. Although these structures more or less fit the overall scale, they take away large parts of the green buffer that surround the residential clusters and the kampung as a whole eg, along Jalan 27A. In addition, the surroundings of many workshops are uncared-for and rubbish is piling up everywhere.^{P-31-26}

1.4 Atmosphere

A decisive factor for Salak Selatan's uniqueness is the fact that it is almost exclusively inhabited by Chinese. The atmosphere in the narrow streets of the residential clusters is intimate. Small house temples and Chinese lanterns are omnipresent.^{P-31-27} Burning joss paper is a common practise with incense burners placed at every other street corner.^{P-31-28} Most small restaurants serve traditional Chinese food and it is there where people socialise in the evenings.^{P-31-29} The settlement resembles quite literally a Chinese village. Compared to other kampungs, people prefer to mix with their own kin and are more reserved towards outsiders.^{P-31-30} The settlement might appear sleepy at first but it is quite the opposite. There is constant activity and background noise, even in the narrow side streets. This is caused by many small workshops, most of them unobtrusive wood or steel sheds, mixed in between residential houses.^{P-31-31} The undertakings are as diverse as wood shops, metal workshops, repair shops, catering services, bakeries, and so on. Frequently, working blends with dwelling.^{P-31-32}

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

The kampung consists almost exclusively of single-family houses. Several of them have not changed much since they were built in the early 1950s and one can still get a very good impression of the simplicity of these self-made homes.^{P-31-33} Of course, most houses have been significantly altered by DIY efforts.^{P-31-34} They have been enlarged by extending and raising the roofs and retrofitted by adding new facade walls to enlarge the footprint.^{P-31-35} This practise has reduced the gardens to a minimum. Building materials changed, too. Roofs have been clad with cheap corrugated iron and wooden walls have been replaced with cement blocks.^{P-31-36} Some houses have been partitioned to accommodate multiple tenants, especially labourers. Roughly one-third of all houses have been completely rebuilt to meet modern standards.^{P-31-37} No house looks the same and the settlement is a varied collection of individual dwellings and tastes. A further typology represent residential sheds and pile dwellings that have been erected on slopes

too steep to build regular houses. A good example is Jalan 20, where several of these dwellings cascade down from street level.^{P-31-38} Such infills are not visible from the street and can only be accessed by narrow paths and staircases.^{P-31-39, P-31-40} Chinese owners rent out these most basic accommodations to low-income individuals or immigrant workers. Spatially separated from the low-rise kampung are two massive 18-storey public low-cost housing blocks.^{P-31-41} They were built by the government in 1998 under the *Program Perumahan Rakyat* (PPR) to house squatter families from different areas in KL.⁴¹¹ Each block accommodates 20 individual units per floor.^{P-31-42} The buildings and surroundings look rather dated and run down. At the same time, they look familiar because several of them are spread all over Kuala Lumpur. To the city dweller they are a common sight. A rather striking appearance is Pasar Dan Pusat Penjaja, a market hall with hawker centre. It is one of DBKL's standard designs, modified with an elliptically shaped main hall.^{P-31-43} Several trees form a visual barrier from the surrounding residential houses. On the west side of the kampung is a popular food court with hawker stalls and open air eating area. Next to it is a community centre and a shaded sports hall. Adjacent to it is a gated area which houses a police station and two 5-storey and two 11-storey residential blocks for government servicemen. A clinic, which is run by the government is also nearby. At the far west of the kampung is *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan* (Cina), a Chinese school which consists of several buildings in a gated compound. Actually, the school is outside the kampung proper but it is the only Chinese school in the area and therefore frequented by many pupils from the kampung.

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

Salak Selatan is almost exclusively inhabited by Chinese. Most of them have lived in the kampung throughout their entire lives raising a family in the same house. Many belong to low-income groups and work as craftsmen, labourers or hawkers. There is an equal number of residents from middle-income groups who live in well-maintained single-family homes. They mostly occupy jobs in the service sector or own small businesses. Overall, the income disparity among Chinese residents is wide. All income groups live side by side throughout the kampung. There is a minority of mostly Indian and Indonesian residents who belong to low-income groups. Most of them reside in infill accommodations behind regular houses.^{P-31-44} These sometimes dilapidated infills are hidden away and represent a world of its own. Despite the run-down appearance, the muddled combination of access pathways, steep staircases and entrance doors form intimate spaces. I was able to obtain an insight of such an accommodation while interviewing an Indian woman on Jalan 20.^{P-31-45} She maintains a close relationship with her immediate neighbours from Indonesia and India. She works as a part-time labourer outside the kampung and owns a two-wheeler. Although there is a thriving business activity with workshops and small industries, many residents have jobs outside the kampung. Mobility is high as many household members have access to a car or two-wheeler. Public transportation does not play an important role. The train stations nearby are difficult to reach by foot and the only bus line serving the kampung runs once every daytime hour.

⁴¹¹ Goh, Ai Tee and Ahmad, Yahaya (2011). *Public low-cost housing in Malaysia: Case studies on PPR low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur*. Journal of Design and Built Environment, Volume 8, Number 1

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

The Chinese form a tightly knit social network. Many residents know each other and information seems to travel quickly. Outsiders are eyed with caution.^{P-31-46} In general, residents say that they are very content to live in Salak Selatan. Being among their kin and sharing the same cultural background is a very important factor.^{P-31-47} Being able to live in a detached house is equally important. Many residents cannot imagine to live in an apartment or in a non-Chinese neighbourhood. This view is changing over time, because the younger generation is looking for opportunities outside the kampung. Simultaneously, the proportion of elderly people in the kampung increases. A meeting with a Chinese families confirms this suspicion.^{P-31-48, P-31-49} The son only returns to the kampung to help his parents with garden work. Although he likes the unique atmosphere of the kampung, he misses the opportunities of more 'central' areas and the amenities of 'modern' developments.

2.4 Space of Opportunities

Living in a Chinese enclave is a mixed blessing for the residents. They clearly enjoy the ethnic, religious and cultural kinship. On the other hand they feel exposed to unpredictable and arbitrary events. Several conversations with residents revealed scepticism if not mistrust against the Malay administration. It does not go unnoticed that Malay Reservation Areas enjoy protection by the state. In comparison, former Chinese New Villages are at a disadvantage. Many residents fear that their properties could fall in the hands of private developers, backed by the authorities. Several residents stated that until the 1990s most inhabitants of Salak Selatan only obtained temporary operating licences (TOL) that had to be renewed year after year. House owners were left hanging for decades until proper titles were issued for their houses. From a legal standpoint it is an unfounded fear. To date, most owners have obtained proper leasehold titles for their houses. But there are still parts of the settlement where unclear property titles or TOL's remain a problem.⁴¹² In addition, many leasehold titles have only short tenures left. A renewal puts financial pressure on owners, adding to the general resentment. Despite poor infrastructure, lack of modern amenities and short tenures, the value of properties is comparable to other low-rise neighbourhoods. The reason is the limited availability of plots and their popularity among longterm residents and investors. Chinese developers from outside the kampung are very keen on the few available plots. They convert them to workshops or keep them for investment. This practise has caused unrest among residents because of the resulting hazards from noise and pollution or the dilapidated state of unused property.^{P-31-50} It is also a challenge for DBKL⁴¹³ because business activities are difficult to control under the aspect of licensing. Basically, new businesses and workshops or old ones that outgrew their initial small size^{P-31-51} touch a grey area in the unclear zoning regulations of the Federal Territories (Planning) Act of 1982.

⁴¹² Choong, Mek Zhin (2009). *Families sue City Hall*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 31 August 2009

⁴¹³ Choong, Mek Zhin (2014). *Traders shocked over DBKL notice*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 12 Juli 2014

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

Useable open space is a rare item in Salak Selatan. The residential plots are densely built and over the years, private gardens have been reduced to a minimum. The low lying valleys are mostly filled with jungle and the dense undergrowth of tropical greenery is inaccessible. The only public open space is the grassy padang on Jalan 13 which is used as a football field.^{P-31-52} A striking feature is a cascading row of large fish ponds that fill a low lying area between two of the residential clusters.^{P-31-53} The ponds are only accessible from the surrounding private properties. All other open space is limited to streets and parking lots. Aside from the main thoroughfare, sidewalks are absent and pedestrians are forced to walk in the streets and watch out for cars. Parking lots tend to obstruct common space, for example in front of the community centre on Jalan 1 where an unshaded parking lot occupies the entire forecourt of the buildings. Unfortunately, the entire ground floor area of the low-cost housing blocks is also filled with parking lots and aside from a small playground there is no usable open space for residents.^{P-31-54, P-31-55}

3.2 Ambivalence

Visits at various workshops between residential houses showed that small businesses and industries make for a successful, but dangerous and noisy practise.^{P-31-56} Open electrical wires, sometimes outdated machinery and low safety standards are ubiquitous.^{P-31-57} Often, work is done in the open which can be an ear-splitting experience for neighbours.^{P-31-58} For the most part, this practise is tolerated but conflicts are equally frequent. The workshops are an essential part of the kampung's economic survival⁴¹⁴ and they offer limited business opportunities in an enclave-like area. Most owners are workmen who use small trucks to reach their clients. They do not rely on passing trade, therefore most businesses do not carry a sign or company name.^{P-31-59} Like many low-rise neighbourhoods, Salak Selatan is more and more constricted by modern large-scale developments. On the one hand there are highways and elevated railway tracks surrounding the kampung. Luckily, a green buffer separates them from the kampung. On the other hand there are private town house and condominium complexes. The town houses are gated by high walls, the latest condominiums exceed 40 storeys in height and feature base buildings for parking structures with up to eight storeys. This results in inaccessible and impermeable ground floor areas. Unfortunately, none of the developments has been placed with any consideration for the scale and context of its surroundings. Their sheer physical size and the enormous volume of traffic are intrusive and highly problematic for adjacent areas. Remarkable is the high degree of civil protest eg, ongoing objection against high-rise developments.⁴¹⁵ People

⁴¹⁴ Bavani, M. (2021). *Resubmit documents, DBKL tells businesses in Salak South New Village*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 26 October 2021

⁴¹⁵ Ravindran, Shalini (2015). *Residents want courts to review high-density project*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 7 April 2015

clearly reject the rampant practises of government authorities and associated real estate developers. The success of these protests is minimal but one needs to acknowledge that residents will raise their voices in an environment that is mainly driven by profit and iniquity. The fact that New Villages were established as resettlement villages under the British and that they bear a sensitive heritage is hardly discussed in public. I have asked several senior residents about their upbringing during the Emergency but was not able to elicit any usable information from them. The son of a family said that the legacy of the New Villages is clearly in the minds of the longterm residents but is considered a taboo. There is no public sign or information on display that Salak Selatan once was a resettlement village in the 1950s. It seems a fact too sensitive to reveal in the public roam.

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

Despite the kampung's density, residential houses are not overcrowded. Most are occupied by only two to four inhabitants. With the exception of the market hall, all available space and all elements are well used in Salak Selatan. Similar to other kampungs, the market hall hardly fits the actual needs of the traders, hawkers and residents. Admittedly, the wet market is busy in the early mornings. But Pasar Dan Pusat Penjaja is oversized and all upper floors are completely empty. The result is an awkward atmosphere of futility. This is unfortunate because for many residents the market hall is a place to socialise. In contrast, the hawker centre on the west side of the kampung is lively and popular. It is small in size but clearly fulfils the function of a centre to meet informally, especially in the evenings.^{P-31-60} Proper facilities for the younger generation eg, for sports or entertainment are missing and it is no surprise that younger residents leave the kampung frequently.

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

The level of activity in the residential clusters is high, the small-sized enterprises and workshops are responsible for a constant bustle. Many residents leave during the day to work in jobs outside the kampung. The nearby areas of Kembangan and Cheras offer an abundance of job opportunities in various industrial sites. The main thoroughfare is not overly busy because through traffic is limited and there are only few roadside shops for people to frequent.^{P-31-61} Hawkers sell their wares and outdoor restaurants draw guests only in early mornings and evenings. This activity happens especially around the food court on Jalan 1 and the market hall on Jalan 13.^{P-31-62} Without being actual centres, both sections take on central functions in the kampung.

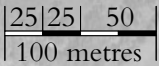
Summary

Salak Selatan is a unique settlement: each house, street and street corner looks different. Although it was hastily built during the Emergency, its layout was chosen deliberately. The sequence of residential clusters forms a well-proportioned neighbourhood. This was achieved by respecting

the varied natural landscape, a practice that is completely ignored in today's modern town planning in Malaysia. The spatial variety only becomes accessible to somebody who visits the kampung. A two-dimensional plan or map will not reveal its qualities. The settlement is an ethnic homogeneous Chinese enclave. Residents are strongly attached to the place as it represents an important part of their upbringing. The mixture of old, heavily altered and well-maintained single-family homes give evidence to a matured urban quarter with old-established residents of different socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, the kampung is an extraordinarily productive neighbourhood. The limited space and the predominant residential use does not keep residents from venturing into diverse businesses. Most of these enterprises are small but highly specialised. The business owners are extremely mobile and have managed to build a network of clients outside the kampung. The contribution of these ventures to the overall economic development of the city should not be underrated.



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

2.3.2. Air Panas

1 Structure

1.1 Spatial Structure

Kampung Air Panas is located five kilometres north-east of the city centre and belongs to the mukim of Setapak. The name Air Panas (hot water) stems from several hot springs that used to be in the area. Today, only one small pool is left, located inside the compound of an apartment complex on Jalan Ayer Panas. The area around the kampung consists of an eclectic mix of densely packed rows of terraced houses, large industrial sites and freely arranged residential high-rise blocks.^{P-32-01} Nevertheless, the enquiring eye will be able to recognise Air Panas on any areal photograph or map.^{P-32-02} In contrast to its surroundings, the kampung has a characteristic urban structure which vaguely resembles the principle of decumanus and cardo. Its basic layout is defined by the offset and angled crossing of three streets, Jalan Ayer Jerneh (north-south), Jalan Ayer Panas and Jalan Ayer Keroh (both east-west).^{P-32-03, P-32-04} The result is a cross-shaped urban form with a central area and four similar sized quadrants. These quadrants are further divided by narrow and mostly regular streets and built from single and double rows of plots which slightly differ in size and shape. The residential plots measure approximately 25 metres x 12.5 metres. The central area is dominated by slightly larger elements, for example a market hall, several shop houses and a so-called padang, an open field that was laid out as a parade ground during the Emergency. The unique layout of the settlement can be traced back to the early 1950s, when Air Panas was established as a New Village under the Briggs Plan.⁴¹⁶ Existing paths were used to form a settlement that could be easily reached from all directions. Entrance and exit gates were installed at the end of these paths to close off the settlement during nightly curfews. Chinese, who squatted in dispersed areas, were relocated in order to cut ties from the Communist guerrilla. Today, the kampung is recognised by DBKL as a Chinese New Village. Unusual for a Chinese New Village, an Indian community was also relocated to Air Panas as early as 1963. This date can be verified by the documented dedication of an Indian temple that was erected on Lorong Ayer Lombong.⁴¹⁷ It is very likely that the Indian settlers joined the urgently needed workforce in the industrial sites nearby and that their relocation was economically motivated. Until the late 1960s the settlement was spatially isolated and surrounded by vegetation of which only a thin outline and several small patches are left today. The phase of intensive industrialisation that followed in the 1970s caused a large influx of especially local Chinese migrants through rural to urban migration. They started to work in the factories nearby eg, at Royal Selangor⁴¹⁸ and

⁴¹⁶ See Chapter 1.2.3

⁴¹⁷ Kannan (2017). Blog entry: 3 January 2017, Temple Name: Kuil Sri Muthumariamman, Address: No15, Lorong Air Lombong, Kampung Air Panas, Baru, Setapak, Year Of Establishment: 1963. Retrieved from: <https://myinfozon.wordpress.com/>

⁴¹⁸ Royal Selangor, founded in 1885 in Kuala Lumpur, is the largest pewter manufacturer and retailer in the world. Its headquarter and production facility is located in Setapak, less than one kilometre north-east of Air Panas.

settled as squatters around Air Panas. Since then large areas to the north and east of the kampung were filled with squatter settlements.^{P-32-05, P-32-06} In 2012, the squatters were evicted by DBKL under the Selangor Zero Squatters 2005 Action Plan^{419, 420} and all houses in the area were destroyed.^{P-32-07, P-32-08} For several years, the area was undeveloped. Lush vegetation quickly reclaimed the land.^{P-32-09} To the immediate east of the kampung runs Sungai Bonus. The channelled river has its source near the foothills of Bukit Tabur and it runs all the way to the city centre where it flows into the Klang river. The urban landscape of Setapak is a rather dull and unappealing series of industrial sites, busy streets, uniformly looking residential neighbourhoods, low-cost apartment complexes and vanishing patches of green space. Since 2015, the mukim underwent a tremendous boost of development. New industrial sites have been established, roads have been widened and newly laid out, new schools and institutions have been set up, and a large number of gated high-rise apartment blocks and gigantic condominiums have been erected.^{P-32-10} All of these developments are excessively large in scale. In contrast, the kampung appears like a minuscule urban element. Previously, the 18-storey public housing blocks were considered huge. Now they appear tiny when compared to the latest 52-storey apartment complexes.^{P-32-11} The resulting volume of traffic is staggering. Unfortunately, Air Panas is situated between two large traffic arteries. To the north is Jalan Genting Kelang, a multi-lane street which connects the city centre with the north-eastern suburbs. To the south is the Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway (DUKE), a major east-west running toll road. Since the recent completion of entry and exit ramps to this expressway, both traffic arteries are connected through Jalan Ayer Jerneh which runs through the middle of the kampung.^{P-32-12}

1.2 Scale of Elements

Most residential houses in the kampung are one storey in height with several two-storey and three-storey buildings in between.^{P-32-13} Their footprint is between 10 metres x 6 metres and 20 metres x 10 metres. At the centre of the settlement, the scale of most built elements is slightly larger. The largest and most prominent building is the one-storey market hall^{P-32-14} which was inaugurated in early 1990. Its footprint is 45 metres x 55 metres. The architectural treatment of the roof mimics a traditional local style and it is divided into several gables in order to fit the context of the surrounding shop houses.^{P-32-15} A recently built community and hawker centre is located across from the market hall.^{P-32-16} It shows a similar scale but is architecturally dull.^{P-32-17} The three main streets through the kampung are wide.^{P-32-18} In contrast, residential streets and alleys are narrow.^{P-32-19} The padang on Jalan Ayer Jerneh is used as a public sports field. The large gated school compound consists of several building blocks and open spaces.^{P-32-21} Surprisingly, the large three-storey and six-storey buildings are not interfering with the low-rise residential houses nearby. Most school buildings are set back and the entire compound is situated on the far north-west corner of the kampung. The main entrance gates with pick-up lanes for school buses is located along Jalan Ayer Panas. In summary, Air Panas is characterised by a low-rise townscape

⁴¹⁹ Anjomani, Ardeshir and Ahmad, Faizah Binti (1992). *Squatter Settlement in Kuala Lumpur: Evaluation and Alternatives*. *Ekistics*, Volume 59, Number 354/355

⁴²⁰ Aziz, Faziawati Abdul (2012). *The Investigation of the Implication of Squatter Relocations in High Risk Neighbourhoods in Malaysia*. Thesis, Newcastle University

with a variety of individual residential houses, designated commercial buildings and sufficient open spaces.

1.3 Visual Simplicity or Complexity

Air Panas is one of only few kampungs in KL that have a strong sense of centrality. Residents and passers-by are drawn to the core along Jalan Ayer Jerneh and Jalan Ayer Keroh where the market hall, several shops, restaurants and businesses are grouped together. The relationship of interior and exterior is particularly pronounced.^{P-32-22, P-32-23} Shops and market hall have open facades allowing people to walk in and out seamlessly.^{P-32-24, P-32-25} The public space is visually connected to the interior and vice versa.^{P-32-26} The proportion of all elements is balanced, the basic layout is simple. It is the combination of different buildings, open spaces and functions that result in varied urban space. The settlement structure is easy to read and the compact layout allows residents to move around without a car. The padang, schools, Indian and Chinese temples, market hall and shops are all within walking distance from the residential houses.

1.4 Atmosphere

The centre of Air Panas resembles nothing less than a small town.^{P-32-27} At any time, people from different walks of life frequent the area.^{P-32-28, P-32-29} There is a broad ethnic diversity which is reflected by the limited but equally diverse offerings of small shops, the market and hawker centre. Chinese coffee shops and Indian stores for household items are door-to-door and the market offers Chinese and Indian foods side-by-side.^{P-32-30} The coffee shops are mainly frequented by local residents, chatting over a coffee and observing the busy activities from a distance.^{P-32-31, P-32-32} Open space, especially side streets that are used temporarily by various activities, play an important role in this context.^{P-32-33} Despite the liveliness in the streets, around the shophouses and the padang, the atmosphere is not chaotic. It bears a functional and spatial logic that stems from the balanced distribution of elements.

2 Potential

2.1 Predominant Building Typology

Primarily, the kampung consists of single-family and multi-tenant houses in a variety of conditions, sizes and types. Some of the houses are still in original condition dating back to the early 1950s.^{P-32-34, P-32-35} But most houses have been altered in DIY efforts.^{P-32-36} A common practise is the enlargement of the original footprint. Roof extensions or additional facade walls have been added to increase the usable area.^{P-32-37, P-32-38} This practise has minimised the open space around the houses which was intended for subsistence farming. Several houses have been partitioned to accommodate multiple tenants, especially labourers.^{P-32-39} Only few plots are empty or occupied with dilapidated structures.^{P-32-40} Less than half of all residential houses in Air Panas have been completely rebuilt over time. Most of them meet modern standards and are

occupied by middle-class families. In between residential buildings, one will find many small workshops and home-based businesses. The diversity of these commercial and semi-commercial units range from old wood structures^{P-32-41} to larger steel sheds with corrugated iron roofs^{P-32-42} to remodelled residential houses.^{P-32-43} A typical example is the house of an Indian family.^{P-32-44} Inconspicuous from the kerbside, it turns out as a hybrid. A tiny convenience store occupies the entrance space and is run by the husband of the family.^{P-32-45} A workspace for the wife's tailoring business is in the middle part and bedrooms are located in the back of the house. In sum, the residential housing stock of Air Panas is exceptionally varied in condition, type and use. Along the main streets, most residential houses have been modified or rebuilt to fit small shops or restaurants.^{P-32-46} Unique to Air Panas is a central area that consists of a variety of buildings with different uses. Located on the east side of Jalan Ayer Jerneh is the aforementioned market hall. The building is set back from the street to make room for a loading zone, a few parking lots and the elevated supervisor's office.^{P-32-47} The complex features a traditional roof shape with exposed gable ends and fascias.^{P-32-48} To the north is a cluster of shophouses, bound by Lorong Air Tenang, Jalan Ayer Tenang and Jalan Ayer Lombong. Three tiny alleys divide the cluster into six blocks with four individual plots each. The condition of the individual houses is diverse to say the least. Some are run-down wood structures as old as the kampung.^{P-32-49, P-32-50} Some are two-storied concrete structures with a five-foot way.^{P-32-51, P-32-52} Due to the fact that the buildings have been extended, altered and rebuilt over decades, the area appears as one inscrutable mishmash of coffee shops, workshops, convenience stores, sheds and nondescript structures. Although the English translation 'calm water' might suggest otherwise, tiny Lorong Air Tenang represents the heart of Air Panas.^{P-32-53} In 2016, a multipurpose hall (Dewan Serbaguna) and a hawker centre were built on the opposite side of Jalan Ayer Jerneh.^{P-32-54} Both facilities are managed by DBKL. The multipurpose hall is used for community meetings, various functions of religious or cultural groups or, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a vaccination centre. The hawker centre next to it caters for passers-by from outside the kampung. There are two main places of worship in the kampung, a Chinese^{P-32-55} and an Indian temple.^{P-32-56} Both buildings are of modest size and well frequented. Each one represents the religious centre for their respective community. They were built to serve the needs of a small and limited community, not the needs of utter representation. This is contrasted by a large modern three-storey Chinese clansmen house which is also used for prayers and located at the east end of Jalan Ayer Keroh.^{P-32-57} The school compound to the north-west consists of ten larger buildings with several annexes and open space. They comprise of the Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Ayer Panas, a primary school, the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Perempuan (SMK (P)) Air Panas, a secondary school for girls, and the Sekolah Rendah Agama (SRA) Al-Jam'iyah, a religious Malay school. The catchment area for all three schools is the entire mukim of Setapak.

2.2 Social Composition of Inhabitants

Air Panas is mainly inhabited by Chinese and to about one quarter by Indians. Both groups are more or less equally distributed across the kampung. There is a concentration of Indian residences and shops on Jalan Ayer Telaga, Lorong Ayer Lombong and Jalan Ayer Keroh. Less than half of the

residents belong to middle-income groups who live in well-maintained single-family houses and occupy jobs in the nearby service sector. The other half belongs to low-income groups who live in simple single-family houses. They rely on jobs in the nearby service or industrial sector. A minority of inhabitants has only low means of income and form the bottom part of the urban poor. These residents live in multi-tenant houses or dilapidated structures and work as unskilled labourers, street vendors or in nearby workshops. Economically, they play an important and active role in the neighbourhood and the city. Individual mobility is high as many household members own or have access to a car or two-wheeler. Striking is the fact that most kitchen workers in the new hawker centre are migrants from Indonesia and Bangladesh.^{P-32-58, P-32-59} They work for Malay hawker stall owners. Both, Malay owners and immigrant workers, do not live in the kampung. This is owed to the fact that the stalls in DBKL-managed hawker centres are centrally awarded, preferably to Malays.

