Walkability and community identity in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur

Wong Seng Fatt

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Abstract

Walkability in city centres, developing cities in general and multi-racial cities in particular, is often taken for granted by many people including city authorities. Although the present literature of walkability is mostly Western-oriented, it presents a general understanding of walkability as ‘the pleasantness of walking in a place’. This pleasantness is usually generated through the pedestrian-oriented micro-design and micro-management of urban spaces instead of their being automobile-focused. However, in most Eastern cities, Southeast Asian cities in general and Malaysian multi-community cities in particular, the pleasantness of walking is also caught in the issues of the unease of traversing ethnically-claimed spaces. This is certainly so in the case of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, as the city is the accretion of various ethnic community settlements. The most frequented of such ethnically-claimed spaces tend to be identified with one or another of the ethnic communities in this multi-race though racially divided and always somewhat tense society; yet, those same spaces can be attractive to all communities in some senses. There may be variously psychological discomfort (e.g., intruding into someone else’s terrain) and/or transgression (e.g., the either purposive or accidental intrusion into the community area of one’s cultural rivals). However, interestingly, it seems that there might be no problem for any one entering an ethnically-claimed space whenever the city holds special celebratory events, although most such events are based in specific ethnic cultures.

Therefore, the study explores the intersections between urban planning and ideas of ‘the well designed city’ (the pedestrian-friendly city versus design for the car) and Malaysian preoccupations and policies related to ethnic diversity/tensions. The work focuses on walkability in urban spaces, particularly in a multi-community city. More specifically, the study aims to understand walkability in the context of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The study thus seeks an answer to the guiding question of
how is walkability of the city centre spaces of Kuala Lumpur to be understood, and how has it evolved?

Accordingly, the study traces the genealogy of Kuala Lumpur and suggests that there have been shifting attitudes and practices linked to its communities’ relationships and the walkability of the city. These findings set the study in the wider questions of walkability and of community identity in a planning context. There are two sub-questions. First, how can micro-design and micro-management make the city a more pleasant place in which to walk? Second, how do the ethnic claims erect barriers in the city against the walking of other communities (e.g., by social exclusion)? Correspondingly, how might these be overcome so as to lead, to some degree, to a better, more walkable Kuala Lumpur, thereby to provide more contact opportunities and occasions for social inclusion?

To deal with these questions, the study observes the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur in general and of the ethnically-claimed areas in particular. The former tell how the city presently is and suggest that, for the most part, the city is not a friendly place for walking. However, it becomes pedestrian-friendly on some occasions, especially during festivals; and at those times, the ethnic exclusion seems to break down. These ethnically-claimed areas are examined and it is concluded that, although the provision of pedestrian amenities of these everyday spaces might be more innovative than in other spaces of the city in general, there is a need for a more vigorous urban design intervention in order to realign the city with what might be encountered in other advanced, more walkable cities. While the city is the accretion of ethnically segregated settlements, the investigation found that this community segregation has in recent times weakened, the barriers between ethnic groups are breaking down and they do visit each other’s territories.

In the final analysis, the study contributes an approach to understanding walkability and discusses how walkable spaces serve a multi-community society in negotiating their identities and differences.
Declaration

This is to certify that the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, references and appendices.

Wong Seng Fatt

January 2011
Preface

The proposal that I first put forward in pursuing a research higher degree at the University of Melbourne was about the walkability and urban design/planning of a city – Kuala Lumpur. “Ethnicity” was out of my perspective, as its significance to the walkability of the city had not even come across my mind. As an urban planner and landscape architect who was educated and trained solely in Malaysia, I had suggested to focus my research entirely on physical aspects as I believed that was the core-business in designing/planning a walkable city – simply stated, walkability was all about physical pedestrian linkages and amenities. As a result, that proposal received heavy criticism from my supervisory panel members and a few other scholars of the University of Melbourne. However, great academic criticism always comes along with positive and constructive suggestions. This is where the element of ethnicity – the Malaysian multi-community society – comes into play in my research.