2.3 Level of Integration of Inhabitants

Many residents have been living in the kampung for their entire life.^{P-32-60} They were able to form a close-knit social network where most people know and interact with each other. This is especially apparent in the coffee shops along Lorong Air Tenang,^{P-32-61} the early morning routine in the old market hall or activities that surround the temples. Chinese and Indian residents have their separate social, cultural and religious networks but mingle in public. Thanks to a variety of housing stock, the kampung is able to absorb and integrate residents of very different social status. This ability also contributes to the acceptance of in- and out-migration.

2.4 Space of Opportunities

Most businesses in Air Panas are frequented and owned by residents. The recycling business of an Indian woman is a typical example.^{P-32-62, P-32-63} She employs a small number of local labourers who help to sort scrap.^{P-32-64, P-32-65} The office, weighing scales, tools and storage for scrap occupy two-thirds of a plot along Jalan Ayer Keroh. The owner lives in a small house in the back of the plot. Space is tight and extended to the street if required.^{P-32-66} Her husband's lorry is picking up the recycled materials frequently.^{P-32-67, P-32-68} During the day, residents stop by to drop off their wares in order to earn some extra money.^{P-32-69} The entire affair fits well to the small size of the kampung and offers a livelihood for several people. I have been in contact with the owner^{P-32-70} since 2008 and despite its cluttered appearance, the business is a steadfast element of the kampung. A number of industrial sites in the area offer further employment opportunities. A conversation with a Chinese family who used to live in the squatter area revealed that mother and daughter work at Royal Selangor, which is less than one kilometre to the north-east of the kampung. The world-famous pewter manufacturer employs several craftsmen and craftswomen from Air Panas. Originally, the residential houses were built in a very simple fashion, mostly from wood. As an advantage they can be upgraded or extended very easily. Many owners feel strongly connected to their properties and therefore identify themselves with the kampung. Similar to other kampungs, the turnover rate of real estate is low.

3 Appropriation

3.1 Formal and Informal Open Space

The historic parade ground still exists and is located on the west side of Jalan Ayer Jerneh.⁴²¹ Today, it is a large grassy padang, surrounded by trees and used as a sports field. Adjacent are several smaller sports fields and a playground.^{P-32-72} A run-down hut with washrooms and storage area completes the facility. Although football is played in the evenings, the field is not reserved for sports only. It is a communal space that is used for public events eg, during festivities. With the later addition of a simple covered walkway at its northern end, the Padang has become a transitional space between the secondary school and the bus stop on Jalan Ayer Jerneh. The walkway allows children to walk safely to the bus stop or further to their home.^{P-32-73, P-32-74, P-32-75} An additional benefit is that school buses do not have to drive through residential streets to pick up children. Also notable is a paved area between the padang and Jalan Ayer Jerneh. It is tree-lined with large palms and mainly used for the weekly *Pasar Malam* (night market) and as a temporary space to sell seasonal wares eg, during Chinese New Year or durian season.^{P-32-76, P-32-77} In times of inactivity it becomes an informal car park and a place for street vendors who sell their offerings temporarily.^{P-32-78} A similar practise can be observed around the market hall. Usually, all activities are confined within the hall and the delivery is organised either in front or in the back of it. But if more space is needed, people will move their activities to Lorong Air Tenang.^{P-32-79} The street becomes a temporary extension for market stands and thus impassable for cars.^{P-32-80, P-32-81} Residents tolerate this practise as long as the flow of circulation is not completely disturbed and the occupation is not permanent. The new hawker centre and community hall across the street do not allow such practise as open space is reserved for parking only.^{P-32-82} With this formal treatment, the flexibility of public space is lost.

3.2 Ambivalence

In recent years, road traffic on the main thoroughfares has increased dramatically. The new entry and exit ramps of the DUKE expressway to the south of Air Panas are responsible for this. Regrettably, Jalan Ayer Jerneh has become the main access road for several new residential high-rise developments to the north and east of the kampung. In addition, the area of the former squatter settlement to the east of the kampung has been prepared for development.^{P-32-83} One can predict that traffic further increases. In 2019, DBKL began to install medians and road dividers to separate four individual lanes along the main thoroughfares.^{P-32-84, P-32-85} Sidewalks have been partially fenced to separate pedestrians from fast moving traffic.^{P-32-86} It has become increasingly difficult to cross the main streets by foot and the constant noise, pollution and high speed of cars and trucks prove to be a heavy burden for the small settlement. Traffic is increasingly displacing pedestrian movement and the use of open space. Another ambivalence is

⁴²¹ For an in-depth historic description, see: Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

the recently opened hawker centre. Although there are enough hawker stalls in the existing market hall, an additional centre was built on the opposite side of the street. The centre caters mainly Malay foods despite the fact that there is no Malay population in the kampung. The new centre is solely frequented by passers-by, not by residents who live nearby. In addition, the Malay stall owners come from outside the kampung and the majority of the workforce are immigrants, mainly from Indonesia. I can only speculate why DBKL has set up the new hawker centre which clearly undermines the needs of the local community. In general, DBKL looks at hawkers that operate outside of their centres with resentment. The reasons are varied, hygiene standards or licensing issues are among them. Bottomline is that DBKL favours hawkers in a "controlled" environments.⁴²²

3.3 Underused or Overused Space or Elements

Being able to occupy the same space or element in different ways over time shapes the daily routine of kampung life.^{P-32-87, P-32-88} Residents make use of this simultaneity in various ways and with different degrees of involvement. There is no unused space and no overused space. On almost every street, small businesses are mixed with residential houses. Sometimes, private residential houses are used as premises for small shops or family businesses. The relatively small size of the plots and the private ownership of residences prevent an inconsiderate extension of businesses or workshops. Despite the many layers of use, everything stays within its confined room.

3.4 Overall Level of Activity or Inactivity

The level of activity in the kampung is very high. The main thoroughfares are not only ridden by heavy traffic, but people who populate the stores, cafes, markets and businesses. Air Panas is interconnected with its surroundings. Schools draw pupils from areas far away, businesses rely on clients from Setapak and beyond. At the same time, the participation of residents is central to most activities in the kampung. For example, the old market and the two temples are very much a local affair, fostering the cohesion of residents.

Summary

Air Panas has the appearance of a minuscule town. The central location of market hall, shophouses and parade ground stems from the kampung's founding as a Chinese New Village during the Emergency. Since then, the kampung has matured noticeably. Several small but successful businesses have been established over time and offer opportunities to make a living in the kampung. Today's hawker stalls, schools, sports fields, markets, tiny stores and places of worship are well frequented by residents and passers-by alike. The round-the-clock liveliness is simply remarkable. The hierarchy of the streets and the well-proportioned residential clusters

⁴²² Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York : 23

make for a straightforward urban form that allows residents to walk or cycle through the entire neighbourhood. Subtle architectural details eg, covered walkways, are mixed with tolerant practises eg, using open space for multiple purposes. Hybrid typologies eg, small shops in residences, allow for the clever use of limited space. All of this contributes to the human scale of Air Panas which is difficult to measure but easy to notice.

2.4. Summary of Assessed Qualities

The classification of kampungs into three different types—*Traditional Kampung*s, *Malay Reservation Areas* and *Chinese New Villages*—has been extremely useful to explain their historic evolution and to contextualise the setting of each single kampung within Kuala Lumpur. But my research has also shown that within each category, kampungs exhibit fundamental differences and individual characteristics.

Traditional kampungs have been formed during different times for different reasons. Therefore, they show contrasting spatial patterns. Some can be traced to multi-ethnic residential communities eg, Pandan. Others can be traced to a specific purpose eg, a home for rubber tappers, as I have shown with Segambut Dalam. The prevailing view, that all Traditional Kampung are based on nucleus villages is not correct.

The examined Malay Reservation Areas are similar in their ethnic composition but differ substantially in terms of their spatial structure. Some have been set up as regular residential subdivisions eg, Datuk Keramat. Others have been declared Malay reservations while assimilating already existing traditional kampungs eg, kampung Puah in the Gombak valley. What sets Malay Reservation Areas apart from other kampungs is the fact that reserved land cannot be transferred, through sale or lease, to non-Malays.

Chinese New Villages feature similar urban elements because they have been hastily set up and built at around the same time with the same intention: easy to control settlements. Most of them have maintained their mono-ethnic composition. However, their spatial layout is surprisingly different. In Salak Selatan, the pre-existing condition of the varied natural topography was used as a spatial principle during construction. In Air Panas, the strategic location of existing paths was used as a decisive component for the urban layout. As a result, the spatial characteristics of both kampungs differ significantly.

Are such substantial differences a surprising outcome? Yes, because initially, the classification in different types suggested—on paper—a much stronger resemblance which did not prove to be true. This means that (urban) kampungs are much more different from each other than expected. Responsible for this difference is their heritage, location, ethnic composition, and above all, their spatial-architectural structure. The careful assessment of urban qualities has been a focus of my field studies. It became clear that qualities are always linked to the varied characteristics of each kampung. Each settlement and its qualities is therefore unique.

However, I also discovered that these qualities can be summarised along similar principles, leading to the conclusion of three superordinate qualities: *readability*, *heterogeneity* and *superimposition*.

Readability

During my research I came across countless residents who appeared very content within their environment. They were sure about where to go and what to do. Above all, they clearly identified with their kampung. Such level of contentment is, amongst other things, an indication that the spatial structure of a settlement is easy to comprehend. The readability of urban form is a crucial quality and can be explained by several indicators.

First, the geometric structure of a settlement. I have presented two examples in my field studies, Air Panas and Datuk Keramat, that show a strong hierarchy of streets based on a Cartesian structure. At the same time, both examples could not be more different from each other. Air Panas is a cross shaped urban layout with a central area. Datuk Keramat is a structure of parallel rows of dead-end streets surrounded by two outlying thoroughfares. Despite these contrasting layouts, both settlements show a highly legible structure and an unusual high share of pedestrian movement.

Second, the contextual relationship with the natural landscape. Two kampungs, Salak Selatan and Segambut Dalam, have been designed and built within the context of the existing topography. The resulting spatial richness is truly unique and offers a concise spatial logic which is a pleasure to explore.

Third, the historic structure of a settlement which offers a strong sense of identity for the residents. This is especially apparent in Chinese New Villages where strategically placed market places, shophouses, padangs and compact clusters of houses form well-proportioned spatial units. Air Panas and Salak Selatan have maintained structures with strong recognition and cognitive characteristics. Despite the fact that some elements have been destroyed eg, the old market in Salak Selatan, or have been altered eg, the previous police stations in both kampungs, the logic of the remaining elements is easy to grasp. Compared to other kampungs, Pandan seems to offer a weaker spatial structure because of its undetermined mix of organic and regular street layouts. But there is a distinction that is rather pronounced: the varied architectures of the places of worship serve as subtle landmarks for the residents. Similar to a historic structure with public buildings, the unobtrusive places of worship add cultural experience and visual orientation. This is a central quality of kampung Pandan, a traditional kampungs that is otherwise not eye-catching by any means.

Lastly, I have shown that several kampungs feature a visual coherence of open spaces that include the surroundings of private houses, pathways and streets. Segambut Dalam and Puaah are prime examples of this. The readability of kampung space is therefore a distinguishable, solid and reliable quality for residents and visitors alike.

Heterogeneity

Kampungs are often viewed as secluded villages populated by backward inhabitants. This notion implies that the settlements are simplistic in form and unvaried in character. My field studies have revealed a very different, if not contrary picture.

For one, the built form of all kampungs is exceptionally heterogeneous. Although the predominant typology consists of detached single-family or multi-family houses, their variety is simply astonishing. Condition, size, appearance, use and layout are very different. In comparison, the uniform terraced housing that makes up for a majority of KL's housing stock is downright boring. Over time, the majority of residential houses and commercial premises in kampungs have been altered significantly, mostly in DIY efforts. The simplicity of the original construction and materiality allows for an inexpensive adaptation of the resident's needs. Both, owners and tenants, make use of this practise. As a result, most residents are symbiotically attached to their bespoke houses and hence to their environment. This is a quality that can be rarely experienced in the surrounding high-rise developments that show unambiguously homogeneous characteristics. The varied housing stock in kampungs also leads to a wide range of pricing for rented accommodation and is therefore attractive for different social groups. As a result, a distinct social heterogeneity can be stated for Pandan, Air Panas, Datok Keramat and Salak Selatan. These findings reveal that even mono-ethnic quarters like Datok Keramat and Salak Selatan show a high degree of social heterogeneity. Moreover, low-income and high-income individuals live door-to-door. I have not come across a situation in any kampung where a spatial segregation of these individuals prevails. This is a phenomenon which stands in stark contrast to modern neighbourhoods in KL. They not only show spatial fragmentation but also a division of social groups. This can be clearly observed in Sri Hartamas, a neighbourhood south of Datok Keramat or, in Ampang, a quarter to the north of kampung Pandan.

In addition, the heterogeneous workforce of kampungs is a substantial benefit for the urban economy of KL. Since all squatter areas in KL have been cleared in recent years, the economic importance of inner-city kampungs has increased. Migrant labourers, often active in the informal sector, take on work which is of low esteem and badly paid. Small-scale production, nowadays pushed to industrial parks in suburban areas, still finds a stronghold in kampungs. The businesses that I came across do work in varied fields like repair, recycling or fabrication. But my findings also show that a relatively large number of middle-class citizens reside in kampungs. The individuals of this dynamic and mobile workforce support a modern service economy that is growing exponentially.

Superimposition

The kampungs examined show specific qualities through superimposition. Three *ingredients* are crucial. One, the density of built form. Two, available open space which is flexible in character. Three, users and residents that show a profound level of agility. The quantity of these ingredients may vary. However, any combination thereof contributes to the quality of superimposition.

The built form of kampungs is predominantly arranged in a dense fashion. Density does not necessarily mean high plot ratios. Closeness might be the appropriate term. Commercial and residential use is located side-by-side. Workshops and businesses are closely placed next to

residential houses to form symbiotic relationships. Some houses have been transformed to hybrid elements with residential and commercial use under the same roof. Permanent and temporary use may alternate. The resulting superimposition of activities foster the efficient use of available space and elements. Nothing remains untouched or unutilized. Air Panas, Segambut Dalam and Salak Selatan feature such qualities in exemplary fashion. Furthermore, old shop houses and places of worship never stand isolated. They coexist in between residential houses. As a result, the daily activities of residents engage with one another.

Unfortunately, this subtle arrangement dissolves with the introduction of eg, large mosques, gated housing developments or market halls. It is striking that *all* recent additions are solitaires and visually dominant. New buildings radiate an importance that is beyond their means. Revealing examples are the newly built mosques in Segambut Dalam and Pandan, the Chinese clanshouse in Air Panas, or the market halls by DBKL in Datuk Keramat and Salak Selatan.

The superimposition of religious symbolism and public space is especially widespread in areas dominated by Chinese or Indian residents. Urban space is enriched by the sight of small altars, the sound of rhythmic chimes and the smell of burnt incense. Such practise allows residents to take possession of their quarter and to identify with their environment. A similar effect can be observed in highly frequented open spaces. For example, roads are temporarily used for the weekly *pasar malam* (night market) during evening hours. Any activity that demands for a temporary expansion is shifted to an available open space close by. This practise results in a quality of immediacy that most contemporary neighbourhoods with gated compounds or large-scale houses have lost.

A final ingredient concerns the agility of people that populate kampung space. Hawkers, for example, are a frequent sight in Southeast Asian cities. It is no surprise that many reside in urban kampungs and operate a stall close by. Hawkers are very much dependent on strategic locations and customers who frequent these locations. Many hawkers actively change their location during the course of the day to maximise exposure with customers. In a similar fashion, small businesses and eateries that depend on passing trade, synchronise their working hours with the particulars of eg, construction workers. The quality of superimposition lies in tightly interwoven spaces that support formal and informal activities over time. This can be observed in eg, Datuk Keramat and Segambut Dalam where busy thoroughfares and multi-tenant housing form the basis for the success of small businesses. Their contribution to the overall economy should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, most residents have regular day jobs outside of kampungs. Are they excluded from such practices? Clearly not. In the morning or evening, I have experienced that the informal encounter with regular folk is very likely. Chatting about Malaysian politics in front of the front porch or sipping a *teh tarik* (pulled tea) at the local *kedai* (shop) are everyday rituals. Undoubtedly, the quality of superimposition can be attested. Kampung space allows residents to expand their social space in an effortless way. I would go as far as to call this a quintessential *urban quality*.

Part Three

Recommendations for Further Development

3.1. Beyond the Kampung

The focus of this study is on the qualitative assessment of urban kampungs. However, it will also include a contextual view analysing the city and thus transcending beyond an isolated examination of individual kampungs.

Fragmentation

In summary, KL can be described as an archipelago of peculiar islands. The cityscape is a heterogeneous mix of dense high-rise and low-rise developments.⁴²³ Multifarious qualities, often hidden in diverse neighbourhoods or exemplified by extraordinary buildings, contribute to the appeal of the city.⁴²⁴ A seemingly endless and chaotic web of roads, streets and greenery passes through this impressive urban landscape.⁴²⁵ Such particularities make KL stand out from other cities in the region and, frankly, in the world. It doesn't take very long for one to stroll through and experience the most diverse urban spaces. Nonetheless, no matter how one navigates the city or which mode of transportation one chooses, disorientation is bound to follow suit. Detours and U-turns are daily encounters of the KL motorist. Endless walks with several flights of stairs between two supposedly connected train lines are a commuters daily grind. And any attempt to cross a road that thuggishly cuts through a neighbourhood or office park will make one settle for a lunch-place closer by. In short, KL is full of variety, yet spatially fragmented. Criticism is never far-off. More often than not, the city is deprived of having "no apparent logic".⁴²⁶ Having unfolded the city's heritage as part of this study, I must disagree with mainstream criticism and argue that the spatial logic of today is a cohesive continuation of the past. Contemporary KL is in constant transformation and built up in the same way as when it emerged from the jungle in the mid-nineteenth century: a unique collection of fragmented urban patches.

Aside from the natural topography, three man-made elements have determined the spatial layout of the city: kampungs, tin mines and rubber plantations. Kampungs gave the varied communities a place to live. Tin mines gave KL its existence. And without rubber plantations, KL would not have matured. Over a period of time, these elements were spread over a vast natural landscape and closely intertwined with urban context eg, transportation and communication lines, additional settlements of various types and styles, and infrastructures of different scales. The individual parts transformed to a spatially and socially organised structure or, *logic*. Of course, mines and plantations were never acknowledged as urban elements and when they became economically irrelevant, they were simply abandoned. Empty footprints of a devastated landscape

⁴²³ See Figure 15, Figure 16 and Figure 17

⁴²⁴ See Figure 18, Figure 19 and Figure 20

⁴²⁵ See Figure 21, Figure 22 and Figure 23

⁴²⁶ Sardar, Ziauddin (2000). *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*. London : 76

were all that were left, rendering an ideal opportunity for redevelopment. The maps of 1885 and 1951 appear as an announcement to this development.⁴²⁷ Patches of empty land, including large Malay reservations, alternate with built up areas. Subsequently, former mining or plantation corporations became dominant real estate developers eg, Sime Darby, IOI Group or Sunway Group. All of them are still active today. Piece by piece, these corporations filled the empty patches with terraced housing, condo complexes, shopping districts and high-rise superlatives.⁴²⁸ Thus, fragmentation became an unsurprising characteristic of KL.

Today, kampungs are the only witnesses of this dynamic past. Otherwise, the heritage of redeveloped land can rarely be traced back to its former use. The *Mines Resort*, located south of Sungai Besi, is a rare exception. Its name, along with its large body of water at its centre, are the only giveaways of the once largest open-pit tin mine in the world. Otherwise, the rich peoples heap of luxury hotels, residences, shopping mall, Golf Club and Health Sanctuary is a jumble of urban mass. It is separated from its surroundings by highways, impenetrable greenery and a university campus. The radical transformation from tin mine to mixed-use development cut off all former connections. Such transformation of heritage is common practice in Southeast Asia's urbanism. William Lim states: "mass demolition and construction are taking place simultaneously. In the process, much of the old and heritage, together with collective visual memories of the people, is lost and often soon forgotten."⁴²⁹

Against this backdrop, the specific spatial fragmentation of KL becomes easier to comprehend. Moreover, the dynamism of asian urbanism values modernisation and progression more than heritage and regularity. "In Asia, chaos, uncertainty, pluralistic richness and evolving complexity are now accepted as essential elements of its urban dynamism."⁴³⁰ This does not mean that historic accounts would generally be dismissed. But the uncertainty of the future seems more welcomed than the reliability of the past. However, this notion should not be confused with the exaggerated admiration of urban chaos or, as some scholars argue, "messy urbanism".⁴³¹ As captivating as a *messy* city might sound, I will argue that a *dysfunctional* city is problematic and not worth striving for. A dysfunctional condition poses a substantial threat for residents who are overburdened with traffic, pollution, noise and competition for space on a daily basis. This challenge is not restricted to urban kampungs but concerns the city at large.

National Capital

As this study is delimited to the DBKL, it runs the risk of overlooking the difference of key

⁴²⁷ See Figure 24 and Figure 25

⁴²⁸ See Figure 26, Figure 27 and Figure 28

⁴²⁹ Lim, William (2008). *Asian Alterity*. Singapore : 114

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Chalana, Manish and Hou, Jeffrey (eds.) (2016) *Messy Urbanism - Understanding the "Other" Cities of Asia*. Hong Kong

urban features between core city and conurbation. Population data⁴³² shows that the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) has densified to a level that is above most Southeast Asian cities. With a population of 1.98 million, an area of only 243 square kilometres and a resulting density of 8148 people per square kilometre, DBKL is much denser than Bangkok and slightly denser than Singapore. In Southeast Asia, Jakarta has the highest density. In comparison, Greater Kuala Lumpur (GKL) which also includes the entire Klang Valley, has 8.46 million inhabitants covering an area of 3,483 square kilometres, almost 15 times the size of DBKL. With 2,429 people per square kilometre it is less dense compared to most Southeast Asian metropolitan areas. However, GKL is home to more than a quarter of the entire population of Malaysia and contributes close to 40 per cent⁴³³ of the national GDP. The current rate of growth can be illustrated with data from 2010, when GKL was home to 20 per cent of the population and contributed 30 per cent of the GDP.⁴³⁴ In summary, the conurbation of GKL has experienced exponential growth in recent decades, but has by far not reached DBKL's high density.

Previous *National Physical Plans* (NPP and NPP-2)⁴³⁵ concluded that the incessant concentration of key economic functions and the rate of growth is a heavy burden for KL. Therefore, lifting the development of other urban areas in Malaysia as outlined in the latest *National Physical Plan* (NPP-3)⁴³⁶ is a sensible strategy. The conurbations of eg, Penang, Kuala Terengganu and Johor have been designated as development regions and enjoy substantial development support. However, with an infinite number of townships, residential precincts, office parks and industrial facilities, KL remains by far the largest agglomeration in Malaysia and is the only "National Conurbation".⁴³⁷

This expansive development has led to considerable urban sprawl which has been identified by the (first) *National Urbanisation Policy* (NUP) as a serious problem. The *Second National Urbanisation Policy* (NUP2) suggests 'Urban Growth Limits' which "will assist the local planning authority to identify areas for development and areas for protection."⁴³⁸ A substantial threat for the economic efficiency of KL is the low modal share of public transportation. It is at 21 per cent for GKL and 25 per cent for DBKL respectively.⁴³⁹ Research suggests "compact development, the provision of mass public transit, and transit-oriented-development".⁴⁴⁰ Aside from these sensible suggestions, allowing for higher plot ratios is another measure to meet urban sprawl. For

⁴³² Department of Statistics (2022). *Population and Housing Census Malaysia 2020*. Putrajaya

⁴³³ Own calculation with data from: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023). *Gross Domestic Product (GDP) By State, 2022*. Putrajaya

⁴³⁴ Yeoh, Seng Guan (2015). *The great transformation: urbanisation and urbanism in Malaysia* In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 255

⁴³⁵ Malaysia (2005). *National Physical Plan*. Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia (2010). *National Physical Plan 2*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴³⁶ Malaysia (2016). *National Physical Plan 3*. Putrajaya : 1-3

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Malaysia (2016). *Second National Urbanisation Policy*. Kuala Lumpur Ibid : 5-2

⁴³⁹ Nuradzimmah, Daim and Fuad, Nizam (2022). *Multi-pronged approach to address congestion outlined in KL Traffic Master Plan 2040*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 27 October 2022

⁴⁴⁰ Naeem, Malik Asghar (2016). *Policies and Issues Concerning Urban Sprawl and Compact Development Paradigm Adoption in Great Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Malaysia Sustainable Cities Program, Working Paper Series, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) : 13

a successful implementation, two items are crucial. One, the existence of public mass transportation. Two, the critical evaluation of urban density. It seems that both items have not been fully considered. The *Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020* indeed proposed "[h]igh density residential and high plot ratio commercial development".⁴⁴¹ However, this suggestion is made under the premise of "integrating Transport and Spatial Development",⁴⁴² a step regrettably omitted. Despite inadequate public transportation, it is evident that planning authorities in KL are trending towards higher plot ratios and the approval thereof.

This can be attested with the appearance of a new building type that is easily noticeable in the cityscape of KL: gigantic 50-storey high-rise blocks replacing older buildings with 20 storeys. These medium cost apartment buildings are mostly funded or co-funded by the government and targeted at the so-called B40 or M40 groups.⁴⁴³ Examples can be seen eg, along the east side of kampung Pandan, where several apartment blocks with 50 storeys in height have been erected since 2018.⁴⁴⁴ Similar buildings, including privately funded ones, appear in eg, Taman Desa, Air Panas and Damansara. In general, the plot ratio of residential blocks in Greater KL and DBKL has been continuously increased. Regrettably, the majority of projects is developed without the integration of public transportation and without considering the urban context. In a rather blunt response to complaints of concerned citizens about the recent boom of high-rise buildings, the mayor of KL was quoted "city folks need to accept the reality that there will be more high rise residential development as it is inevitable in any developing city."⁴⁴⁵ In other words: everything that appears sparse (and unmodern) possibly faces extinction.

It is not the scope of this study to assess this development in detail. However, notwithstanding the urgent need to tackle urban sprawl and to meet demand for housing, I will argue that the development of extremely large high-rise apartment blocks in dense areas without the integration of public mass transport is the outcome of misgoverned agglomeration policies. Its consequences have become the concern of several neighbourhoods in KL and not least of urban kampungs eg, Segambut Dalam, Pandan and Air Panas. All of these settlements experience the development of excessively large high-rise blocks in their immediate vicinity. An instant challenge for the preservation of urban quality in kampungs is the increased level of road traffic, the loss of open space, the challenge of supply and a general competition for space.

Overdevelopment

A growing number of citizens are not willing to accept such conditions. A good example is the ongoing protest in Taman Desa, an established neighbourhood east of Old Klang Road and

⁴⁴¹ Malaysia (2008). *Kuala Lumpur City Plan*. Kuala Lumpur : 4.14

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Malaysia categorises its population into three different income groups: Top 20 per cent (T20), Middle 40 per cent (M40), and Bottom 40 per cent (B40). It is based on the *Household Income and Basic Amenities* survey of the Department of Statistics.

⁴⁴⁴ See Figure 29 and Figure 30

⁴⁴⁵ Reena Raj (2018). *KL Mayor: High rise residential development unavoidable in cities*. The Malay Mail, 15 January 2018

north-west of Kampung Salak Selatan. A social media site serves as a platform to make concerns of residents public and to document violations of real estate developers and DBKL. The protest aims specifically at the "unsustainable overdevelopment"⁴⁴⁶ of Taman Desa, caused by externally developed high-rise buildings in the immediate vicinity. Despite early protests, construction of two high-rise buildings started in 2018. After that, several mishaps unfolded.⁴⁴⁷ In 2020, a partial collapse of one building occurred, apparently caused by hurried construction. In a piecemeal process, residents unveiled illegal practices by both DBKL and the contractors. It turned out that the building "was built on a land marked for use of utilities and not for development"⁴⁴⁸ which would mean a breach of land use. Further revelations concluded that the contractor faced "alleged violations included failure to provide workers with safe lodging, pay for overtime work, and employing illegal migrant workers."⁴⁴⁹ News media followed up on the subject matter and unveiled illegal arrangements between DBKL and real estate developers.⁴⁵⁰

The example of Taman Desa is especially informative because residents are not rejecting new developments per se. They argue that heteronomous developments with excessive plot ratios will have a negative impact on existing neighbourhoods.⁴⁵¹ In 2022, residents started an online petition "to stop the old township from being overrun with apartments and condominiums. [...] Putting mega structures in the midst of it without proper town planning can cause irreversible damage to the mature township."⁴⁵² Media coverage stated that "the overdevelopment issue was worrying residents as it threatened their liveability and quality of life."⁴⁵³ The petition of the residents is explicitly critical about the poor planning practices of DBKL. In addition, allowing higher plot ratios will lead to congestion and possible social inequality. Land use violation will lead to environmental risks eg, landslides and flash floods. These are solid and comprehensible claims.

Having described similar events in my field study of Segambut Dalam,⁴⁵⁴ it becomes clear that neither settlement is an isolated case but rather exemplifies how contested the current urban development is. It shows that residents identify strongly with their environment and try to find ways to defend their living space.⁴⁵⁵ Sadly, such protest and media coverage are less likely in kampungs.⁴⁵⁶ Most residents do not have the means to organise themselves successfully, others

⁴⁴⁶ (n.d.) (2019). *Protect Taman Desa From Over-Development*. Facebook. Retrieved from: www.facebook.com/ProtectTamanDesa

⁴⁴⁷ Ruban, A. (2018). *After crane crash, Taman Desa residents stage protest against condo development*. The Malay Mail, 3 February 2018

⁴⁴⁸ Dzulkifly, Danial (2020). *Taman Desa residents urge authorities to make findings of probe into collapsed condo public*. The Malay Mail, 16 February 2020

⁴⁴⁹ Syed, Jaymal Zahiid (2020). *Probe into collapsed Taman Desa condo finds illegal workers used, not paid overtime wages*. The Malay Mail, 20 February 2020

⁴⁵⁰ Bernama (2020). *Kok: I voiced Taman Desa worries in 2017*. The Malay Mail, 18 February 2020

⁴⁵¹ Lim, Jarod (2022). *'No more high-rises, please'*. The Star, 25 July 2022

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ See Chapter 2.1.1.

⁴⁵⁵ Lim, Jarod (2022). *Upping KL's liveability*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 10 February 2023

⁴⁵⁶ Ravindran, Shalini (2015). *Residents want courts to review high density project*. The Star, 7 April 2015

have developed a rather fatalistic attitude towards urban transformation. Kampung lack any significant lobby from political representatives or the general public. In recent years, many have been destroyed to make way for new developments. For example, residents in Kampung Chubadak were not only falsely accused of squatting, they were forcefully evicted and compensated only after years of legal battles.^{457,458} In general, pressure on existing low-rise quarters in KL has drastically increased.⁴⁵⁹ Many quarters are being replaced by denser and more upscale developments.⁴⁶⁰

Although the simultaneity of demolition and development is culturally accepted,⁴⁶¹ it poses the acknowledged dangers of lost quality, disorientation and (in the case of kampungs) eviction. Local authorities are responsible to mediate such conflict. However, the City Hall of KL (DBKL) is clearly struggling with this role. Why does DBKL often decide over the heads of the people?

Governance

Urban development in Malaysia is guided by a comprehensive planning system. I have laid out a brief overview in Chapter 1.3.3.. This system is complemented by mostly progressive and forward thinking policies eg, the *Second National Urbanisation Policy* (NUP2).⁴⁶² However, policies and actual implementation often diverge and an "enhanced coordination between federal, state, and local planning agencies"⁴⁶³ is needed. The underlying complexity can be illustrated with the administrative structure of Greater KL. GKL contains the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. They are administered by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Perbadanan Putrajaya respectively. In addition, GKL is part of three states—Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan—which contain and represent four City Councils and ten Municipal Councils. A final complexity is the three levels of governance involved—federal, state and local—that collide regularly because of strict hierarchies and overlapping responsibilities. This framework is a challenge for the development of GKL.

As national capital and Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur is administered under the Prime Minister's Department. The mayor of KL is appointed by the Minister of Federal Territories and not elected by the citizens. As a result, the influence of the Federal Government office over DBKL is substantial and City Hall is less free in its agenda than one might assume. Since the first *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan* in 1984, the Federal Government designated KL as a showcase for

⁴⁵⁷ Zurairi, AR (2014). *In final plea, KL mayor tells Chubadak folk to move out, not squat*. The Malay Mail, 17 June 2014

⁴⁵⁸ Khazi, Haika and Lokman, Tasnim (2018). *More than 50 years wait finally over for Kampung Chubadak villagers*. New Straits Times, 6 May 2018

⁴⁵⁹ Husin, Mohd Zamri and Usman, Ismar and Suratman Robiah (2021). *Density Challenges of High-Rise Residential Development in Malaysia*. Planning Malaysia, Volume 19 Issue 4

⁴⁶⁰ Yeoh, Seng Guan (2015). *The great transformation: urbanisation and urbanism in Malaysia*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 249

⁴⁶¹ Lim, William (2012). *Incomplete Urbanism - A Critical Strategy for Emerging Economies*. Singapore

⁴⁶² Malaysia (2016). *Second National Urbanisation Policy*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁶³ Naeem, Malik Asghar (2016). *Policies and Issues Concerning Urban Sprawl and Compact Development Paradigm Adoption in Great Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Malaysia Sustainable Cities Program, Working Paper Series, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) : 13

Malaysia's progression and appeal. The moniker 'World-Class City'⁴⁶⁴ affirms that modesty was not the objective. Needless to say, that the term never stuck with locals who mostly care about their neighbourhood instead of KL's global rank.

During the first premiership of Mahathir Mohamad from 1981 to 2003, the government actively modified land use regulations and sought support from the private sector to accelerate the output of development. This greatly changed the building and real-estate sector in KL.⁴⁶⁵ "[L]and use change benefited tremendously the commercial, institutions and government sectors at the expense of housing, in particular low-cost housing."⁴⁶⁶ The persuasiveness of the private real estate market, often backed by international capital eg, from East Asia, the Middle East and the Gulf region, started to influence urban development significantly. Islamic modernism became a *leitmotif* during Mahathir's premiership and KLCC with the Petronas Towers was, and still is, its most iconic display. But the striking economic progress and commendable social advancements also had its drawbacks. Cronyism spread within the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, an infirmity that reached its peak with the 1MDB scandal during Najib Razak's premiership from 2009 to 2018. The rivalry of Mahathir and Najib arrived at final heights when two megatall skyscrapers, Merdeka 118 and Exchange 106,⁴⁶⁷ were adopted under Najib.⁴⁶⁸ As of 2023, both projects are near completion. However, congestion in the centre of the city is rising noticeable and the destruction of heritage grounds is impacting the urban fabric. The gigantic costs of the projects are met with criticism from the public and both developments prove to be unpopular with locals. The new government, which entered power after the 2022 General Election, reverts to a more sensitive and sensible planning approach. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated that "City Hall must [...] ensure Kuala Lumpur stays a green, healthy and vibrant city. At the same time, [...] affordable housing is expanded to accommodate the demands made by the residents of Kuala Lumpur."⁴⁶⁹ This might be an indication that KL is no longer seen as a proving ground for overambitious Prime Ministers. Nevertheless, the administrative structure of DBKL remains a challenge.

Urban development of DBKL is guided by a comprehensive set of plans: *Structure Plan*⁴⁷⁰, *KL City Plan*⁴⁷¹ and *Development Control Plan*.⁴⁷² A significant problem is the pace of development. Plans become outdated quickly and permit processes often find exceptions to override previously prescribed recommendations. In many cases, it is owed to a superior treatment of projects

⁴⁶⁴ Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁶⁵ Yeoh, Seng Guan (ed.) (2014). *The Other Kuala Lumpur - Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. New York

⁴⁶⁶ Morshidi, Sirat (2001). *Kuala Lumpur, Globalization and Urban Competitiveness: An Unfinished Agenda?* Built Environment, Volume 27, Number 2 : 103

⁴⁶⁷ Merdeka 118 is the second-tallest building in the world, Exchange 106 is the third-tallest building in Southeast Asia. Both surpass the Petronas Towers in height.

⁴⁶⁸ Au, Eunice (2016). *Malaysian PM Najib to build tower to rival Mahathir's Twin Towers*. The Straits Times, 27 April 2016

⁴⁶⁹ Sallehuddin, Qistina (2023). *PM wants City Hall to gazette KLSP 2040 before year end*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 18 July 2023

⁴⁷⁰ Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁷¹ Malaysia (2008b). *Kuala Lumpur City Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁷² Malaysia (2008a). *Draft Development Control Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

initiated by the Federal Government. Therefore, the role of DBKL can be characterised as reactive instead of proactive. In addition, City Hall lacks a direct connection to the local level. Detailed knowledge about specific issues in a local neighbourhood might not reach the administration.

Having met with several representatives of DBKL's planning departments, I learned that most project planners do not have a counterpart on the ground. The design of projects is mainly driven by generic parameters and not by contextual requirements. These interviews matched with findings in my field studies of eg, Datuk Keramat.⁴⁷³ There, with a more than generous budget and good intentions, a large market hall was built without understanding the local context. Prior to construction, no dialog was initiated to understand the needs of residents. This is unfortunate because neither DBKL nor local residents and vendors are satisfied with the final project.⁴⁷⁴ Worse, it has resulted in a significant loss of Datuk Keramat's urban quality.

Yet again, the above is a testament to the weakness of Malaysian governance.⁴⁷⁵ Representatives of local authorities, so-called councillors, are not elected by the public but appointed by the Federal and State Governments. Since the elections for local authorities were suspended in 1965 and finally abolished in 1976 by the Local Government Act 1976 (Act 171), local councillors tend to lean towards their political superior instead of being committed to their local constituency. The lack of accountability of local authorities is at the centre of criticism. It is "the manpower and the expertise available at the local level [...] what is lacking in most of the local authorities."⁴⁷⁶ "The role of the councils in urban development control has also diminished. From 1976 to the 1980s, local authorities prepared and implemented both local plans and structure plans. Today, the State Town and Country Planning Department [...] has taken over the preparation and implementation of structure plans."⁴⁷⁷ Various stakeholders and civic groups are suggesting to bring back elected local authorities. Residents "believe that a local authority formed through an election would prioritise the needs of Kuala Lumpur folk, and reduce political influence when deciding on and approving projects."⁴⁷⁸ In the past, the government has given high costs as a reason against elections. Considering the inefficient handling of many planning projects on local level, this is a weak argument.

In order to improve the cooperation between DBKL and local groups, two items are necessary. One, local councillors must be enabled to act more independently. Two, the specialist knowledge of contextual design must be improved within DBKL. In 2018, the Pakatan Harapan (PH)

⁴⁷³ See Chapter 2.2.2.

⁴⁷⁴ Augustin, Robert (2016). *Keramat Mall far from thriving*. Free Malaysia Today, 29 October 2016. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/10/29/keramat-mall-far-from-thriving

⁴⁷⁵ Lim, Ida (2021). *Minister: Malaysia won't have local govt elections, with no guarantee of good service and minimum cost of RM302m*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 9 December 2021

⁴⁷⁶ Nik, Hashim Ibrahim and Nordin, Mohd. Yahya (1984) *Local Government System in Malaysia*. National Institute of Public Administration Malaysia : 166

⁴⁷⁷ Goh, Ban Lee (2015). *Local government in urban Malaysia*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York : 96

⁴⁷⁸ Lim, Jarod (2022). *Upping KL's liveability*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 10 February 2023

coalition suggested to "revive local government elections to enable local councillors to be elected by the public."⁴⁷⁹ The suggestion was rejected during the takeover of the conservative BN coalition between 2020 and 2022.⁴⁸⁰ However, since 2022, a new PH government is open to revive its earlier suggestion.⁴⁸¹ I will argue that this comes across as a sensible step towards an improvement of KL's urban governance.

⁴⁷⁹ Lim, Ida (2021). *Minister: Malaysia won't have local govt elections, with no guarantee of good service and minimum cost of RM302m*. The Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur, 9 December 2021

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Nambiar, Predeep (2022). *Revive local elections with 'test runs' in KL, Penang, says analyst*. Free Malaysia Today, 12 December 2022. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/12/12/revive-local-elections-with-test-runs-in-kl-penang-says-analyst

3.2. Knowledge and Recognition

Kampungs are sites of heritage, but not heritage sites. They consist of unique houses, but not architectural marvels. And finally, kampungs are spatially captivating, but not artefacts that require conservation. The survival of kampungs is secured by consistent use and contextual transformation.

Qualities

The qualities found in urban kampungs have been elaborated in the above chapters. Notably the *readability* of urban space is much less pronounced in other residential quarters. More often than not, one is left with confusion because most quarters are spatially incoherent. A legible geometric urban structure as found in eg, Air Panas, is very rare. The same is true for a spatial composition that is based on the natural topography, like in Salak Selatan. In contrast, the layout of ubiquitous terraced housing precincts, typically found in various neighbourhoods of KL, is mostly repetitive and lacks an interesting spatial experience. Nonetheless, commercial areas in between such precincts, with restaurants in open air, food stalls of every taste and round-the-clock businesses, create a lively atmosphere which is typical of KL. Kampungs are a portrayal of the *heterogeneity* of the Malaysian society. Different ethnicities live in different quarters or find residence in the same quarters. This is a common feature in many areas of the city. An exception is the exclusive—mostly gated—housing developments of recent vintage. These enclaves feature a separation of different income groups. In contrast, kampungs are neither mono-ethnic, nor mono-functional. They are structurally and socially heterogeneous. Moreover, the *superimposition* of densely built up houses, available open spaces and agile residents lead to a high level of simultaneity. There are rarely elements that are unused or buildings that stand isolated, everything is tightly interwoven. It is due to these underlying qualities that kampungs rarely show chaotic or confusing characteristics. Nevertheless, it is not easy to get to the bottom of urban quality. The quarters are mostly off the radar. In KL's fast changing urban environment, kampungs are unobtrusive elements.

Kampungs and City

Within the vast urban landscape, kampungs appear like small sponges. They are inconspicuous but fulfil a number of important functions. The informal economy profits to a large extent from the heterogeneity of the quarters. A dynamic and mobile workforce that consists of low-paid immigrant workers and affluent middle-class professionals finds home in the core of the city. This heterogeneous workforce consists of either residents that hold temporary engagements or long-term residents that hold a steady (formal) occupation. Despite this variety in occupancy, long-term residents and established businesses continue to predominate. Kampungs can be described as cultural, ethnic and religious refuges. What is more, some appear like secluded islands, others like

well-connected places of opportunity. Subliminally, kampungs maintain a specific ecosystem. A simple gentrification is therefore hardly imaginable. Some kampungs are in need of upgrading in the areas of infrastructure, education and medical service. However, the kampungs that I have included in my research are not underdeveloped. All of them are well-connected with their surroundings and therefore able to fall back on facilities elsewhere. Because of their specific historic geneses, kampungs are contextualised urban elements. That is to say they are rooted deeply in the city and will therefore offer social cohesion for its residents. However, challenges are plenty.

Lack of Knowledge

Interestingly, DBKL's Structure Plan of 2004 dedicated an entire chapter to kampungs. It is simply entitled: 'Special Areas'.⁴⁸² "These areas have generally fallen behind in development and are associated with complex developmental problems, relative poverty, poor living conditions and inadequate infrastructure."⁴⁸³ The accompanying Local Plan⁴⁸⁴ is taking a similar line. "By upgrading their living environment, the residents should be brought into the mainstream development and be part of a World-Class City that Kuala Lumpur aims to be."⁴⁸⁵ The meaning of this assessment is clear. DBKL acknowledges the existence of kampungs but characterises them as problematic. At the time, kampungs proved to be difficult elements for a city that was preparing to play a global role. It is likely that many readers of the Structure and Local Plan have concluded that kampungs are in the way of modernisation and will be rendered obsolete soon. Two decades later, many kampungs have disappeared. The gradual or complete destruction of some kampungs—or, should we say 'Special Areas'—was rarely challenged. In the past, private developers as well as the government have had pretty much the freedom to claim and develop kampung land. The real estate gain for such land is huge. The area between Sri Hartamas and Segambut Dalam is a prime example for this.⁴⁸⁶ On the other hand, Malay Reservation Areas were left to themselves as a commercial exploitation proved to be difficult, if not impossible. Consequently, these areas remained outside the "mainstream development".⁴⁸⁷

Surprisingly, in the subsequent planning policies,⁴⁸⁷ kampungs do not play a role at all. The most recent *Structure Plan* and *Local Plan* do not mention kampungs as coherent urban typologies, nor do they mention individual settlements.⁴⁸⁸ Also, the *Development Control Plan*,⁴⁸⁹ does not

⁴⁸² Malaysia (2004). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁸³ Ibid. : Section 16.1.

⁴⁸⁴ Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. : Volume 1 Part 2, C7 page 7.2-3

⁴⁸⁶ See Chapter 2.1.1.

⁴⁸⁷ Malaysia (2006b). *Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur : Volume 1 Part 2, C7 page 7.2-3

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter 1.3.3.

⁴⁸⁹ This might change with the KLSP 2040. However, the plan has not yet been published or gazetted. See: Sallehuddin, Qistina (2023). *PM wants City Hall to gazette KLSP 2040 before year end*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 18 July 2023

⁴⁸⁹ Malaysia (2008a). *Draft Development Control Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

mention kampungs or other quarters eg, Chinese New Villages. However, the most striking documents are the Zoning Maps in the *City Plan*.⁴⁹⁰ Kampungs appear (like all other areas in the city) in detailed 'land use' and 'development intensity' plans. The designated use of areas where kampungs are located is either 'residential' or 'commercial'. As expected, these plans suggest varying plot ratios (densities) for the entire city. A closer look reveals that most kampungs show different densities within their boundaries. This is not necessarily unusual. However, it is rather unusual that an individual, coherent or small settlement shows a variety of plot ratios. Moreover, the divisions appear arbitrary.

In Air Panas, my field work shows that the urban layout with four quadrants of similar urban grain contributes to the compactness of the settlement. However, in the zoning maps the north-east quadrant shows a higher plot ratio than the rest of the kampung.⁴⁹¹ At first, the reason might be the old market hall and shophouses that are located in the same area, although along the main streets. However, the rest of the quadrant is filled with regular residential houses and for no apparent reason these plots show a higher plot ratio than the rest of the kampung. A second example is Datuk Keramat. My analysis shows a low-density albeit highly heterogeneous urban fabric. However, the zoning plans show a very different image. The kampung is, for no apparent reason, dissected in three areas with different plot ratios.⁴⁹² Why would eg, the east side of Lorong Kiri 15 allow for a higher plot ratio than the west? From an urban-spatial view, there is no reason for this.

Both examples show a denial of the coherence of built form of kampungs. Moreover, the disintegration of the original form and size of individual kampungs seems accepted. I am aware that kampungs do not have a prescribed *border*. But I will argue that they have an invisible, non-administrative *boundary*. The examples also match my earlier observation that recent developments do not respect the integrity of the urban pattern, nor the structural boundaries of kampungs.⁴⁹³ I do not have enough knowledge to offer a satisfying explanation for this arbitrary division. However, it is a strong indication that DBKL does not recognise or, is not able to recognise kampungs as coherent quarters. External developments (around the kampungs) seem the decisive factor for varying plot ratios. Thus, planning authorities do not recognise the unique urban and spatial quality that is ingrained in kampungs. I will argue that this lack of acknowledgement is problematic. The gradual or complete destruction of some kampungs is therefore not challenged. Nor is the social cohesion of its residents acknowledged.

Lack of Recognition

Although everybody in KL knows what a kampung is, not many people have an understanding

⁴⁹⁰ Malaysia (2008b). *Kuala Lumpur City Plan*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁹¹ See Figure 31 and Figure 32

⁴⁹² See Figure 33 and Figure 34

⁴⁹³ See Chapter 2.1.1.

of its history, exact location or current condition. As there is fierce competition for novelties in a Southeast Asian metropolis, kampungs have not much to offer. Basically, the settlements are a peripheral phenomenon.

Most Chinese or Indian Malaysians are convinced that kampungs are solely a Malay affair. On the other hand, "Malays insist, quite properly, that to understand Malay culture and Malaysian society you have to grasp the character of the kampung."⁴⁹⁴ As this study shows, both notions are somehow flawed. I will argue, that urban kampungs portray the ethnic diversity of *all* Malaysians. There is no privilege of interpretation. Of course, kampungs are the original form of settlement in former Malaya (today: Malaysia) and therefore Malay people claim to ownership. However, other ethnicities made kampungs their own in order to fit their needs. This differs from Chinese New Villages that are outrageous examples of late British colonisation. Nevertheless, they belong to the collective memory of Malaysia like any other settlement. Lastly, the MRAs with their special status and their entanglement with affirmative action policies are not an exclusive Malay problem, as they are integrated in the city and thus part of its development. Part of this study was to uncover the complex heritage of different kampungs. It is therefore a historic fact not an academic construction that kampungs are a part of a coherent history, no matter what the specific circumstances were that brought them up in the first place. Therefore, kampungs are always more than regular (or generic) settlements. They also go beyond being the nuclei of Malaysian settlement. As such, they bear a contextualisation that does not need political, ethnic or cultural re-contextualisation.

The collective memory of the entire city is limited to the aforementioned negligence. It is rarely acknowledged that the residents strongly identify with their settlements. In contrast, the collective memory of kampung residents is strongly developed, although rarely expressed. My field studies in Chinese New Villages clearly show this. The collective memory of the Emergency era remains within the kampungs. This does not have to be corrected. But it shows that member of the public remain ignorant about the qualities that kampungs can offer. This fundamentally mistaken lack of recognition leaves the majority of qualities described in my field studies somewhat unrecognised. I will argue that this lack of recognition is problematic.

⁴⁹⁴ Sardar, Ziauddin (2000). *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*. London : 75

3.3. Recommendations

The previous paragraphs have demonstrated that the lack of recognition and the lack of knowledge are the worst enemies of urban kampungs in KL. In this final section, I will describe two recommendations aiming towards solving the challenges faced by modern-day kampungs.

Independent Research

My study shows that the quality of research surrounding urban kampungs is inconsistent and flawed. I will illustrate this with two examples to justify and amplify the need for better research availability in the area of urban kampungs

The first example is a report that outlines '*Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*' by the Malaysian branch of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) a non-governmental organisation which is part of UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).⁴⁹⁵ The report suggests to implement its findings to the forthcoming *Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040* (KLDSP).⁴⁹⁶ One of the prescribed goals of the KLDSP is called: 'Rooted in Heritage (heritage protection, strengthening and enhancement)' At a quick glance, several of ICOMOS suggestions to fulfil these goals are comprehensible. The section entitled 'Traditional Villages: Unplanned and Planned' deals with urban kampungs. It summons "[f]or any community heritage planning scheme, involvement of the actual owners are crucial and we need to respect the actual needs/wishes of the community. Community participatory process (bottom-up approach) is recommended for any development proposals in these villages."⁴⁹⁷ I will argue that this is a very sensible outcome. I acknowledge very much the proposed community based approach.

However, reading the text more attentively, several discrepancies can be discovered. For example, the report sees "tourism potential"⁴⁹⁸ for New Villages and hopes "that DBKL studies the possibility of transforming the Jinjang New Village into a 'Chinese Food & Cultural Village'."⁴⁹⁹ It is unclear to me if the initial idea originated from DBKL. Nonetheless, the reasoning for such a suggestion remains unanswered. Is there an economic potential for Jinjang? Is there an interest from tourists? Of all Chinese New Villages in Malaysia, Jinjang is the largest and most populated.