Nevertheless, as a Malaysian-Chinese, bringing the ethnicity element into the study presented a dilemma. As a town planner serving in a public agency, my colleagues are mostly Malay and, more importantly, the study was funded by the Government of Malaysia which is dominated by the Malay community. Thus, it is ideal if I can avoid discussing sensitive issues, such as the tense relationships among ethnic groups in Malaysia, particularly anything related to the bloody race-riot tragedy in Kuala Lumpur in 1969, and it is preferable that I avoid questioning the privilege accorded a particular ethnic group. However, I have eventually been convinced and come to believe that, for the sake of research and the acquisition of knowledge, such issues cannot be escaped. More importantly, I have always tried my best not to be biased in discussing community-sensitive issues – even though Malaysians are reminded from time to time by the Government of Malaysia that the issue of race, religion and particular group privileges are ‘untouchable’ topics.
Walkability and community identity in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur has been suggested as the title of the study. The study has provided me an opportunity to see urban planning in Malaysia in a broader context. Exploring the complexity of planning and development of Kuala Lumpur has certainly enriched my professional experience and led me out from my urban planning ‘wonderlands’ – overly simplistic, preoccupied with purely physical considerations. In other words, the investigation has offered me a ‘new/fresh’ insight on walkability and the ‘real’ functions and operations of urban planning in Malaysia.

About the city: Kuala Lumpur, in my opinion, is an intriguing place, but probably many outsiders might argue otherwise. Nevertheless, its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society is certainly engaging of both mind and senses. The varying levels of tolerance of differences among the communities are fascinating; more importantly, differences among communities are able to be managed to achieve a measure of coexistence. The diversity and hybridity of everyday spaces and their appropriation are certainly not less interesting. Traversing such spaces by foot and having contact with people in that process makes the walking journey noteworthy. However, the everyday visitors to Kuala Lumpur might agree with me that the pedestrian amenities of the city are urgently in need of improvement.

I hope that people who read this thesis will enjoy their reading as I have enjoyed its writing and will understand the argument of the document.
Acknowledgements

I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed in whatsoever way to the completion of this PhD dissertation. They are numerous to the extent that I cannot list all here.

I definitely owe a great debt to Professor Ross King, who consistently ‘lectured’ me with fascinating ‘stories’ that however related to my research and continuously pressured me with his critical ‘red-pen’ comments and corrections on all the material that I have submitted to him for the past 33 months (May 2008 ~ January 2011). I was also fortunate that he was kind enough to ‘rescue’ the project in taking over the supervisory role of this research in my most critical period. Without his patience, encouragement and guidance, the production of this thesis would have been an impossible mission.

To my advisory committee members: Dr. Leigh Glover (August 2007 ~ January 2011), Dr. David O’Brien (July 2009 ~ January 2011), Associate Professor Darko Radovic (August 2007 ~ June 2009), Professor Ross King (August 2007 ~ April 2008) and Dr. Carolyn Whitzman (ex-supervisor, February 2007 ~ March 2008); the ABP academic staff from whom I sought advice: Professor Kevin O’Connor, Associate Professor Han Sun Sheng, Professor Nicholas Low and Associate Professor Zhu Jianfei; and the ex- and present ABP Assistant Deans: Professor Paolo Tombesi, Associate Professor Julie Willis and Associate Professor Hannah Lewi. Thank you for your critical and constructive comments and the time spent on this project.

Thanks to the ABP research support professional staff who always responded to my requests promptly: Ms. Jane Trewin and Mr. Tri Le.

To my research-mates: in Room 410a Old Commerce (February ~ April 2007) and in Room 419 Architecture Building (May 2007 ~ January 2011); house-mates in 22 Eades Place West Melbourne (February ~ November 2007) and in 13/171 Flemington
Acknowledgements

Road North Melbourne (December 2007 ~ January 2011); and marketing-mates in the Queen Victoria Market and QV. Without your friendship, my everyday life in Melbourne would not have been that interesting.

To the people of Kuala Lumpur whom I observed or talked with during my two fieldwork periods, I thank you for your presence and time.

To the anonymous examiners of this document, I thank you in anticipation for your valuable and constructive comments and suggestions.

My appreciation also goes to my office colleagues in Malaysia – the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia, especially to Y. Bhg. Dato’ Mohd. Fadzil bin Hj. Mohd. Khir, the Director General, for his support and approval of my study leave (26 February 2007 ~ 25 February 2011).

I would like to note my deepest gratitude to my sponsor, the Government of Malaysia. Without the sponsorship, it would have been impossible for me and my family to realign our lives in Melbourne. I owe a lot to Malaysian taxpayers, indeed.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family members who have probably found the last four years much more challenging than I have, particularly my mother, my wife Ban Hong (雯香) and my sons Yang (泱) and Yi (奕).
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<th>A</th>
<th>Agong</th>
<th>King</th>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bahasa Malaysia / Bahasa Malayu</td>
<td>Malay language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balik kampung</td>
<td>Going back to hometown / village / kampong</td>
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<td>BN</td>
<td>Barisan Nasional (see NF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bumiputera / Bumiputra</td>
<td>literally translated as ‘sons of the earth’, the indigenous people in Malaysia and their descendants, including the Malays</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<td>CDP</td>
<td>(Kuala Lumpur) Comprehensive Development Plan</td>
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<td>Chi-Chong-Kai</td>
<td>Cantonese pronunciation of the name of Chinatown in Petaling Street, which means the ‘tapioca factory street’</td>
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<td>CHKL</td>
<td>City Hall [Council] Kuala Lumpur (see KLCH and DBKL)</td>
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<td>CM</td>
<td>Central Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNY</td>
<td>Chinese New Year</td>
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<td>Conversation_1 (etc.)</td>
<td>This is the reference code used by the author in quoting the informal conversations with the public</td>
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<td>CPTED</td>
<td>Crime prevention through environmental design</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Action Party</td>
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<td>Dataran DBKL</td>
<td>DBKL Square</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dataran Merdeka</td>
<td>Independence Square (see also Padang)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Datuk Bandar</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
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<td>DBKL</td>
<td>Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (see KLCH and CHKL)</td>
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<td>DEB</td>
<td>Dasar Economi Baru (see NEP)</td>
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<td>DPN</td>
<td>Dasar Pembangunan Nasional (see NDP)</td>
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<td>DTCPPM</td>
<td>Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia (see JPBDSM)</td>
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<td>DTP</td>
<td>Draft (Kuala Lumpur) Town Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital video disc or digital versatile disc</td>
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Halal  kosher, rightful (in this thesis, halal food refer to food that Muslims could eat)

Hari raya  The great day / The day for celebration

Hari Raya Puasa / Hari Raya Aidilfitri  The celebration of Muslims successfully getting through the fasting month

Hari Raya Qurban / Hari Raya Haji  The great day for the celebration of sacrifice

ICT  Information and communications technology

Interview_1 (etc.)  This is the reference code used by the author in quoting an interview with a planner

IRR  Inner Ring Road

ISA  Internal Security Act (Malaysia)

Istana  Palace

Jalan Road(s) / Street(s)

JICA  Japan International Cooperation Agency

JP  Jalan Petaling / Petaling Street / Chinatown

JPBDSM  Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, Semenanjung Malaysia (see DTCPPM)

JTAR  Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman

Kaki lima  The five-foot setback at the ground floor in front of shophouses for usage as walkways

Kampung  Village/kampong, though kampung is sometimes also used to describe other forms of settlement, such as squatter or illegal settlements (kampung setinggan) in urban areas in Malaysia (see Kg.)