⁴⁹⁵ ICOMOS (2020). *The Kuala Lumpur Heritage Agenda - Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur

⁴⁹⁶ Sallehuddin, Qistina (2023). *PM wants City Hall to gazette KLSP 2040 before year end*. New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, 18 July 2023

⁴⁹⁷ ICOMOS (2020). *The Kuala Lumpur Heritage Agenda - Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur : 55

⁴⁹⁸ ICOMOS (2020). *The Kuala Lumpur Heritage Agenda - Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur : 54

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

It is located to the north of the city centre.⁵⁰⁰ I have visited Jinjang several times but excluded it from my field work because it did not meet my criteria for delimitation. Its character is somewhat similar to Salak Selatan, although its rigid urban layout bears resemblance to Datuk Keramat. Hence, comparing and contrasting Jinjang to these kampungs as described, it is difficult for me to follow the recommendation of ICOMOS which heavily leans upon a tourism potential without solid justification. As mentioned above, the report distinguishes between unplanned and planned villages which leads to another discrepancy. "[T]he Chinese New Villages were planned and built within a very short period during the Emergency, hence, their less obvious / diverse characters of built form[...]"⁵⁰¹ It is well known that New Villages were built hastily.⁵⁰² But does that mean their built form is 'less characteristic'? My findings in Air Panas and Salak Selatan arrive at a very different conclusion. I will argue that the fast development process that adopted simple geometric patterns and respect for the natural landscape rendered these settlements extremely characteristic. Its qualities will not need outstanding architectural heritage in order to arrive at a settlement full of character. Again, this finding emphasises the weakness in ICOMOS' view which is a lack of recognition of the urban quality ingrained in kampungs.

The second example is the renowned research journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners, PLANNING MALAYSIA. The articles in the journal are progressive and current, mostly published by researchers of local and international universities. However, a search query for urban kampungs through the institute's website⁵⁰³ revealed zero results in published articles. There was however one exception: a recent research paper⁵⁰⁴ which focusses on 'architectural style' featuring 'Kampung Bharu'. The traditional spelling 'Kampung Bharu' indicates conservative Malay authors. Kampung Baru, a Malay Reservation Area and highly politicised neighbourhood, is undoubtedly the most prominent and most publicised kampung in Malaysia. It is located near the city centre, less than two kilometres to the west of Datuk Keramat, and a Malay icon. It is disappointing nevertheless that no other kampung, at least within the last two decades, was ever mentioned in any research paper. Consequently, it is not surprising that kampungs, especially of multi-ethnic composition, are often neglected, even by academics and planners.

A similar picture can be observed in local planning or architectural colleges and universities. Urban kampungs are rarely the subject matter. I am only aware of one recent academic planning project⁵⁰⁵ that deals with the architectural design of a community hub in Salak Selatan. The project is a crucial contribution to the problem of upgrading communal spaces in kampungs. However, it is the only one that is publicly accessible. It is surprising that very little academic

⁵⁰⁰ See Chapter 1.2.3.

⁵⁰¹ ICOMOS (2020). *The Kuala Lumpur Heritage Agenda - Reviews & Recommendations for the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020*. Kuala Lumpur : 55

⁵⁰² Nyce, Ray (1973). *Chinese New Villages in Malaya - A Community Study*. Singapore

⁵⁰³ The archive since 2003 can be accessed from: <https://www.planningmalaysia.org/index.php/pmj/issue/archive>

⁵⁰⁴ Ibrahim, N. A., Ja'afar, N. H., Abdul Malek, M. I. and Mokhtar, N. A. (2022). *The Architectural Style which Attracts People to the Traditional Urban Village: Kampung Bharu as a Case Study*. Planning Malaysia, Volume 20 Issue 2

⁵⁰⁵ Lee, Min Hui (2021). *Unfinished: Architecture in transformation - Salak South community hub & master planning*. Retrieved from: <https://worldarchitecture.org/architecture-projects/hvzeg/unfinished-architecture-in-transformation--salak-south-community-hub-master-planning-project-pages.html>

debate can be found on urban kampungs. The settlements are easy to reach and their challenges are not unknown, at least to academia and professionals. In my view, there is a lot of potential to conduct research in the area of urban kampungs.

I therefore strongly suggest an expanded research activity on the topic of urban kampungs that takes an unbiased view and pays attention to a qualitative outcome. Kampungs not only possess urban-spatial qualities that need to be communicated but offer a variety of contextual topics in the disciplines of eg, sociology, economy, governance or migration, making for worthwhile investigations.

Administrative Revaluation

My study shows that external forces often control urban development impacting the quality of kampungs. In order to make kampungs more resilient to these external forces, a strengthened status of local leadership would be desired. I will conclude that the diagnosed lack of recognition can only be overcome with an administrative revaluation.

Traditionally, kampungs had a certain degree of self-government in the form of penghulus (headmen). In some states, headmen, or village chiefs, are still active, although their role is limited to either representation in the case of rural Malay villages or, organisation in the case of so-called Community Management Councils in some urban areas. There is no power vested in these chiefs. On the contrary, most kampungs are at the mercy of political influence. The relative weakness of local authorities, mostly under the influence of the Federal government, adds to the arbitrariness. Nonetheless, the administrative strength of kampungs are (rare) private grass-root initiatives that try to challenge the overburdened and unknowledgeable local authorities.⁵⁰⁶ In my view it bears a certain charm to combine the idea of administrative revaluation to strengthen the status of local leadership with the weakness of local authorities.

An excellent opportunity to enhance the relationship of kampungs within DBKL is the repeatedly demanded renaissance of elected local councils.^{507, 508, 509} In Chapter 3.1. I outlined the particulars of this endeavour. Thinking further, a trial election in urban kampungs could be used as a testbed for such a substantial project. I am not an expert on local governance nor electoral law. But a wide variety of formats of elections seem conceivable. Aside from regained electorate representation, this move would have a number of advantages for kampungs—and other small neighbourhoods—within DBKL. One, constituencies would have to be defined by DBKL. Naturally, the size or boundary of kampungs would have to be defined as well. Two, an

⁵⁰⁶ Ravindran, Shalini (2015). *Residents want courts to review high-density project*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 7 April 2015

⁵⁰⁷ A good overview on local government and local elections offers: Goh, Ban Lee (2015). *Local government in urban Malaysia*. In: Weiss, Meredith (ed.) 2015. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*. New York

⁵⁰⁸ Lim, Jarod (2022). *Upping KL's liveability*. The Star, Kuala Lumpur, 10 February 2023

⁵⁰⁹ Nambiar, Predeep (2022). *Revive local elections with 'test runs' in KL, Penang, says analyst*. Free Malaysia Today, 12 December 2022. Retrieved from: www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/12/12/revive-local-elections-with-test-runs-in-kl-penang-says-analyst

immediate effect would be a heightened recognition of the quarters. Kampung will not remain administrative blank spaces, but become much more visible elements in urban governance. Three, kampungs are often subject to religious and political squabbles. Elections on local level will not eliminate this. But a hopefully improved accountability of elected (!) local representatives will ease processes of mediation.

I therefore strongly suggest to include urban kampungs in the proposed reinstatement of local elections. The quarters could form their own constituencies, be part of a larger constituency or, form their own constituency. The goal must be the improved accountability of local representatives and a stronger recognition of individual kampungs.

The remaining urban kampungs are the only morphological elements that allow us to understand the development of Kuala Lumpur in a coherent way. Nevertheless, upgrading and improving is needed in many areas. Such improvements must come from within individual kampungs, not from external forces. The strong *contextual* quality of kampungs must be recognised and acknowledged. Since its inception, city and kampungs have entered a symbiotic relationship. Only profound knowledge and earnest recognition of this relationship will safeguard the survival of urban kampungs in Kuala Lumpur and thus maintaining quality for its residents.

Appendix

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with additional data from DBKL, Think City and Google Earth

Frank Eisenmann

Kuala Lumpur – Kampung in the Context of a Global City

Volume 2: Atlas

Dissertation
Technische Universität München
September 2023

Kuala Lumpur – Kampung in the Context of a Global City



Overview | Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur with ○ Landmark Sites and ● Kampung

Contents

Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur with Landmark Sites and Kampung
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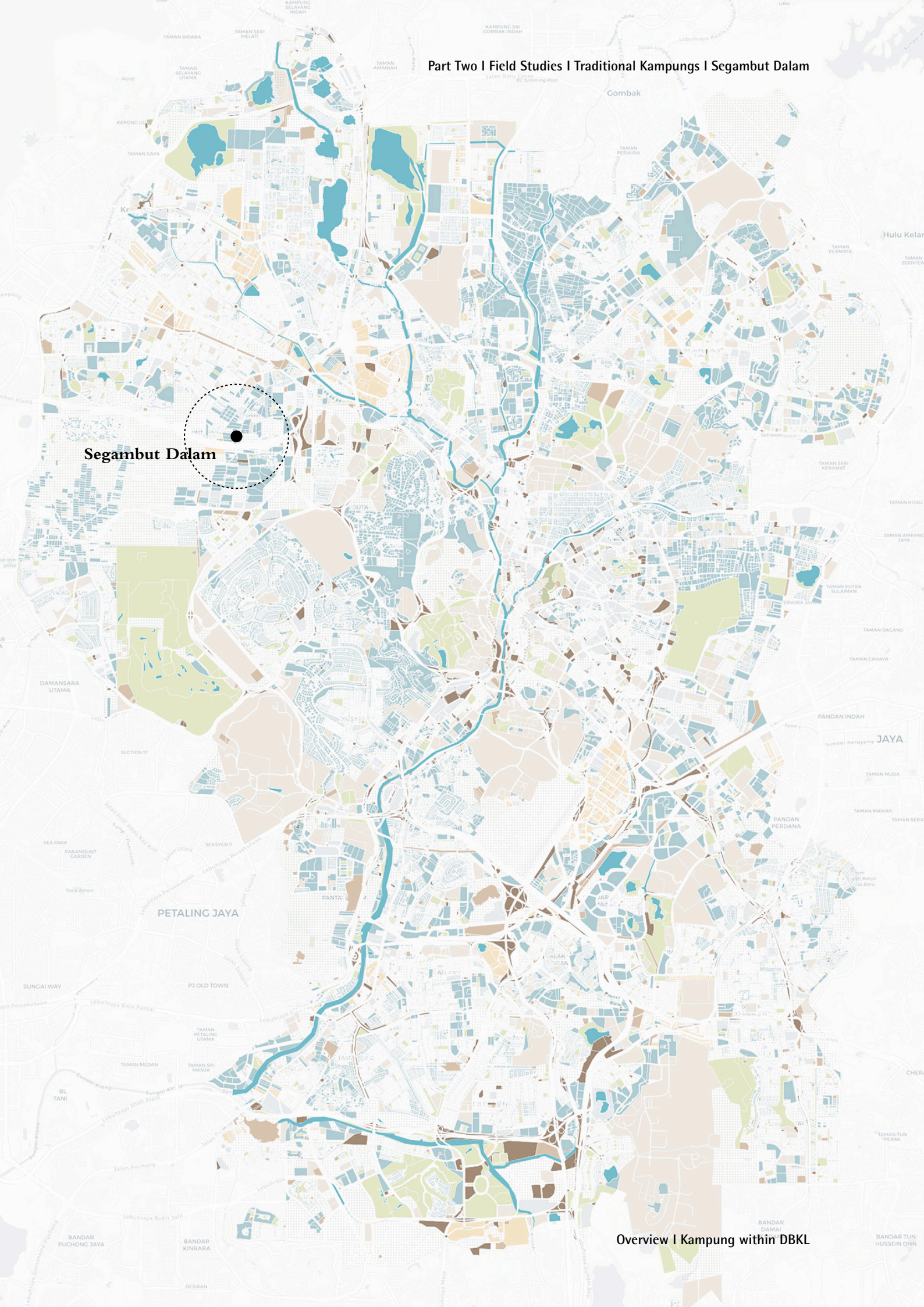
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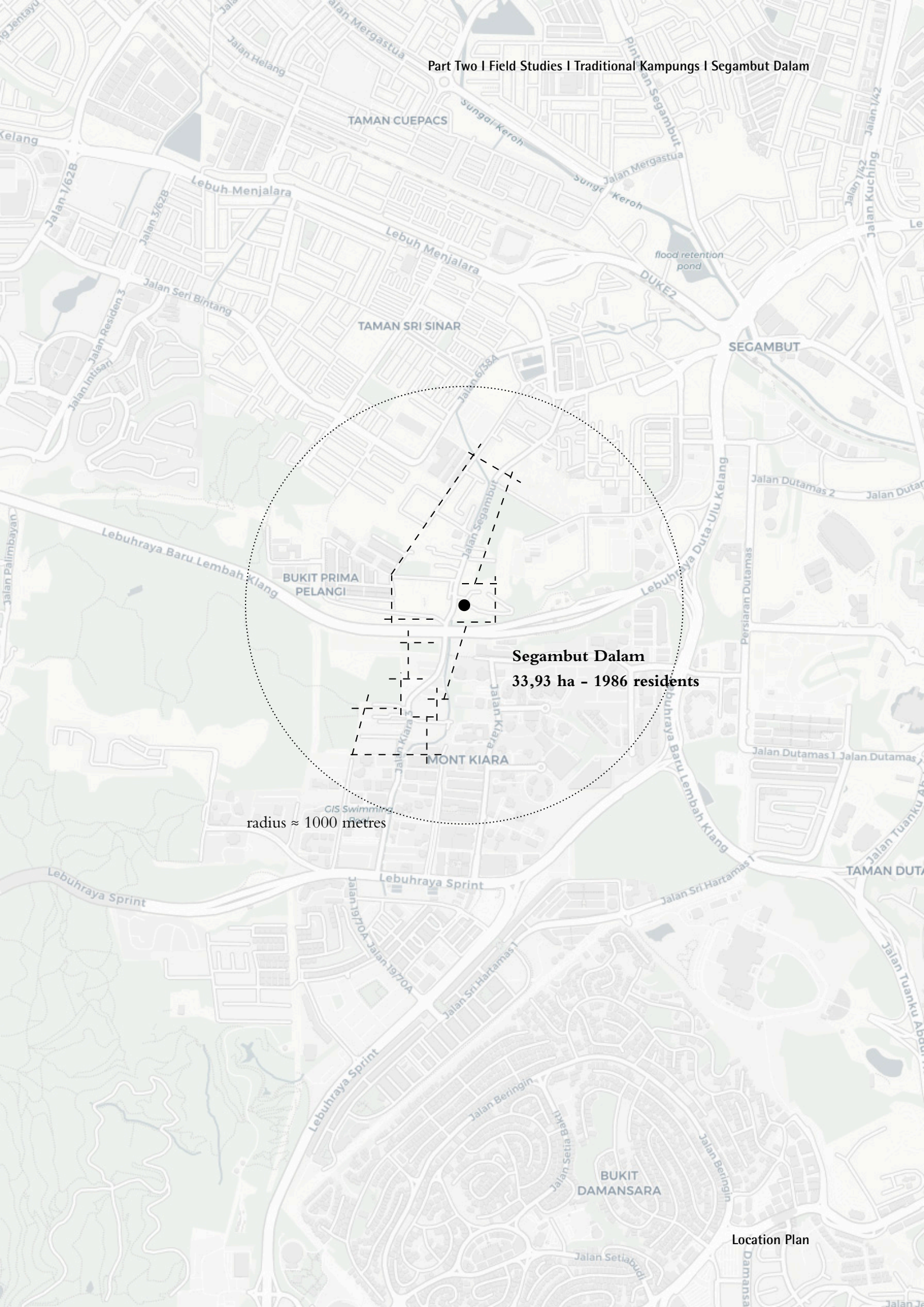
Segambut Dalam

Part Two | Field Studies | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



Segambut Dalam

Overview | Kampung within DBKL



radius \approx 1000 metres

Segambut Dalam
33,93 ha - 1986 residents



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship

25 | 25 | 50 |
100 metres



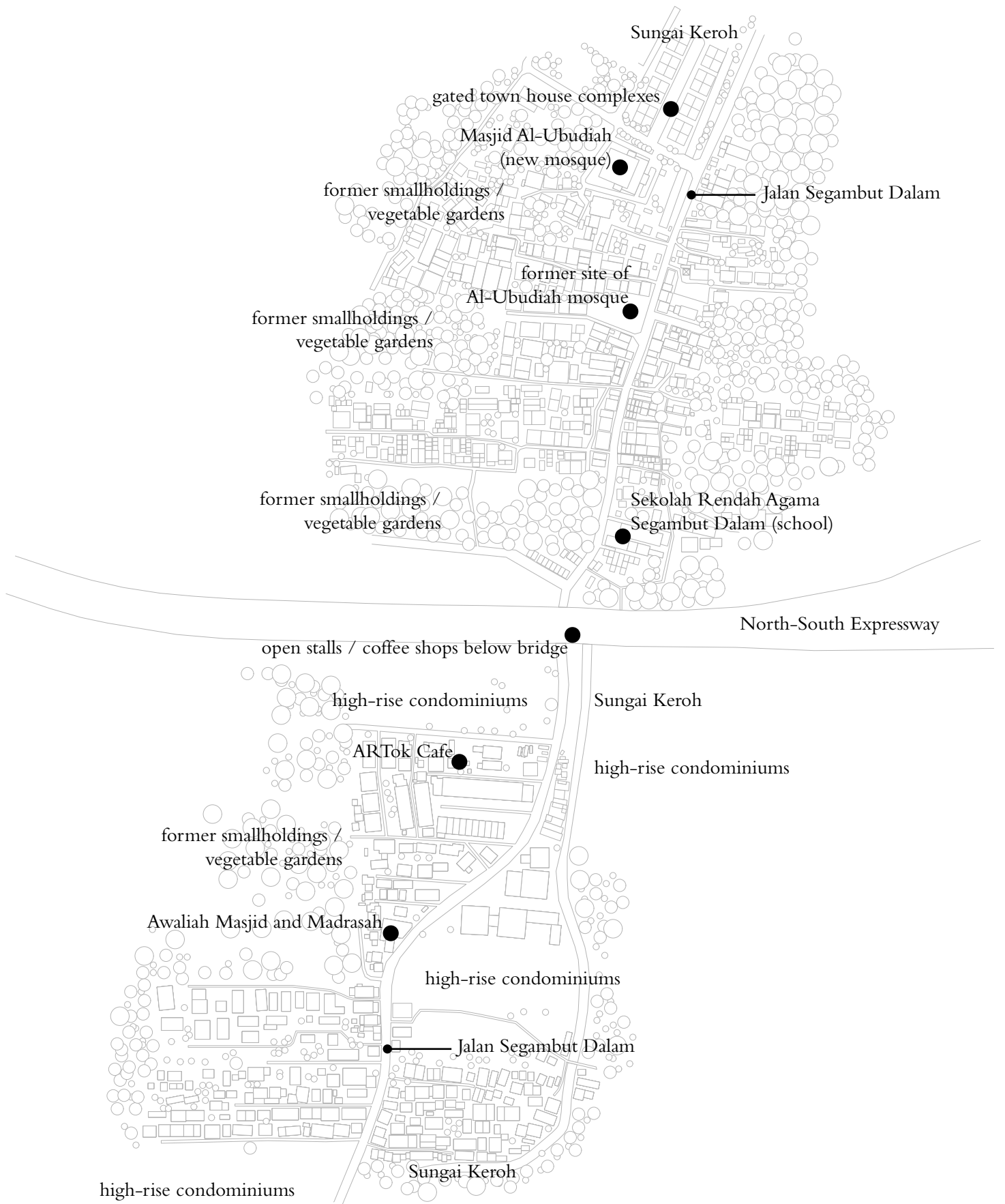




Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-11-01



P-11-02



P-11-03



P-11-04



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P-11-06

Photographs | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



P-11-07



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P-11-12

Photographs | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



P-11-13



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Photographs | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



P-11-19



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Photographs | Traditional Kampung | Segambut Dalam



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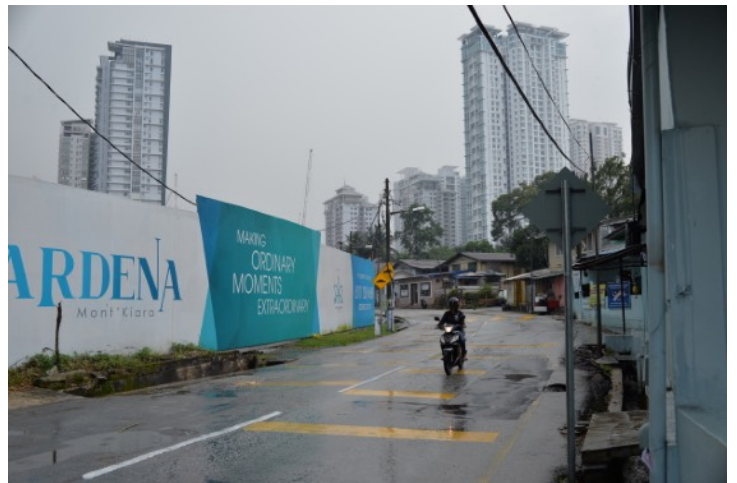
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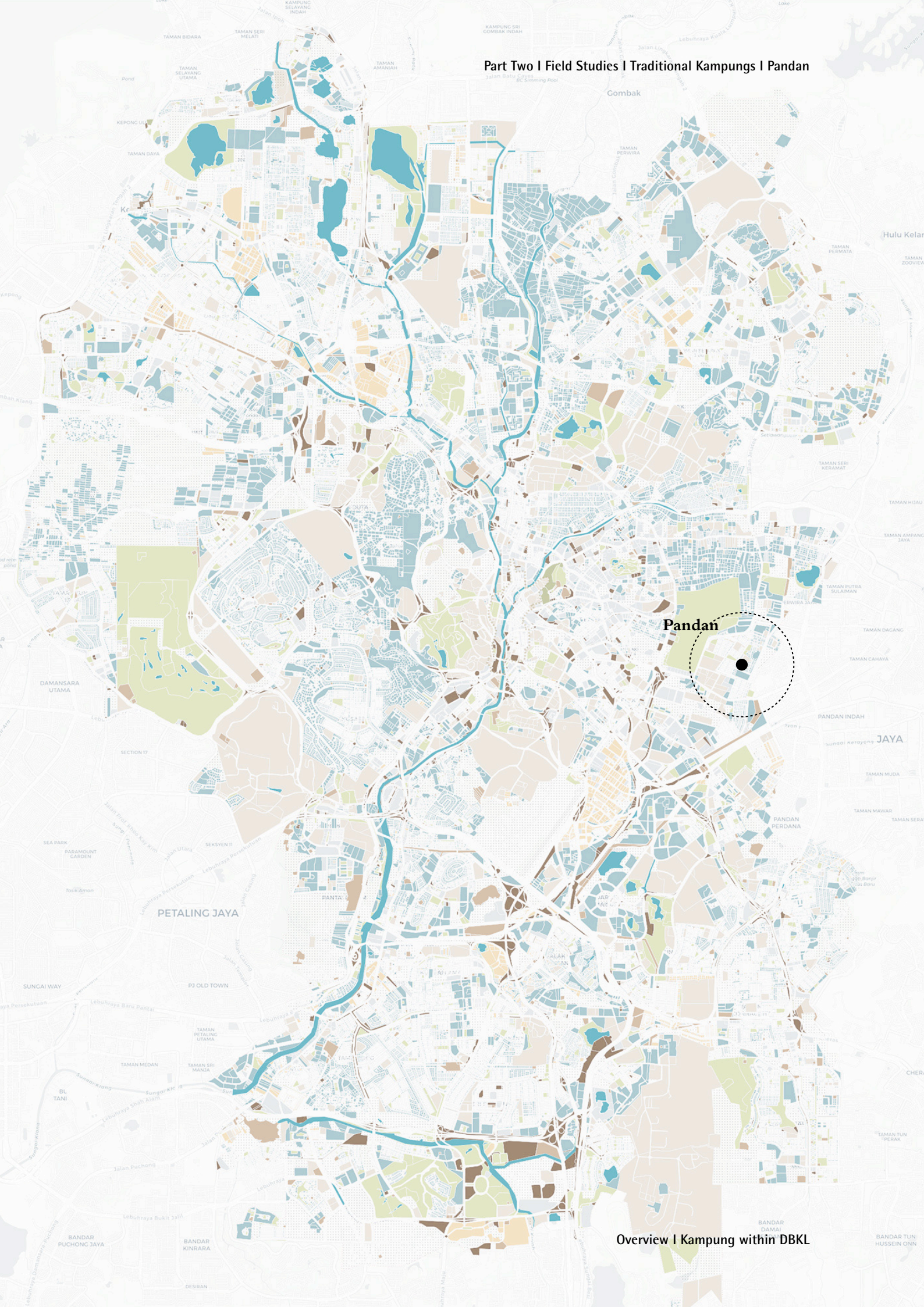


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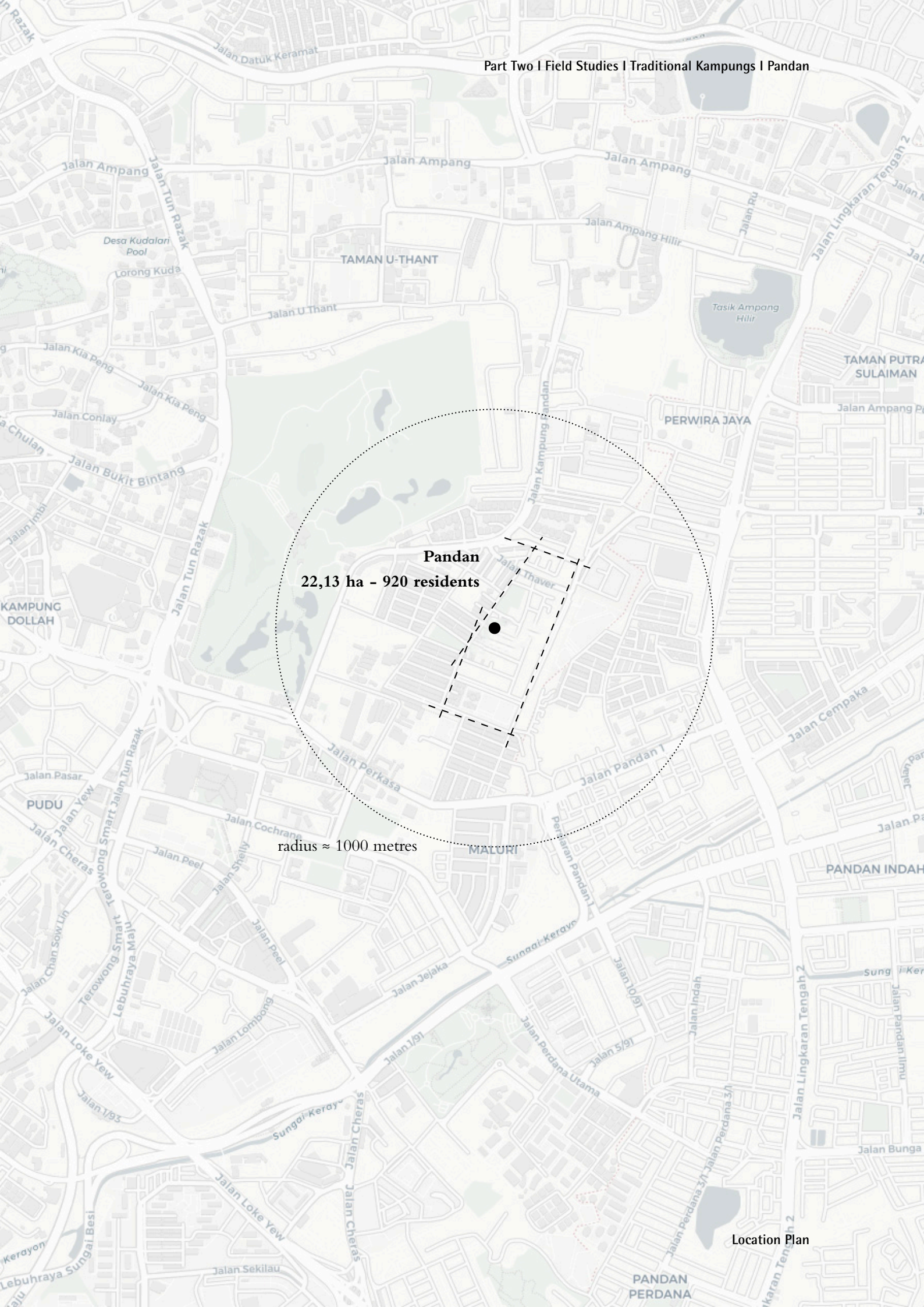


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Pandan



Pandan



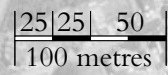
Pandan
22,13 ha - 920 residents

radius ≈ 1000 metres

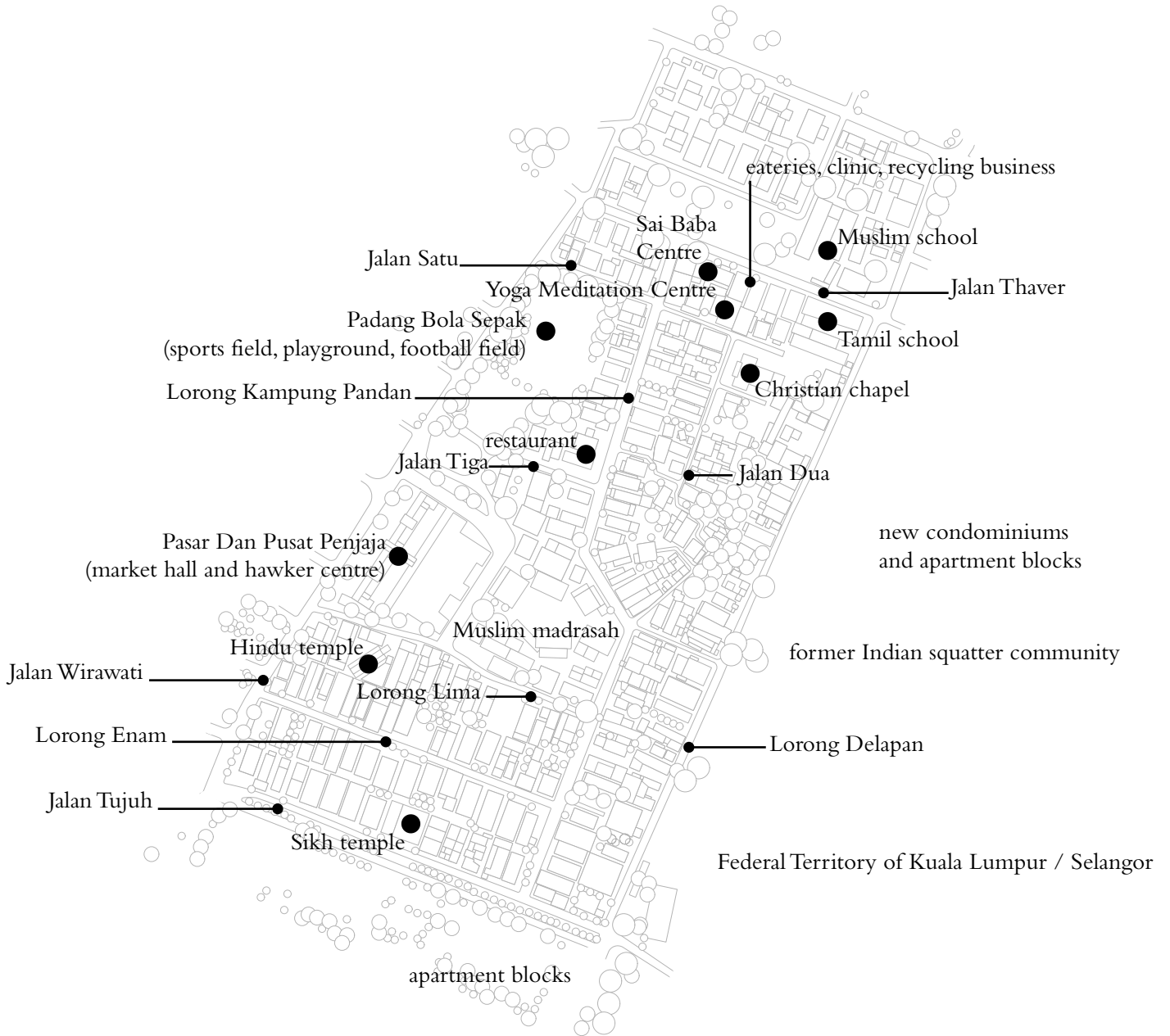
Location Plan



- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000



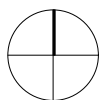
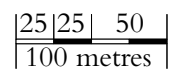


Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-12-01



P-12-02



P-12-03



P-12-04



P-12-05



P-12-06



P-12-07



P-12-08



P-12-09



P-12-10



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P-12-12



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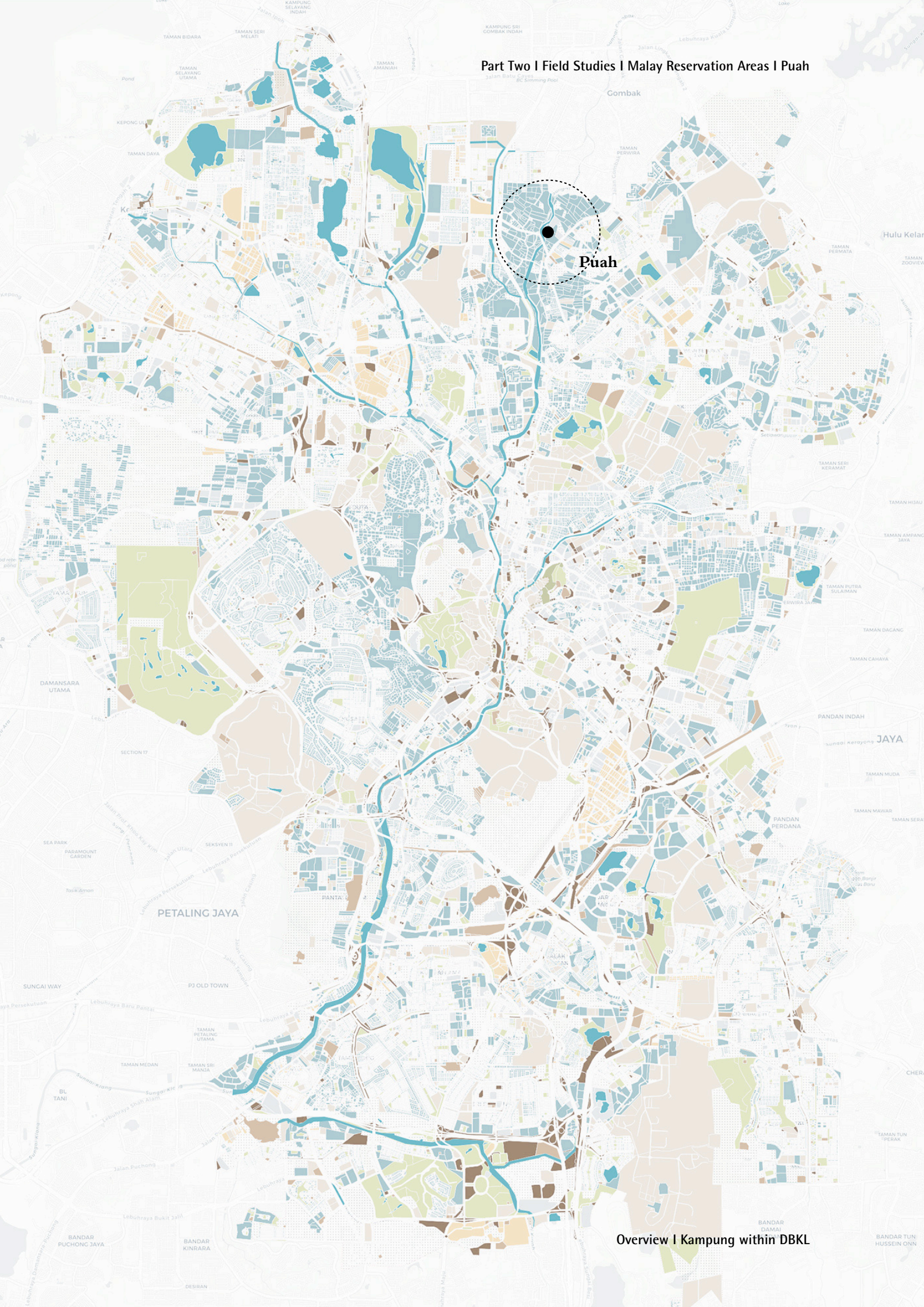
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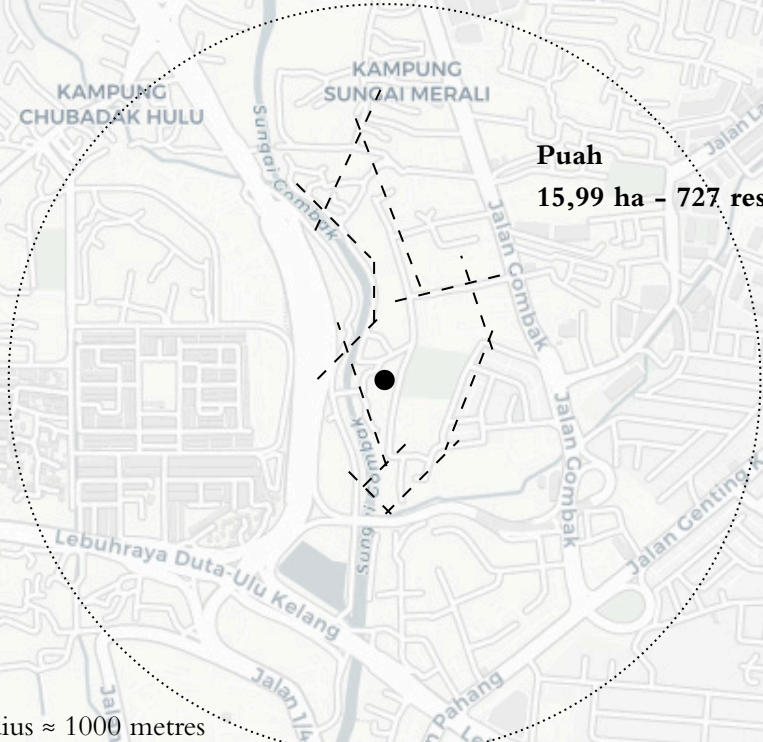
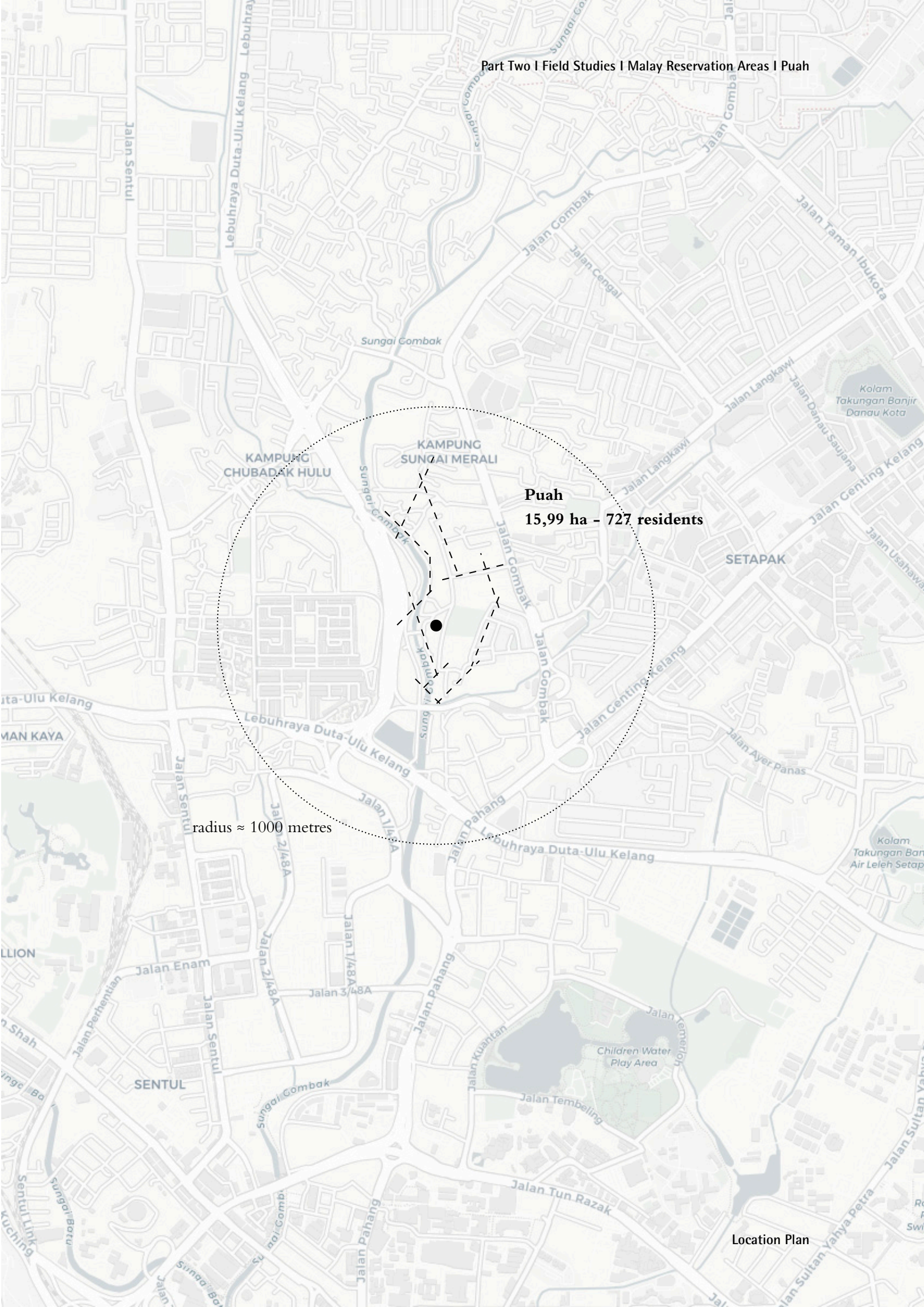
Puah

Part Two | Field Studies | Malay Reservation Areas | PuaH



PuaH

Overview | Kampung within DBKL

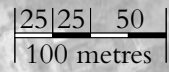


radius \approx 1000 metres

Puah
15,99 ha - 727 residents

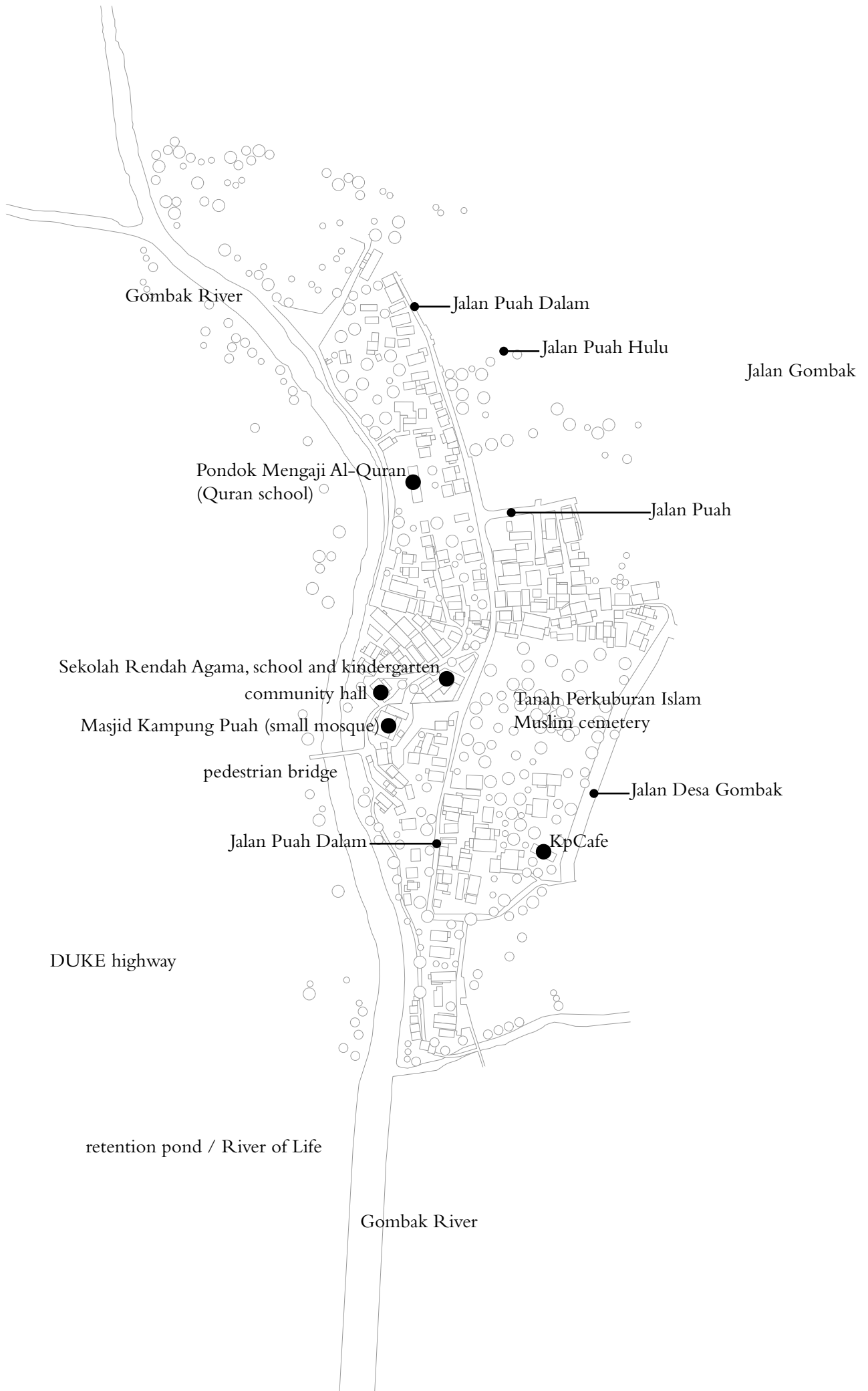
Location Plan

- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000





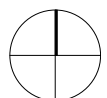
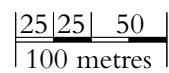


Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-21-01



P-21-01



P-21-01



P-21-01



P-21-01



P-21-01

Photographs | Malay Reservation Areas | Puah



P-21-13



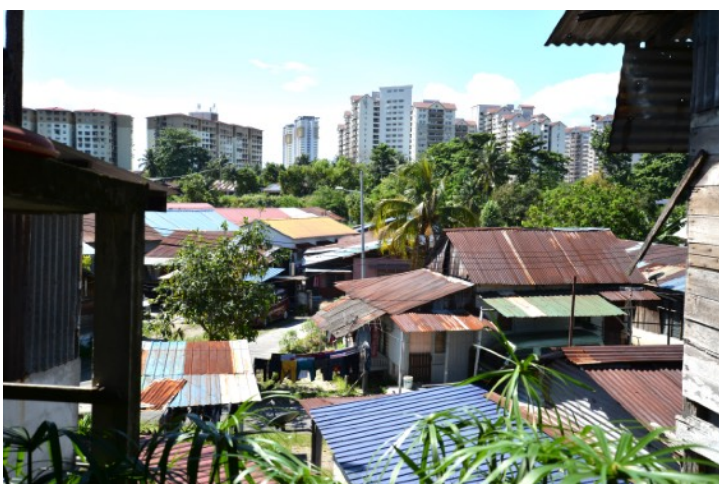
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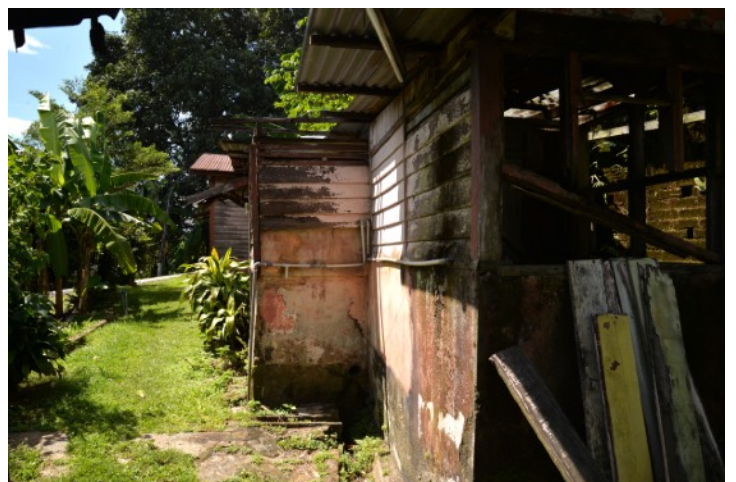
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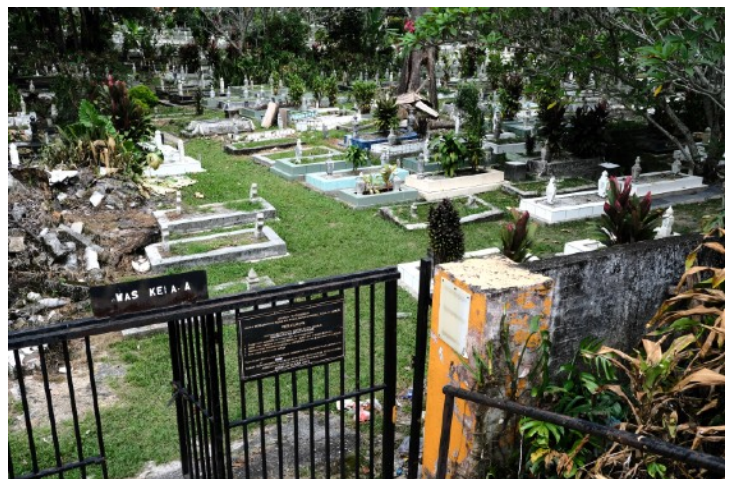
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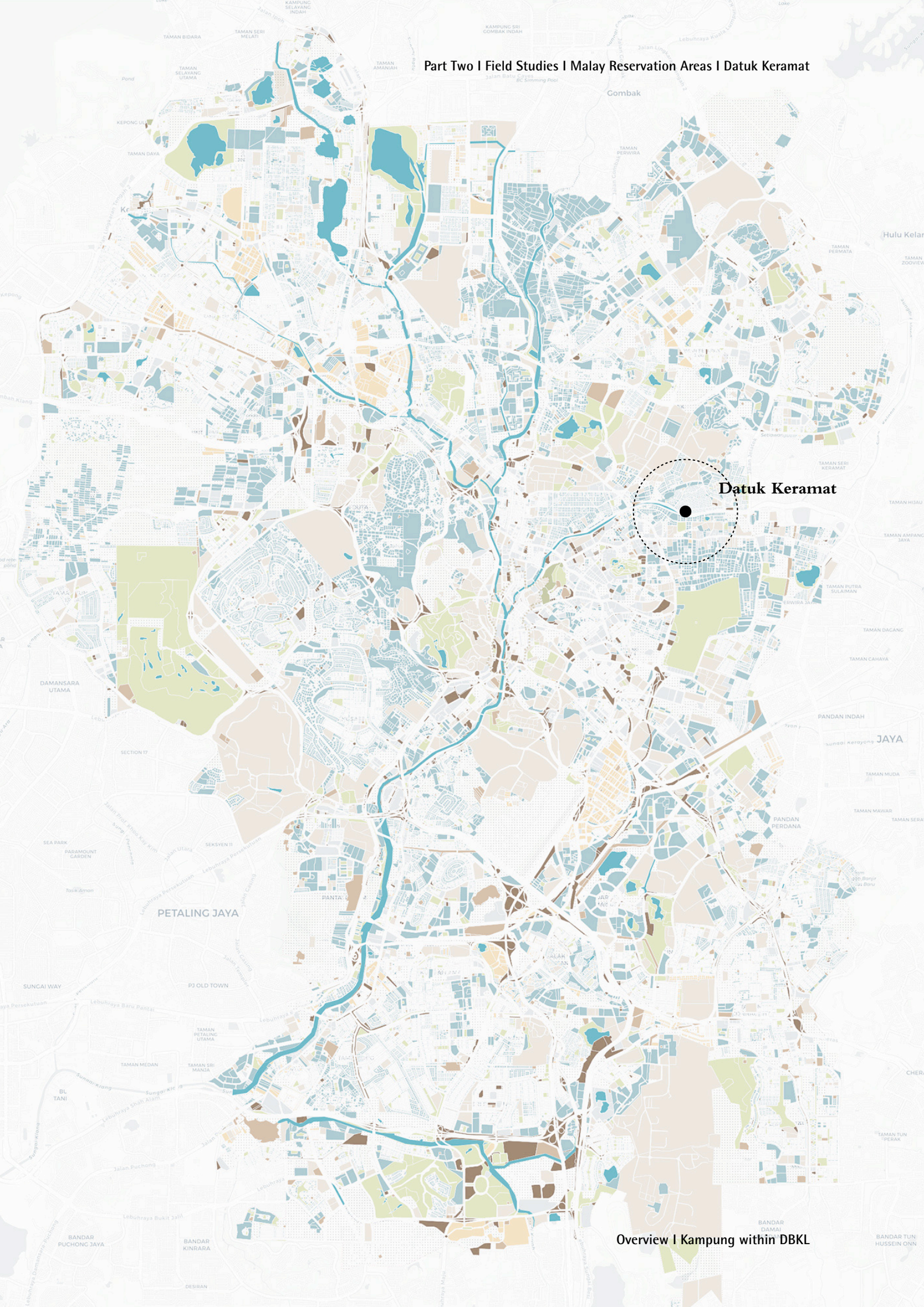
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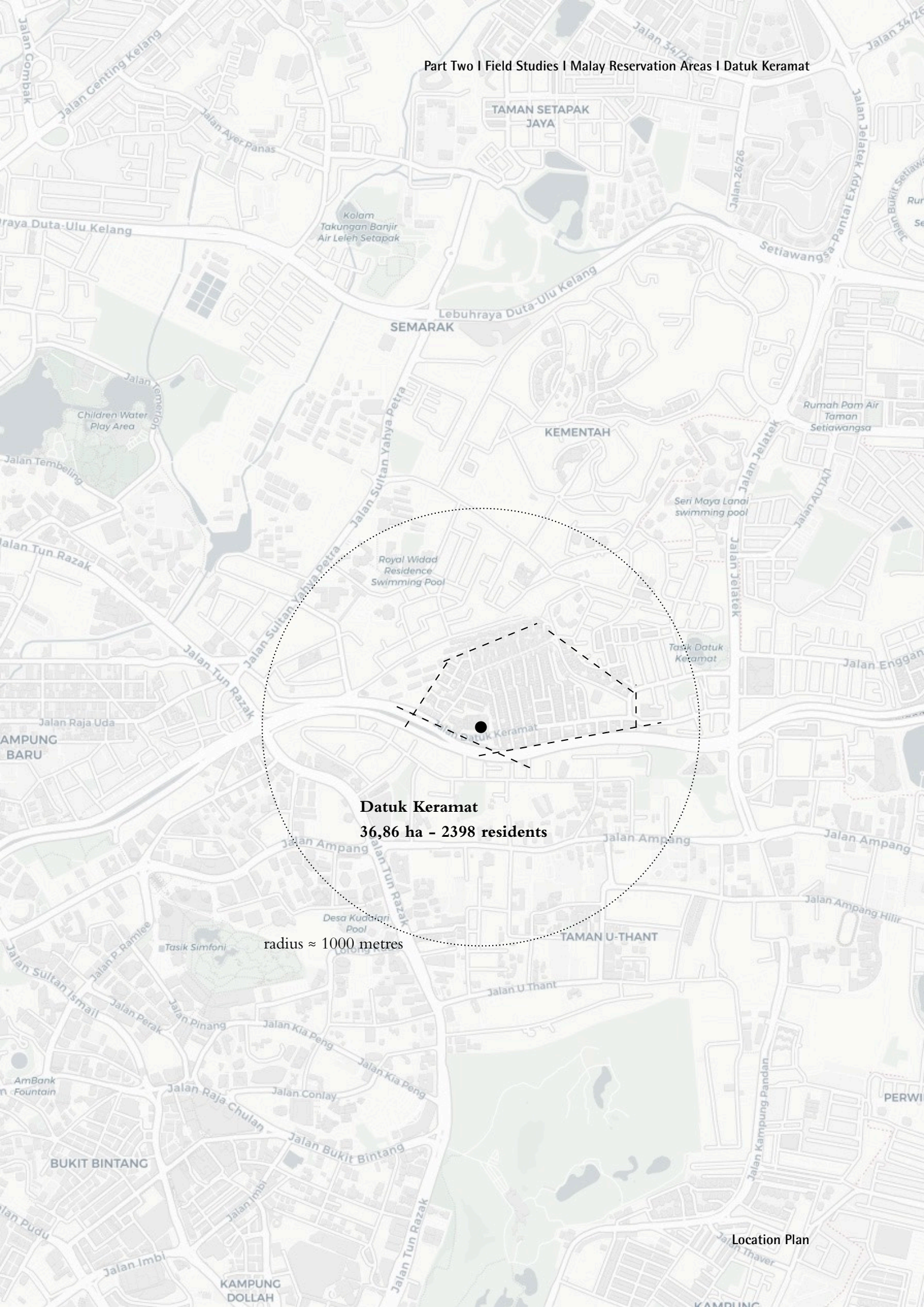
Datuk Keramat

Part Two | Field Studies | Malay Reservation Areas | Datuk Keramat



Datuk Keramat

Overview | Kampung within DBKL



Datuk Keramat
36,86 ha - 2398 residents

radius \approx 1000 metres

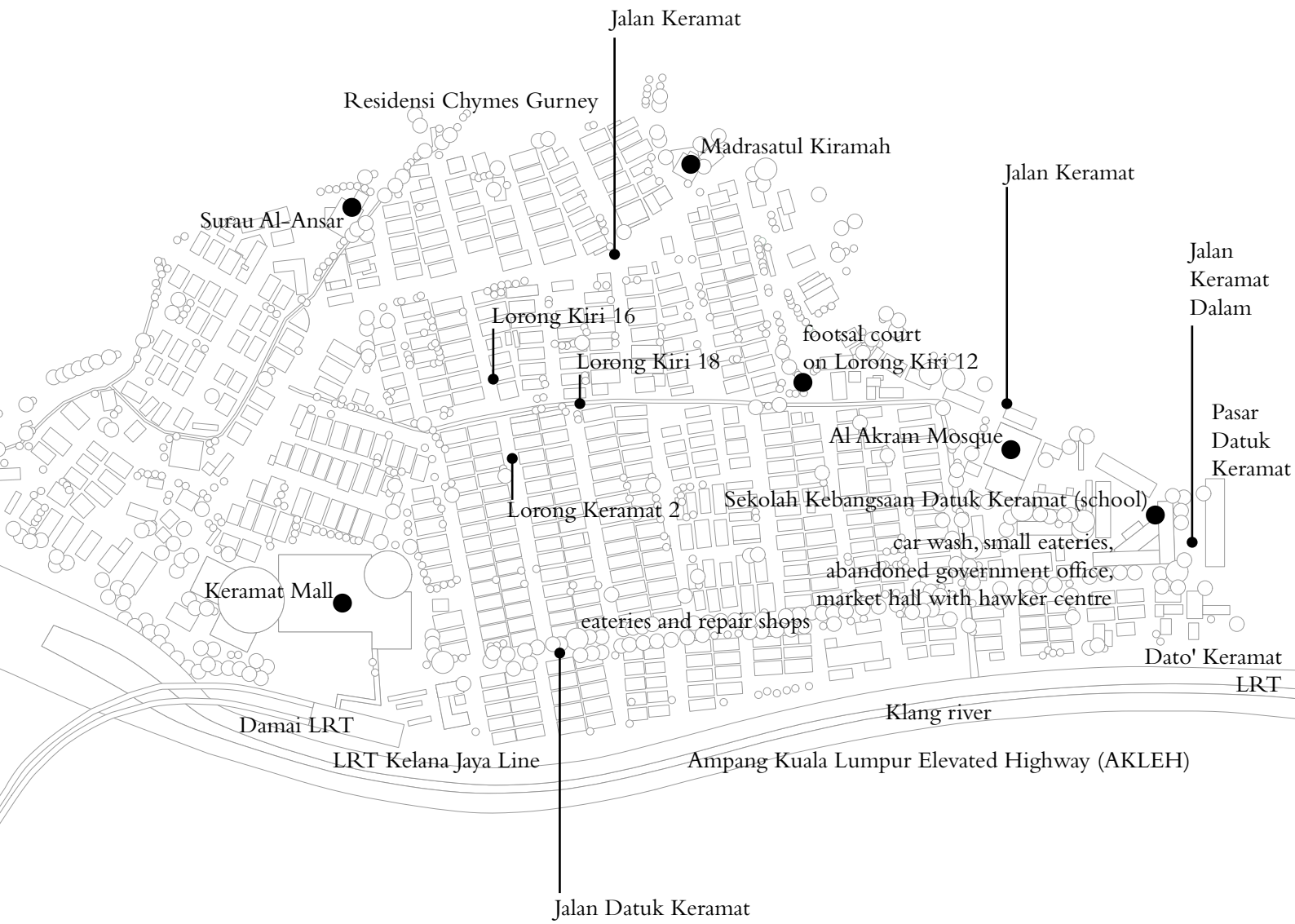


- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship

25 | 25 | 50 |
100 metres



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000



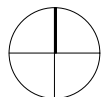
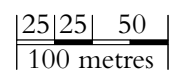
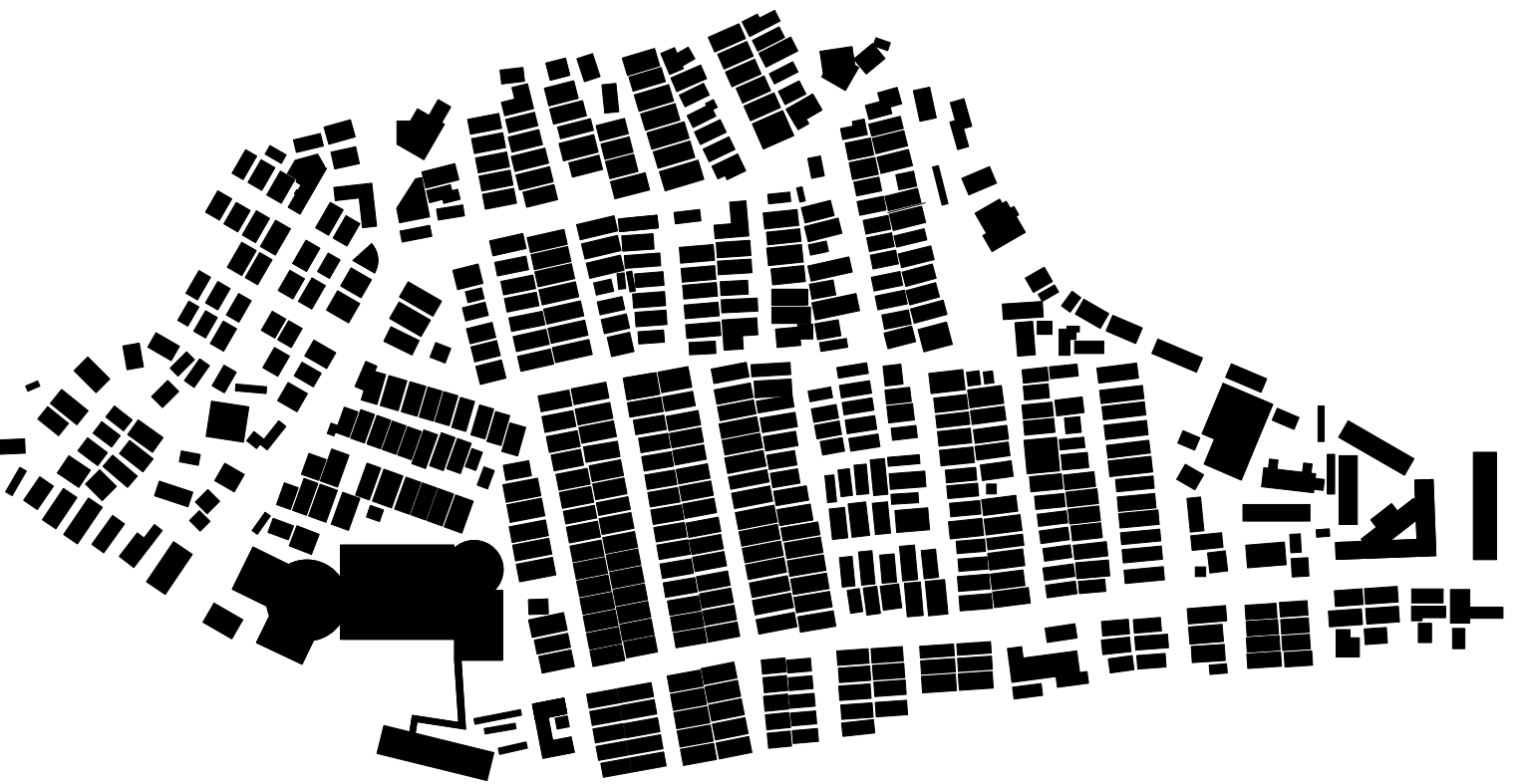


Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-22-01



P-22-02



P-22-03



P-22-04



P-22-05



P-22-06



P-22-07



P-22-08



P-22-09



P-22-10



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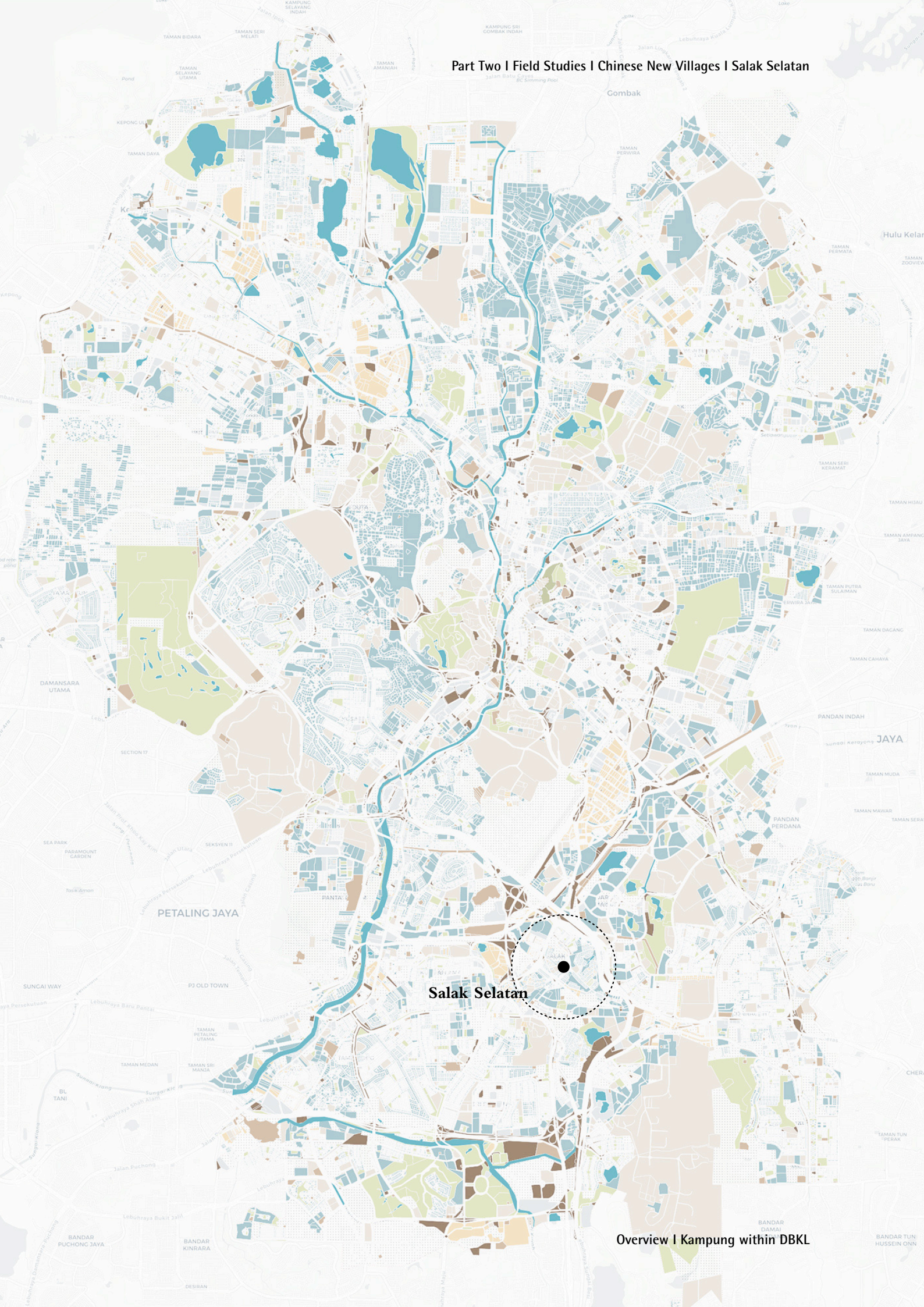
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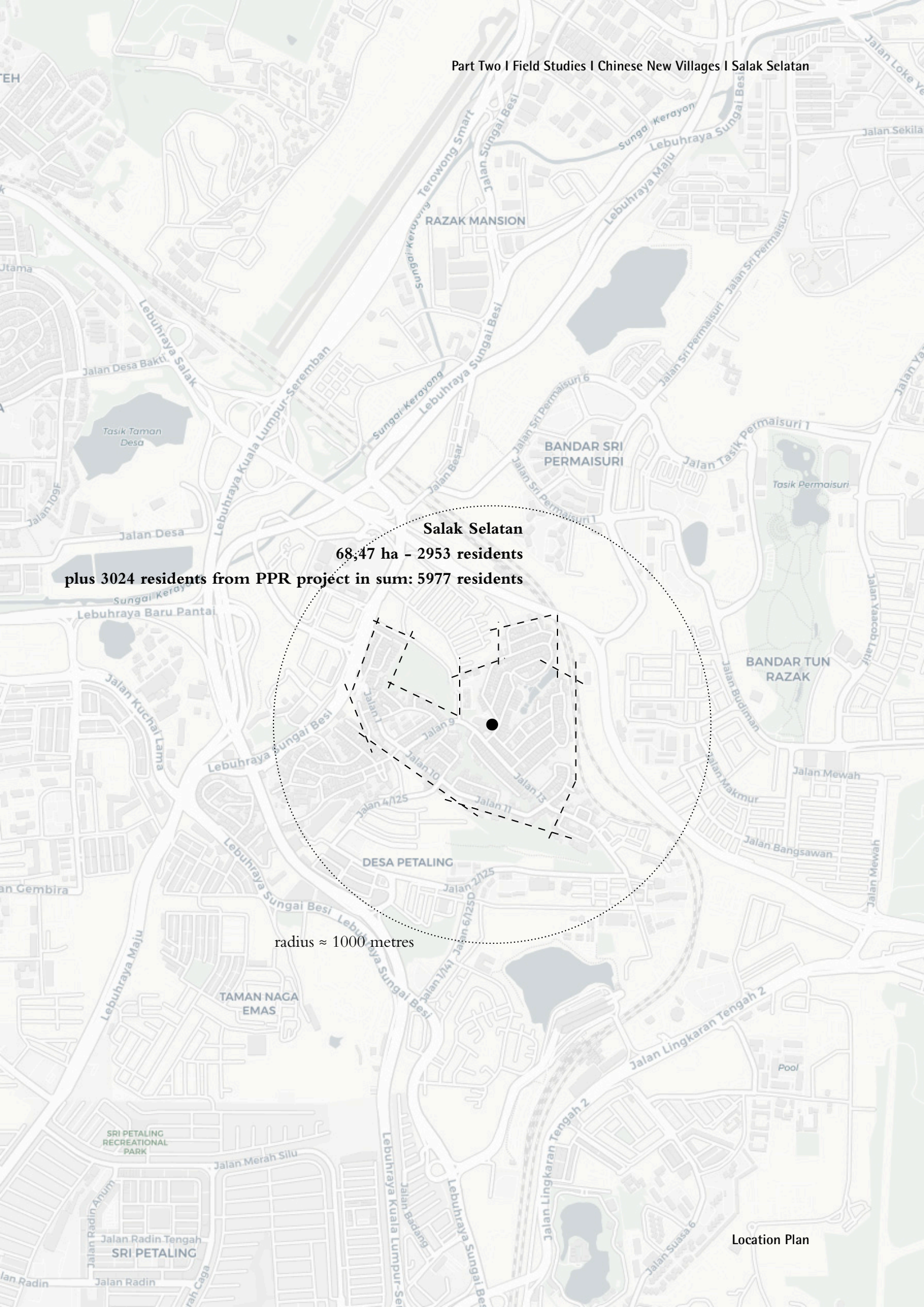
Salak Selatan

Part Two | Field Studies | Chinese New Villages | Salak Selatan



Salak Selatan





Overview | Kampung within DBKL



Salak Selatan
68,47 ha - 2953 residents
plus 3024 residents from PPR project in sum: 5977 residents

radius \approx 1000 metres



-  residential
-  mixed use / commercial
-  education
-  places of worship

25 | 25 | 50
100 metres



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

Salak Expressway

Kuala Lumpur–Seremban Expressway

KTM commuter



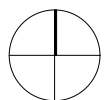
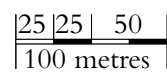


Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-31-01



P-31-02



P-31-03



P-31-04



P-31-05



P-31-06



P-31-07



P-31-08



P-31-09



P-31-10



P-31-11



P-31-12



P-31-13



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P-31-16



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P-31-18

Photographs | Chinese New Villages | Salak Selatan



P-31-19



P-31-20



P-31-21



P-31-22



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P-31-24



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P-31-26



P-31-27



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P-31-29



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P-31-31



P-31-32



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P-31-36



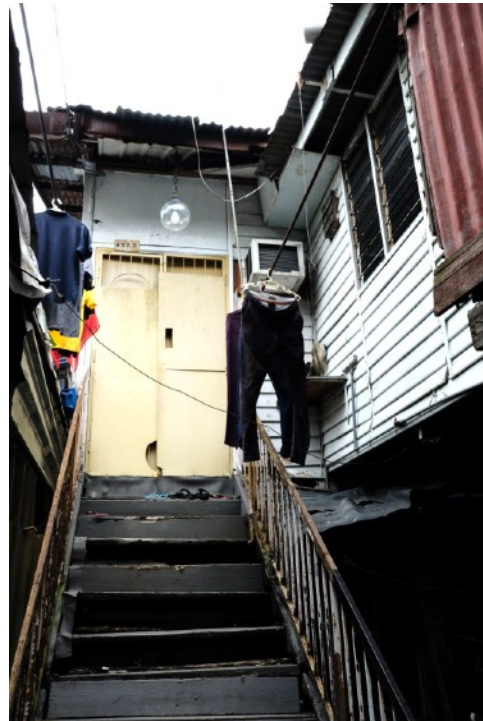
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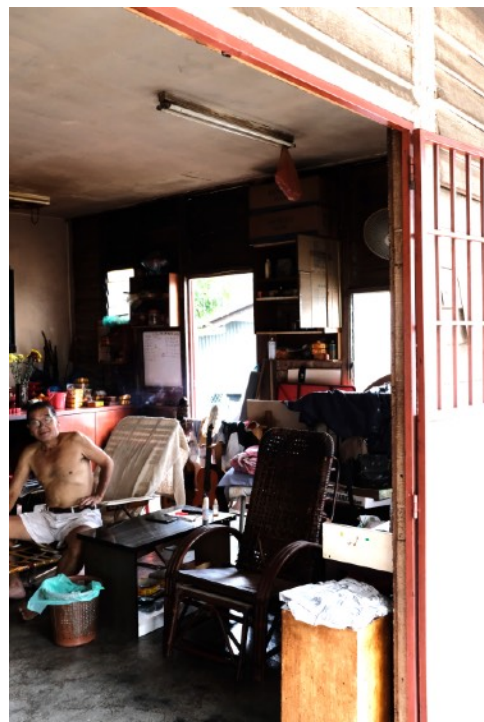
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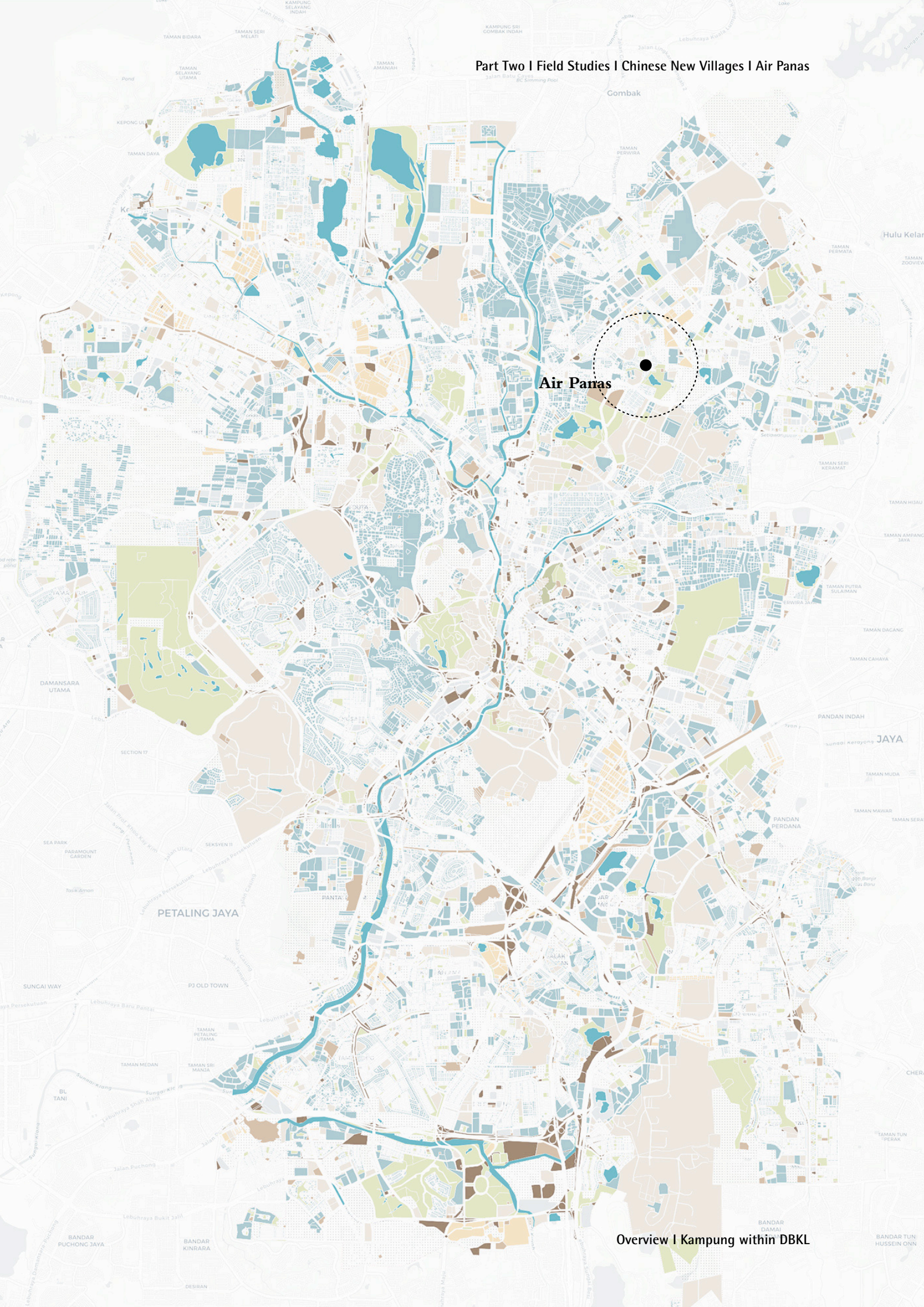