Kapitan Cina  Chinese Capitan or Captain, the headman of the Chinese community in Malaya

Kedai kopi  Coffee shop or cafe

KESAS Highway  Lebuhraya Shah Alam (Shah Alam Expressway)

Kg.  Kampung / village or kampong (see Kampung)

KL  Kuala Lumpur

KLCC  Kuala Lumpur City Center, also known as Petronas Twin Towers and its surrounds

KLCH  Kuala Lumpur City Hall [Council] (see CHKL and DBKL)

KLCP 2020  Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020

KLIA  Kuala Lumpur International Airport
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KL Monorail</td>
<td>An intra-city public transit system; was managed by KL StarRail Sdn. Bhd., but now managed by Rapid KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984 KLSP</td>
<td>1984 Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan (see 1984 PSKL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLSP 2020</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (see PSKL 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KL Tower</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur Tower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTM</td>
<td>Keretapi Tanah Melayu (National Railways)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTM Komuter</td>
<td>One of the commuter rail services managed by KTM, the National Railways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L Lorong</td>
<td>Alley(s) / Lane(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRT</td>
<td>Light Rapid Transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUTH</td>
<td>Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji (Hajj Pilgrims Fund Board)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Mamak</td>
<td>Indian-Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARA / Mara</td>
<td>Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Council of Trust for the Indigenous People)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEB</td>
<td>Model Economii Baru (see NEM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merdeka</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRR-I</td>
<td>Middle Ring Road I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRT</td>
<td>Mass Rapid Transit (Singapore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSC</td>
<td>Multimedia Super Corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzium Negara</td>
<td>National Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N NEM</td>
<td>New Economic Model (see MEB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy (see DEB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF</td>
<td>National Front (see BN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Policy (see DPN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Padang</td>
<td>Field (a large open area usually covered with grass). Padang in this document refers to the field of the present Independence Square (Dataran Merdeka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat</td>
<td>The People’s Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlimen</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasar malam</td>
<td>Night market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICC</td>
<td>Putrajaya International Convention Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary and abbreviations</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROTON</strong></td>
<td><em>Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional</em> (National Automobile Industry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1984 PSKL</strong></td>
<td><em>1984 Pelan Struktur Kuala Lumpur</em> (see 1984 KLSP)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSKL 2020</strong></td>
<td><em>Pelan Struktur Kuala Lumpur 2020</em> (see KLSP 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUTRA</strong></td>
<td>Projek Usahasama Transit Ringan Automatik, one of the light rail services now managed by Rapid KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PWD</strong></td>
<td>Public Works Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PWTC</strong></td>
<td>Putra World Trade Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q**

**R** Rapid KL The name of the public transport management company in Kuala Lumpur

**S** S.A.W. “sall Allah ‘alayhi wa sallam”, which means “may Allah bless him and grant him peace”. It is usual to write this after the name of Nabi Muhammad S.A.W.

**SEA** Southeast Asia

**Sdn. Bhd.** Sendirian Berhad (Private Limited)

**Sg.** Sungai / Sungei (see Sungai)

**SMART Tunnel** Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel

**STAR** Sistem Transit Aliran Ringan, one of the light rail services, now managed by Rapid KL

**Sungai (also Sungei)** River (see Sg.)

**Surau** Muslim prayer house / room

**T** TAR (Jalan) Tuanku Abdul Rahman

**U** UMNO The United Malays National Organization

**UNESCO** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**URA** Urban Redevelopment Authority (Singapore)

**V** VIP/VVIP Very/very important/influential person

**W** Warong Malay food stalls

**WWII** Second World War / World War II

**X**

**Y**

**Z**
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. First there is the background to the research and, thereby, its context. This leads to an outlining of ‘the problem’ to be addressed, defining the research question, the aim of the work, its scope and limitations. Then the approach employed for the investigation is described. Last is an outline of the dissertation.