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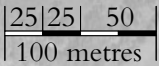
Air Panas



Air Panas

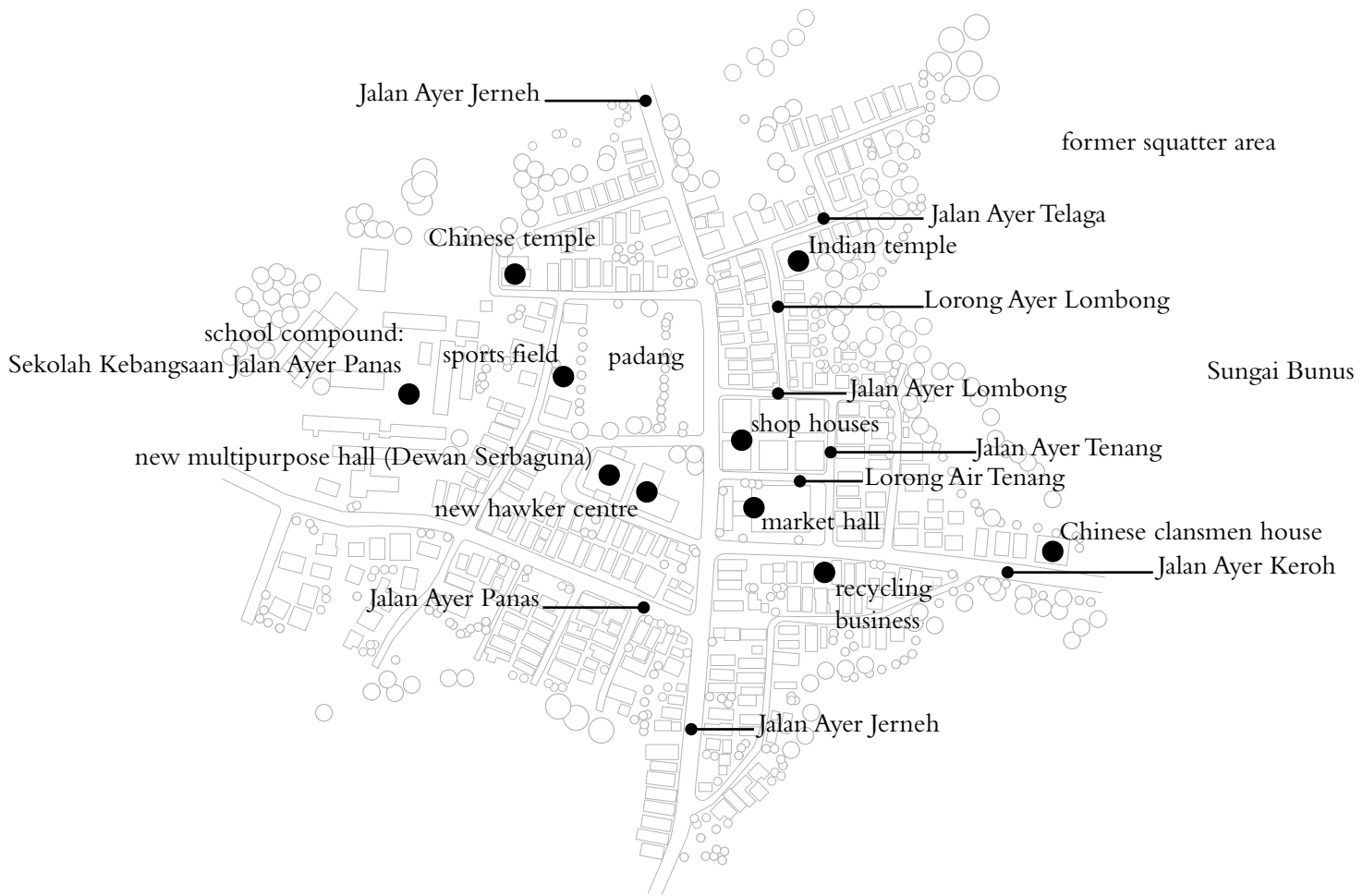


- residential
- mixed use / commercial
- education
- places of worship



Site Plan | Scale 1:5000

Jalan Genting Kelang



Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway (DUKE)

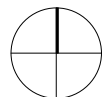
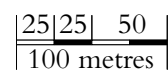


Figure-Ground Plan | Scale 1:5000



P-32-01



P-32-02



P-32-03



P-32-04



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P-32-08



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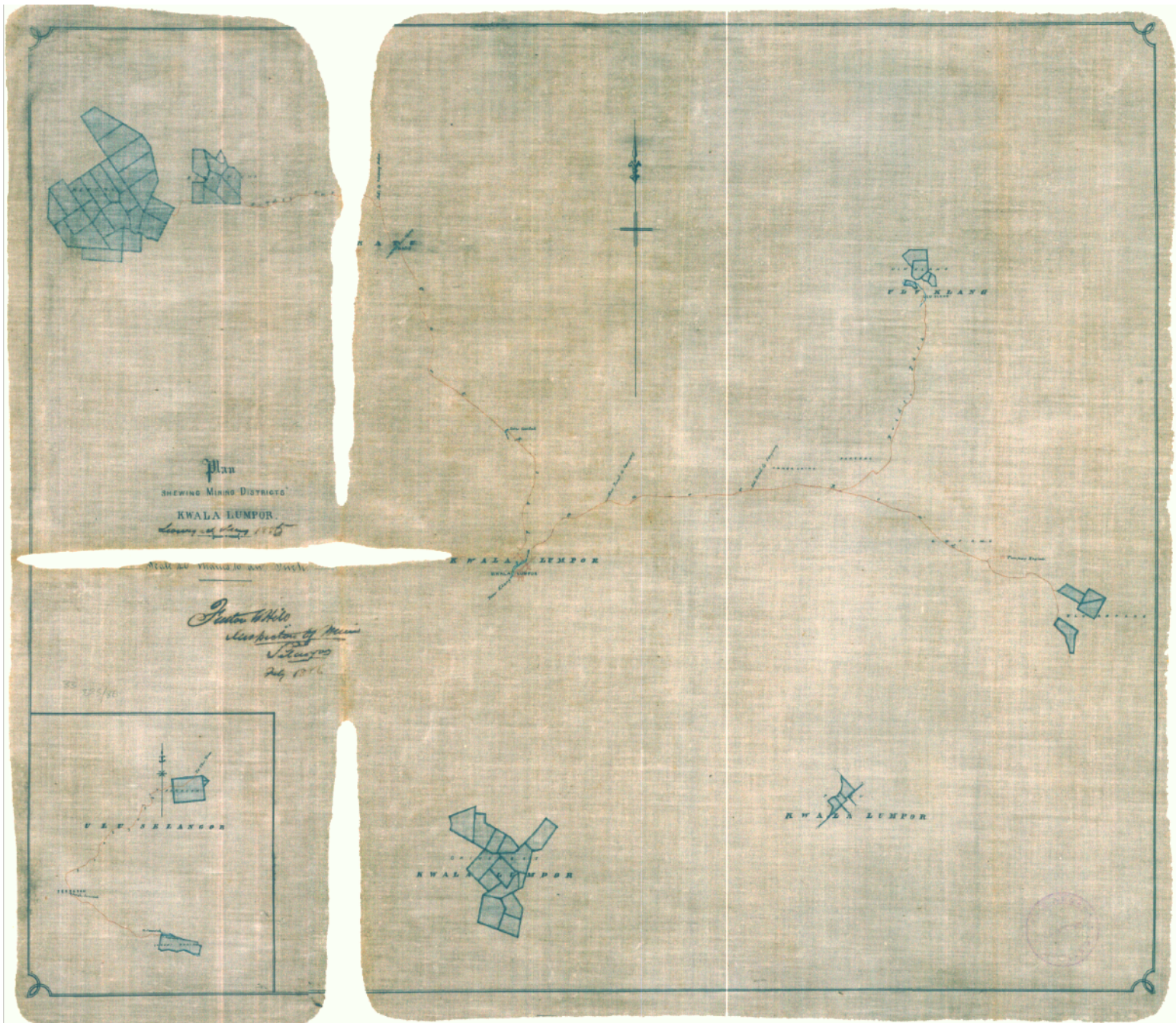


Figure 1

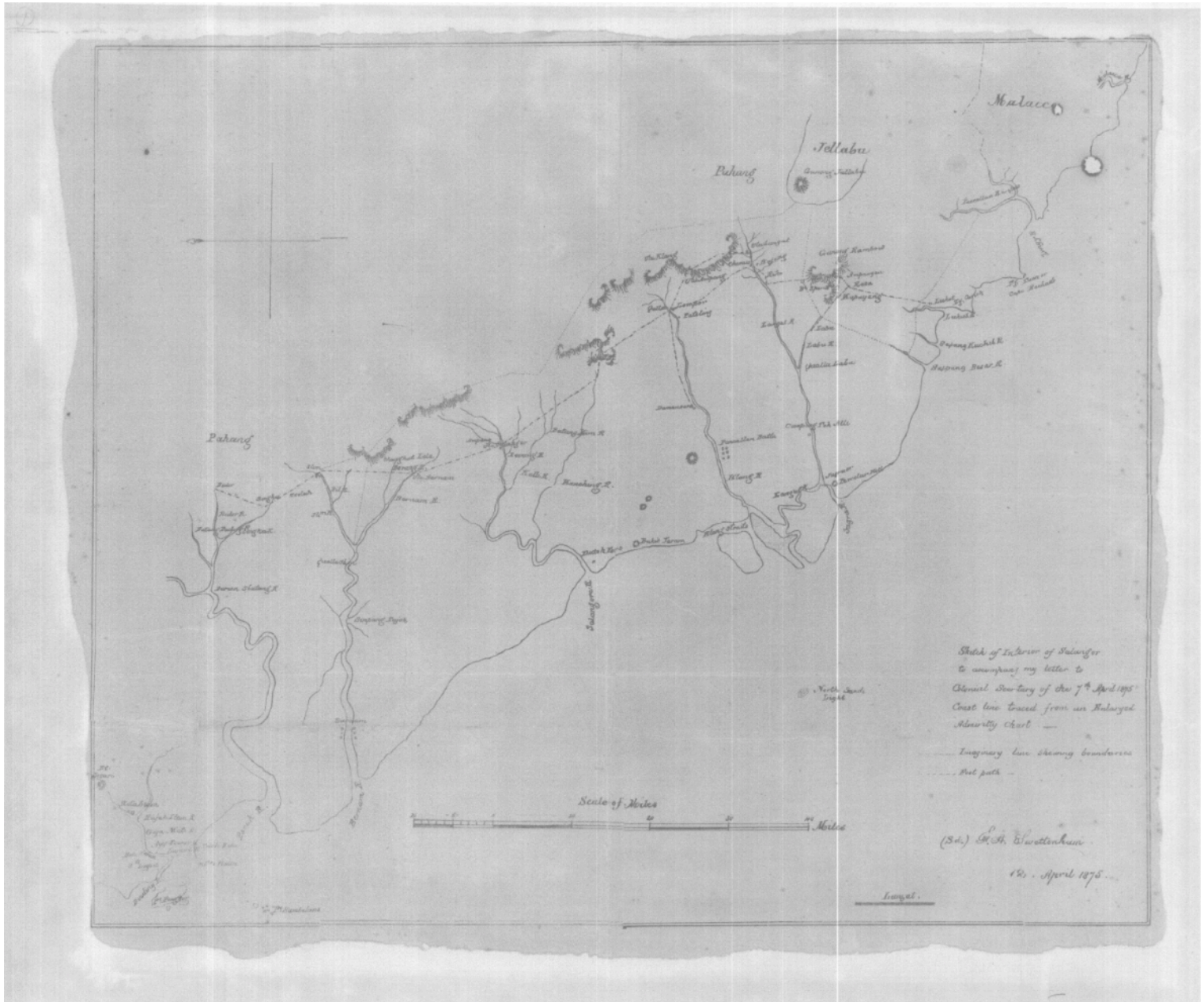


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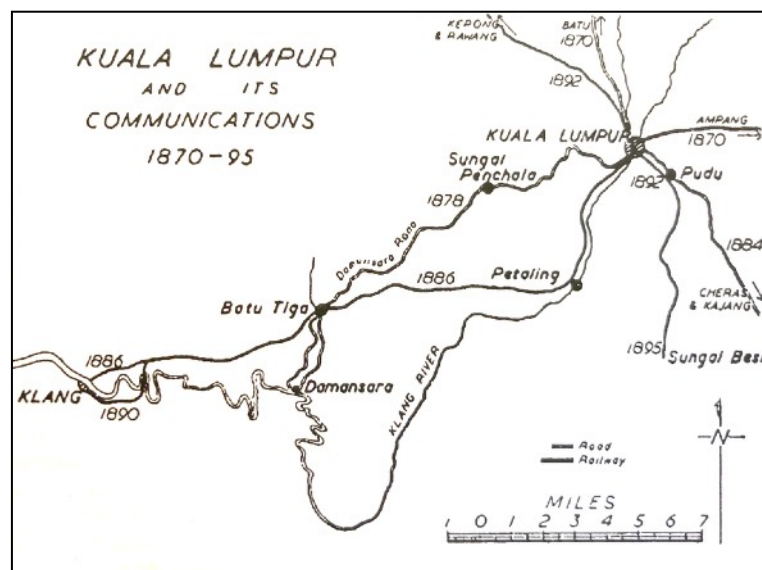


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

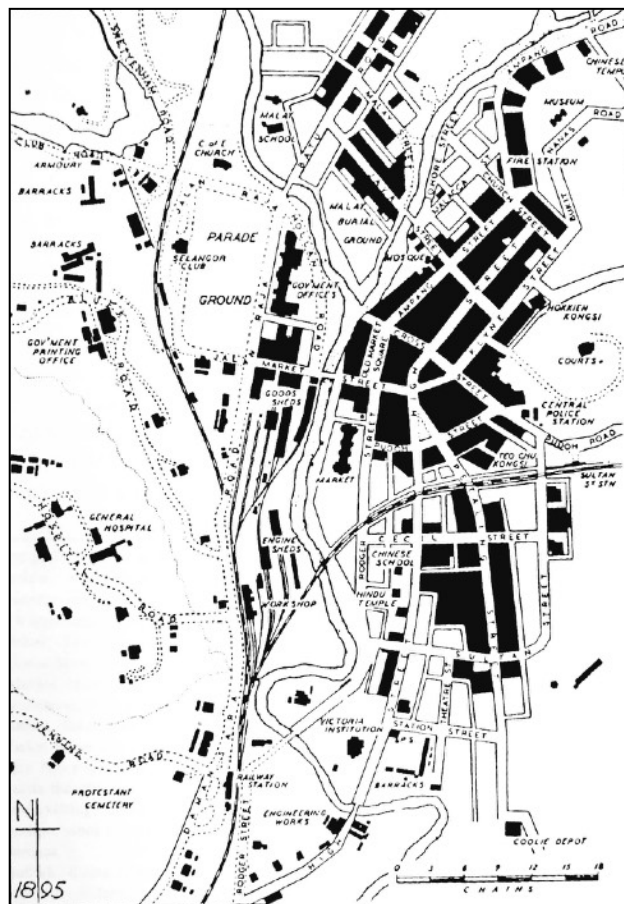


Figure 7



Figure 8

TAN CHAY YAN

FIRST RUBBER PLANTER IN MALAYA

Tan Chay Yan (1817-1916), born and educated in Malacca, was the **first rubber planter in Malaya**. At the age of 20, he inherited a successful tapioca farm at **Bukit Lintang** near Malacca from his father Tan Teck Guan, who was Tan Tock Seng's youngest son. He soon joined the Malacca Municipal Commission and at 24 became a Justice of the Peace, following in his father and grandfather's footsteps. A founding member of the **Straits Chinese British Association**, he also served as president of its branch in Malacca.



In 1896, Tan met with his close friend **Henry Ridley**, who was then the director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Ridley was eager to promote a new crop, rubber, and offered him some free seedlings. Encouraged by another Singaporean pioneer **Lim Boon Keng** and convinced of the amazing possibilities that rubber as a cash crop could provide, Tan Chay Yan decided to invest.

With Ridley's seedlings of the indigenous Rambong (*Ficus elastica*) and the untested, imported **Para rubber tree** (*Hevea brasiliensis*), he started the first rubber plantation in Malaya on 40 acres of his Malacca property, becoming the first Asian rubber plantation owner.



A few years of experimentation proved the crop to be a success, and he commenced planting on a large scale. By 1898 he was operating a 3,000-acre estate at Bukit Asahan, and had exhibited the first sheet of Malayan-grown rubber at a horticultural show in Malacca. Tan's Para rubber won a gold medal at the 1903 Hanoi Exposition, and Malacca soon shipped its first 1000 pounds of rubber. By 1905, the 4000-acre (about three-quarters the size of Tempon's) Bukit Asahan estate had become the **world's largest Hevea plantation**.



Tan Chay Yan was a pioneer and great advocate of the rubber industry in Malaya. He generously shared his rubber seeds to convince planters, who were still resistant to the new crop of its value. It was said that he would carry rubber seeds in his pockets all the time, and fish out the seeds and give them away when he met people. He also hosted demonstrations of new latex manufacture processes at his estate, to share industry expertise with other planters.

Even though he was based in Malacca, Tan Chay Yan visited Singapore often to encourage his friends to take up rubber planting. In 1896, he expanded his enterprise to Singapore by establishing the 3,800-acre Sembawang Rubber Plantations with **Lim Boon Keng** and **Lee Choon Guan**, Serangoon Rubber Plantations as well as the Tempon's Para and Coconut Plantations.

Tan's plantations were acquired by **Bukit Sembawang Rubber Company** and **Singapore United Rubber Estates**, and by 1920 Bukit Sembawang had consolidated a staggering total of 20,000 acres of rubber planting estates, stretching from **Jurong and Woodlands to Punggol, Yio Chu Kang and Changi**.

Tan Chay Yan comes from a long line of philanthropists, the most famous being his grandfather **Tan Tock Seng**. Like his grandfather and father, Tan used his fortune to support medicine and education. He donated \$15,000 to the Straits and Federated Malay States Medical School (later King Edward VII College of Medicine) in 1911, for offices, a library, museum and classrooms. The building was named after his father, **Tan Teck Guan**, and today survives as a National Monument within the Singapore General Hospital. There is also a street named after him in the heritage district of Tiong Bahru.





In 1948, Tan Chay Yan's son, **Robert Tan Hoon Siang**, produced a hybrid orchid which he named after his father, **Vanda Tan Chay Yan**, which has been reclassified as *Papilionanda Tan Chay Yan* in 2013, was grown at the Singapore Botanic Gardens and went on to win many prizes at international flower shows. Today, you can find the rare salmon pink orchid at the National Orchid Garden.



This information for this story board was kindly provided by the Preservation of Sites and Monuments, NHB. This storyboard was jointly unveiled on 27 July 2014 by His Indraneel Rajah, Adviser to Tanjong-Pagar Tiong Bahru, and the descendants of Tan Tock Seng.

Images courtesy of National Museum of Singapore (1, 4); National Archives of Singapore (2); Bukit Sembawang Estates Ltd (3); Preservation of Sites and Monuments (5, 6); Singapore Botanic Gardens (7).

Preparation of Sites and Monuments, National Heritage Board



Figure 9

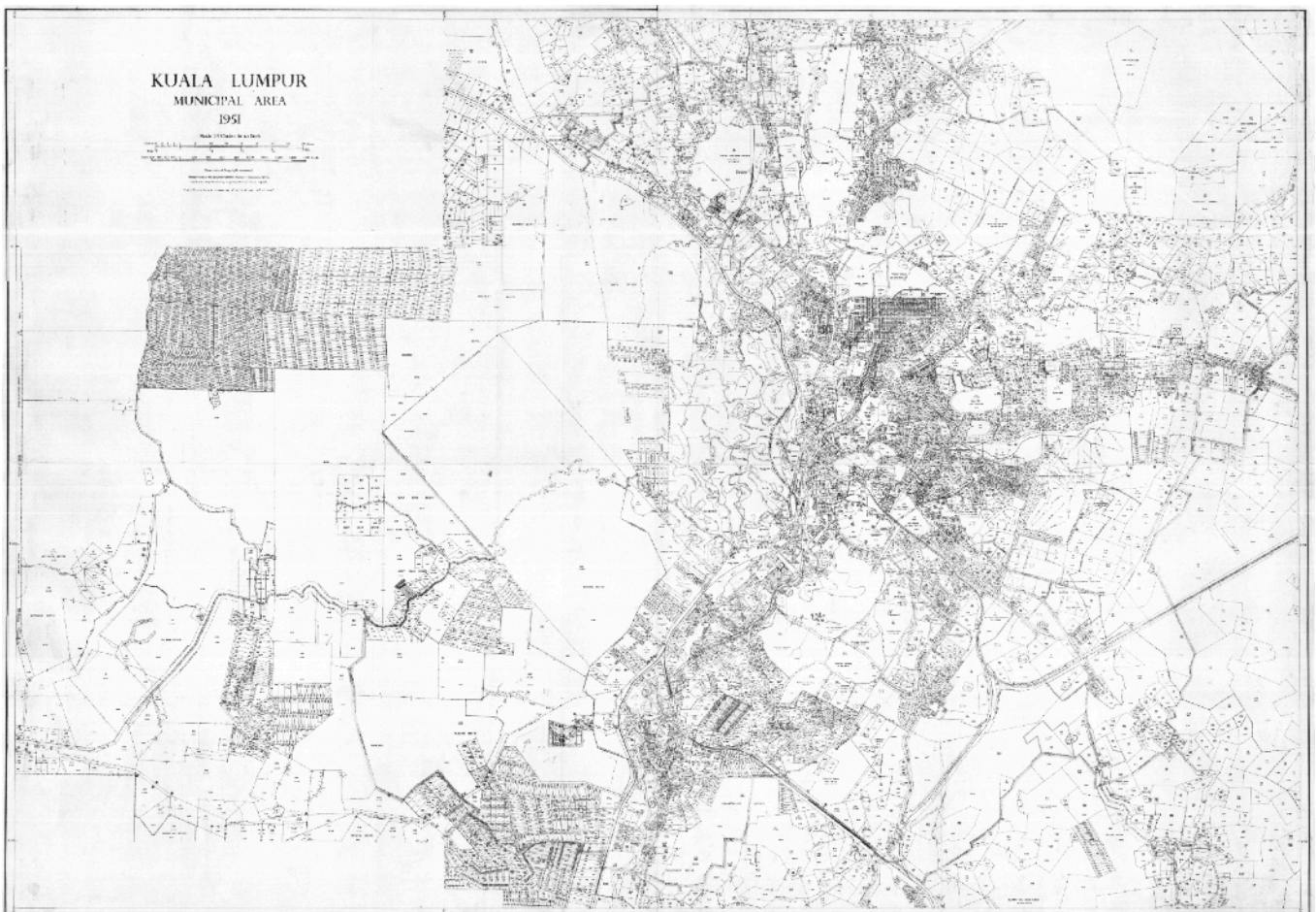


Figure 10

Figure 11

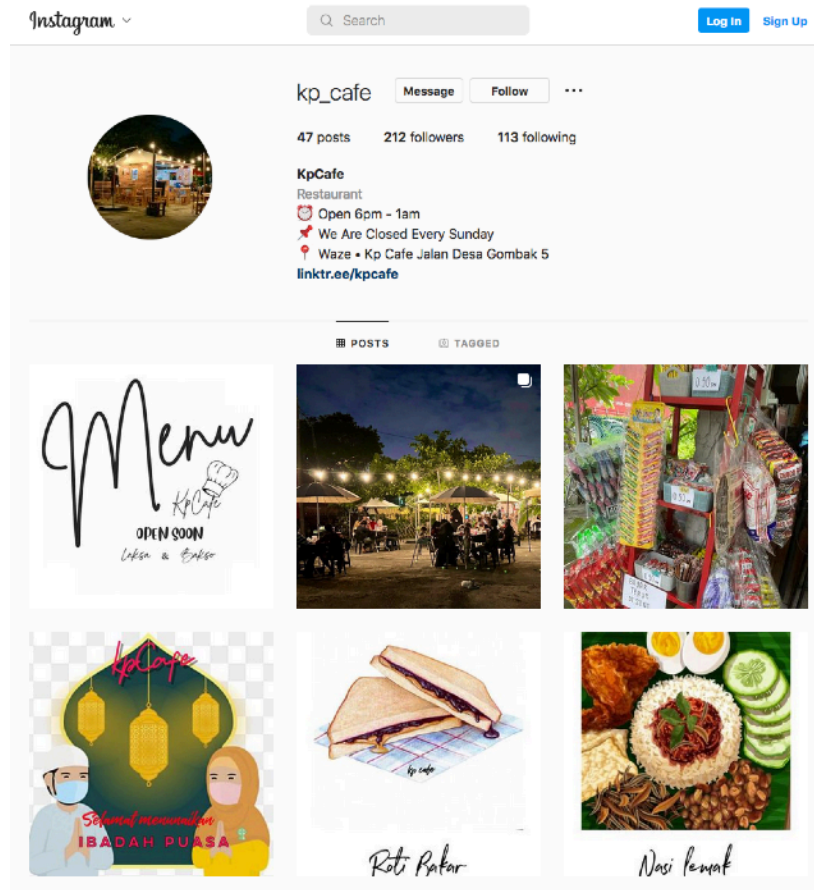


Figure 12



Figure 13



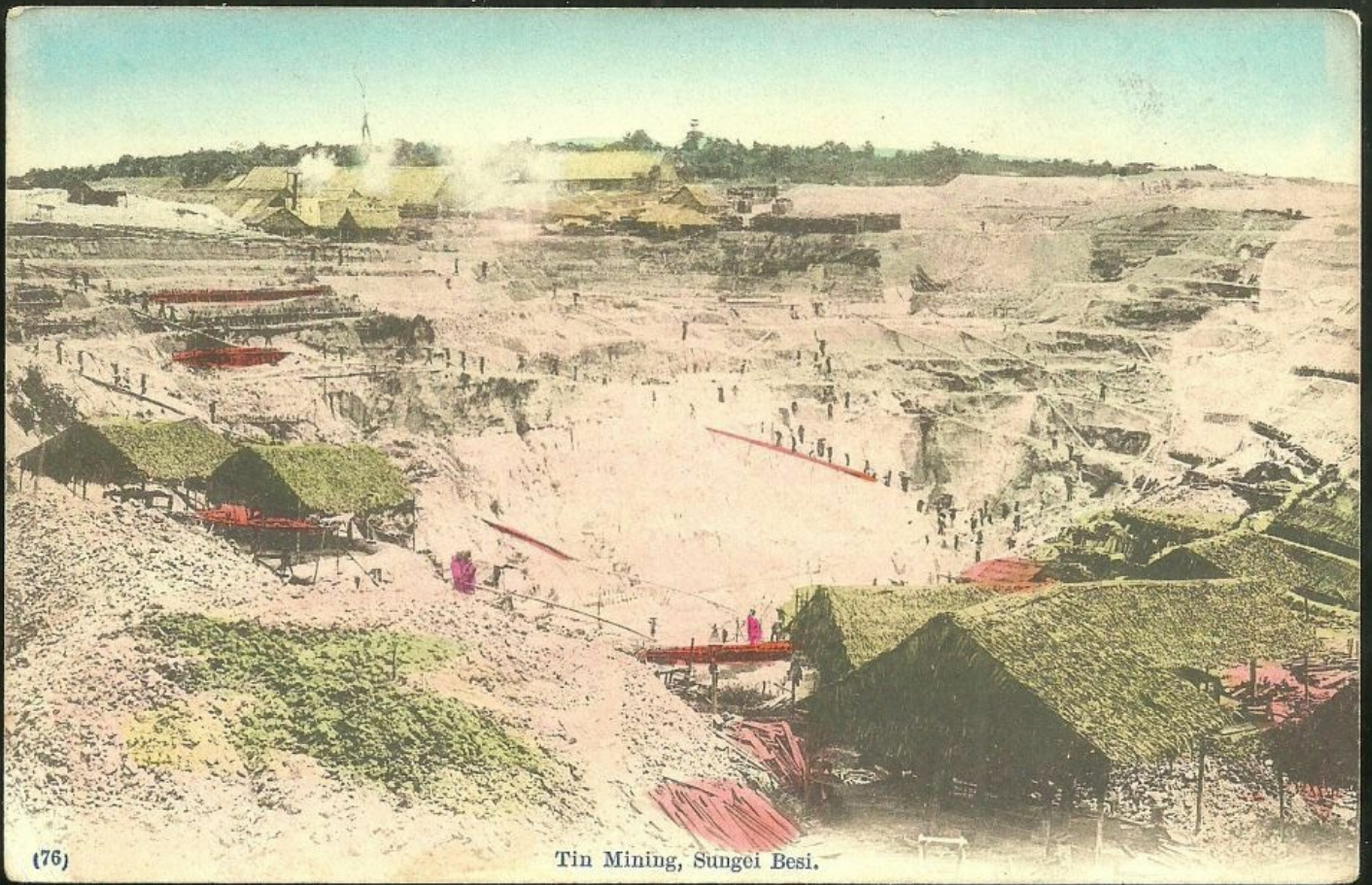


Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

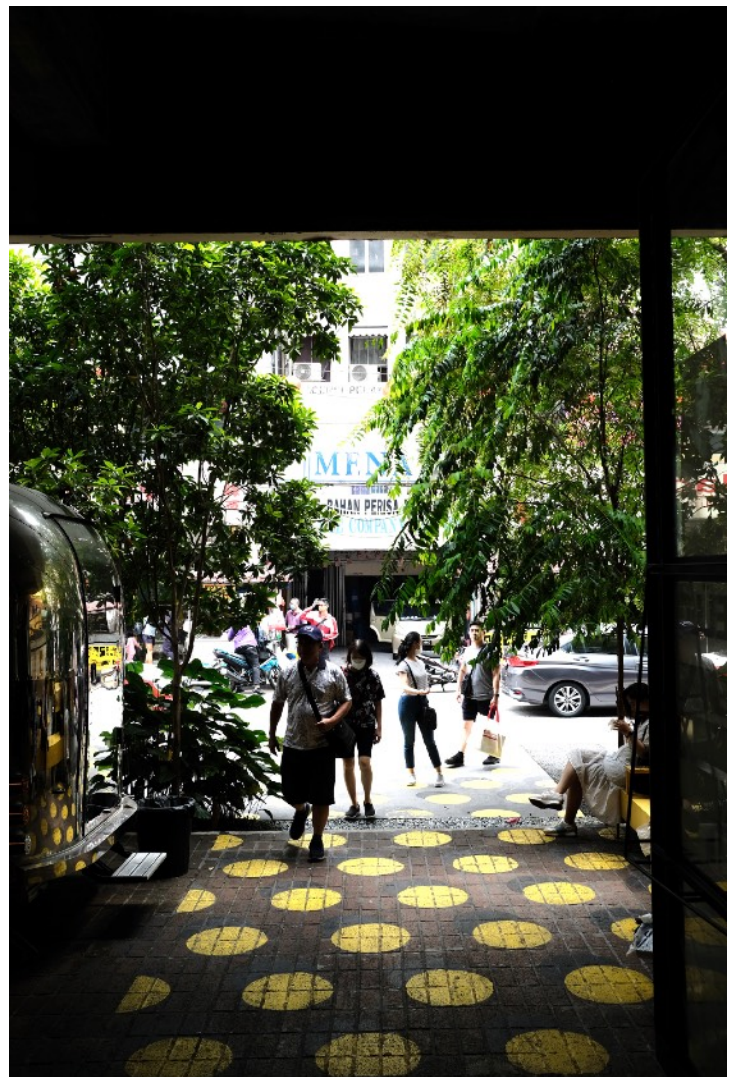


Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23

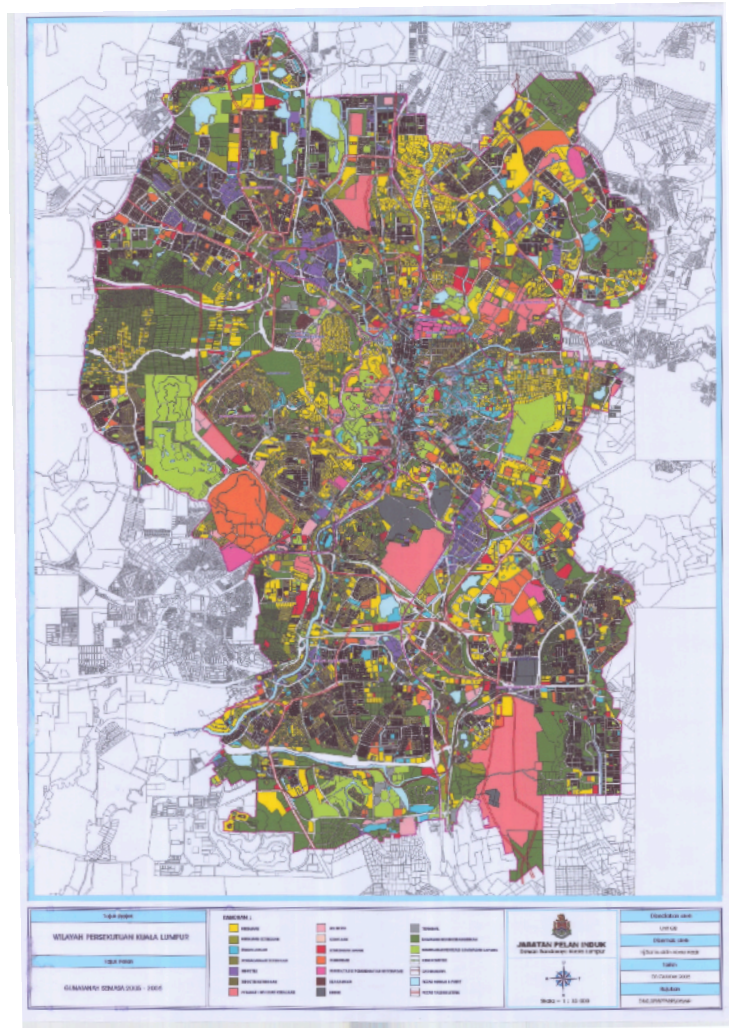


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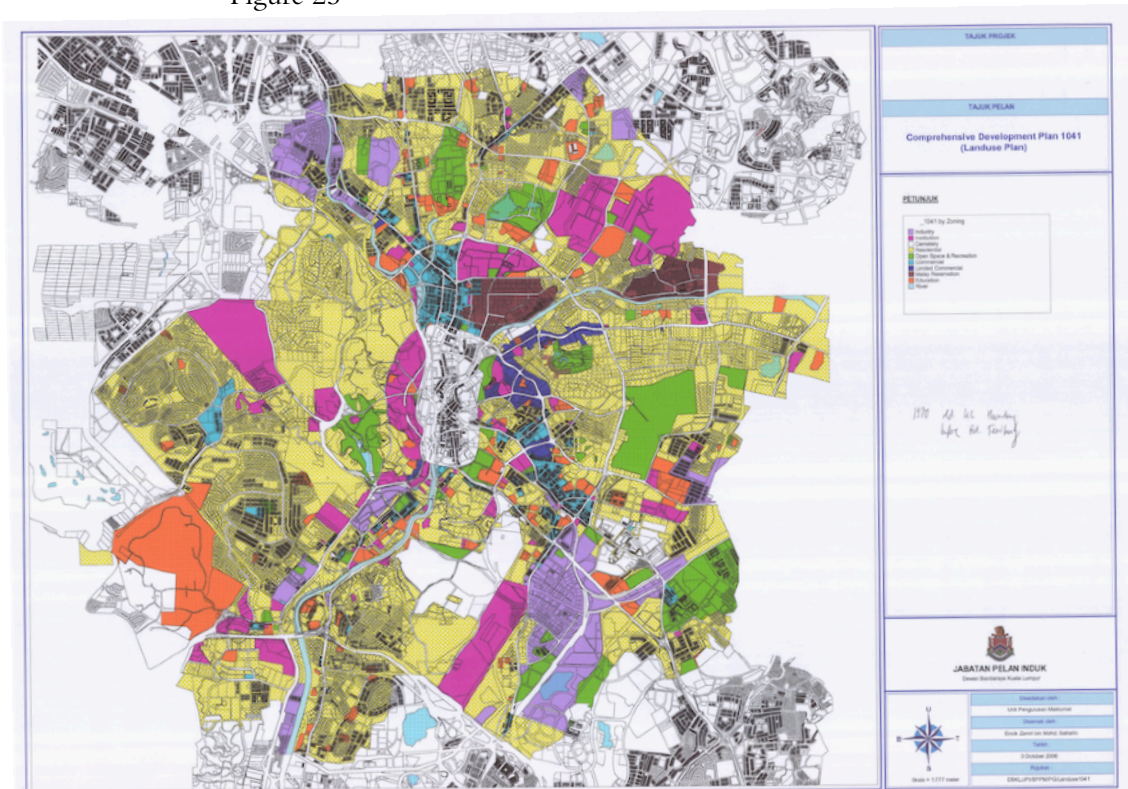


Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

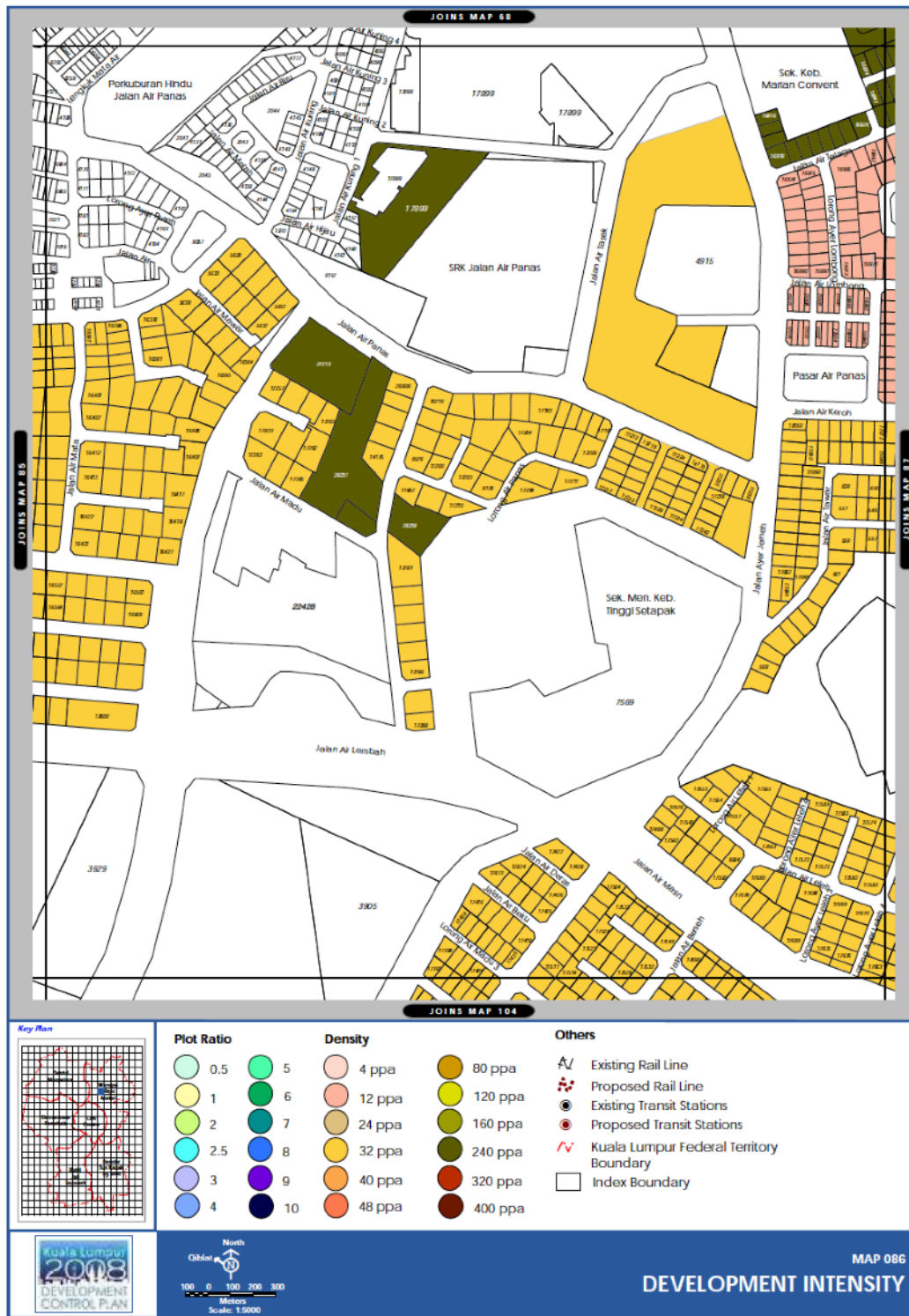


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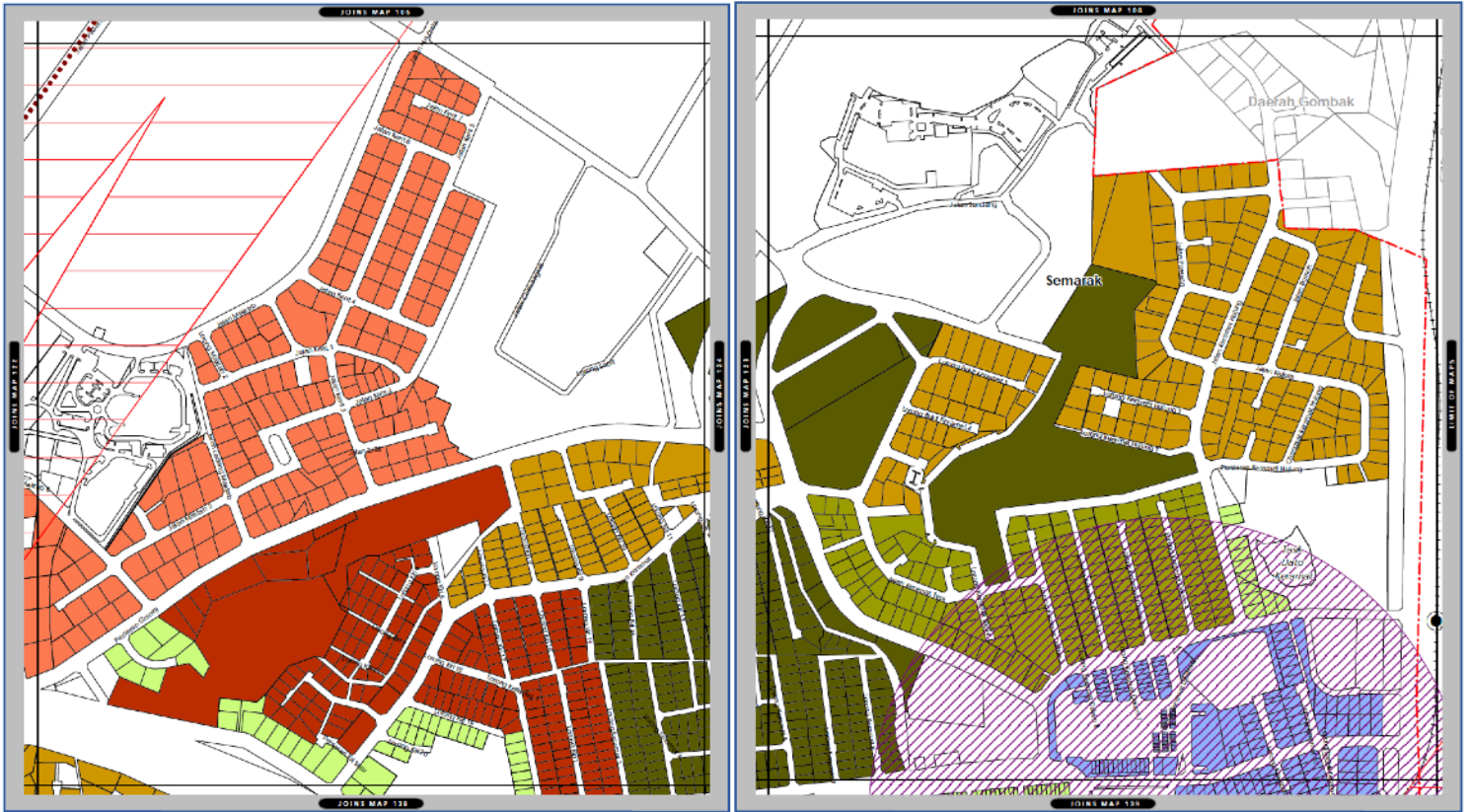


Figure 31

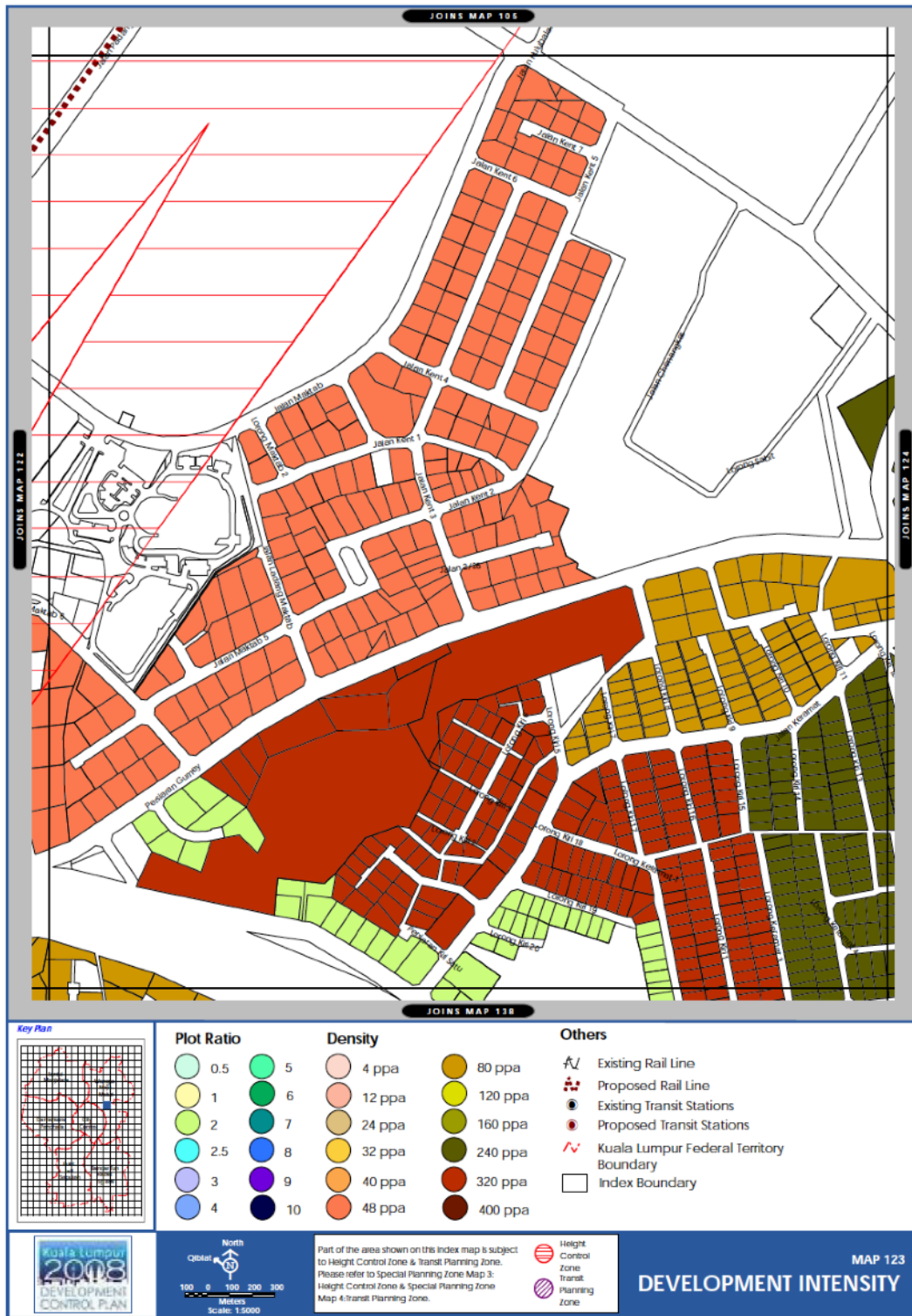


Figure 32