1.1 Background to the research

Malaysia is a developing nation that is also intriguing, especially in terms of its angst-laden, multi-racial society.\(^1\) In order for one to appreciate the uniqueness of the relationships within, among and between the ethnically-delineated communities, it is not irrelevant to focus on the genealogy of their configurations.

Malaysia, especially west-Malaysia (the Peninsula or what was historically called the “Golden Chersonese”\(^2\)), has an exceptional record of having been directly and indirectly colonized, variously by Asians (Sumatra-Malay-Hindu, Siamese and Japanese) and Europeans (Portuguese, Dutch and British) over more than five hundred years before it gained independence on 31 August 1957.\(^3\) Five centuries is not a short period of time, especially for a nation (Malaysia) that is just slightly over a half century of age.

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\(^1\) The words multi-racial (race), multi-community (community) and multi-ethnic (ethnicity) will be used throughout this writing. The terms convey different meanings (as do race, community and ethnicity), to be explicated in Chapter 2.


\(^3\) 31 August 1957 was the Independence Day of Malaya (only the Peninsula). Malaysia Day was celebrated on 16 September 1963, while the present Federation of Malaysia was formed on 9 August 1965, when Singapore seceded (or was expelled) from Malaysia seemingly due to ethnic political considerations.
The long period of being colonized has seen the accumulation of a rich colonial heritage. There are places of colonial provision that still could stimulate a certain degree of nostalgia, especially for those of older generations. Physically, there are buildings that are invaluable historically, aesthetically and architecturally. Culturally, there are unique ‘local’, ‘imported’ and ‘mixed’ traditions and customs as the result of migrations and mixed-marriages between the locals with migrants or between migrants themselves or the descendants of colonists who decided to stay. The communities of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Portuguese, Dutch, British, and Peranakan (i.e., Baba-Nyonya) are some of the instances of those who remained in Malaysia. Melaka and Georgetown are the two ancient places in Malaysia that most notably display those unique values of ‘hybridity’. It is therefore not surprising that both of these cities have recently been listed as Historical Cities of the Straits of Malacca by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008. The celebration of the listing should logically have been held in those two cities; however, it ran instead in Kuala Lumpur (on the 22 November 2008), seemingly for political reasons.4

Malaysia is a federated nation.5 It is administratively and physically formed by diverse states. In other words, it consists of a variety of territorial entities and, additionally, of several ethnic groups or communities. In each ethnic group itself, Malays for instance, people might look alike physically, but there are differences among them in many aspects. Their traditions and customs are obviously based on their areas of origin, socio-economic profiles, and probably levels of education and urbanization. For instance, Malay in Kelantan or Kedah States in the north of the peninsula are not the same as Malay in Selangor or Johor States at the middle and south of the peninsula in

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4 The coalition of opposition parties (Pakatan Rakyat) had taken over five State Governments (Penang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Kelantan) in the 12th Malaysian General Election held on 8 March 2008. A year later, the Perak State Government returned to National Front coalition (Barisan Nasional) however with controversy.

5 Malaysia consists of thirteen states. There are eleven states in west-Malaysia (the peninsula): Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. There are two states in east-Malaysia (part of Borneo Island): Sabah and Sarawak. Besides, at present, Malaysia has three federal territories: Kuala Lumpur (previously part of Selangor), Labuan (once part of Sabah) and Putrajaya (once part of Selangor).
many aspects, while Malay in Sarawak or Sabah States of east-Malaysia are quite unique. Each group speaks with their own unique accent and slang of the Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language). Their dietary habits might also be different; although they are all consuming spicy food, it will probably be at different levels of spiciness. Further, they all have their own styles and fashions to adorn themselves. Thus, both physically and socially, the differences between communities are obvious.

Malaysia has three main communities: Malays, Chinese and Indians, who might be presumed to be the post-colonial caretakers of Malaysia. Before the colonial British granted independence to Malaya, one of the conditions posed by the British was to see the unity and harmony of the multi-racial society in Malaya ensured, especially between the three largest communities: Malays, Chinese and Indians. With some political will (for the sake of Independence), the Malays, Chinese and Indians successfully demonstrated to the British that they were united in the course of the 1952 Kuala Lumpur Municipality elections, following through to the 1955 general elections\(^6\) in which the Alliance\(^7\) gained nearly full support from all races. There was also the appearance of harmony because no unpleasant incident occurred.

Under the federal constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy system, the Malaya Government united the three main ethnic groups of Malaya harmoniously in the federal constitution, principally by the device of “the Social Contract”. The Social Contract is a kind of “business-trade” agreement between the Government of Malaya and all races in Malaya in order to ensure (prolong) the semblance of unity and harmony of all communities. However, Mahathir Mohamad expressed his contrary, personal views of the relationship between ethnic groups in Malaya in his controversial but best-selling book, *The Malay Dilemma*\(^8\), to the effect that:

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\(^6\) The Alliance only lost one parliamentary seat in the 1955 general elections, which the opposition party, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), won. This was the Krian, Perak parliamentary seat.

\(^7\) Alliance (Perikatan) was a political coalition in Malaya. It was initially formed by several ethnic-based political parties led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Later (in 1973) this was renamed as National Front (Barisan Nasional). This coalition of those political parties has been ruling the country since independence.

\(^8\) First published in 1970, since then reprinted twenty-three times including the latest reprinting in 2008, which has a new preface.
“… there never was true racial harmony. … There was tolerance. There was accommodation. There was a certain amount of give and take. But there was no harmony.”
(Mahathir 2008, p.14)

In order to avoid racial antagonism, the Alliance government first listed the rights and privileges of each community; then, with the consensus of the majority, they made it up as a contract among themselves. This contract ultimately formed part of the federal constitution. Since the rights and privileges were agreed by the majority communities in the 1950s based on their merits in those times, then, according to Asian values or customs, the descendents should have no objection to it. However, in the real democracy of the current liberal-capitalist world, there is increasing challenge to the idea of consensus and contract, especially from the less-benefited communities (people who have received less benefit due to the contract) with claims that situations have changed over time (a theme for Chapter 2) and that some now-irrelevant agreements should be reviewed. Conversely, the most-benefited communities (people who grasp most benefit out of the contract) will certainly disapprove of the suggestion to review. In that state of affairs, whenever attempts arise to question or alter the relationships or to try to advance one over the other community groups, tension or conflict between communities will be created. This is presumably why the sensitivity between community groups is always receiving first-priority consideration in many Malaysian government decisions, in order to maintain the peacefulness of the society.

Nevertheless, the tension is not always non-violent. The tragedy of 13 May in 1969 was an unforgettable lesson, much recounted, and should not be allowed to be repeated. The semblance of unity and harmony between communities was shattered after the 1969 general elections where the Alliance lost its two-third majority in the highest legislative body besides losing two state governments. Although there are several versions of the story that try to rationalize, defend or simply deny responsibility regarding the tragedy, nevertheless the undoubted fact is that this incident took many innocent lives. Many were killed and the city of Kuala Lumpur was devastated.
It is not an easy task to rebuild a town, especially at times where there is scarcity of financial capability, resources, knowledge and appropriate technologies. However, the real task was to recuperate the feelings of anger, spite, fear, and disappointment among communities after the 13 May 1969 incident. Central to any such recuperation has been the physical advancement and amenity of the town and its ability to represent the interests of all ethnic communities. There can be little doubt that the incident of 1969 greatly harmed the relationships between communities, even to the present day; hence the physical environment of the city is still implicated in the tensions (as in 1969) and in attempts at their amelioration.

From the perspective of urban planning, the 1969 incident obliterated the functions of the public spaces as places for enjoyment, interaction, indirectly strengthening the division of the city into ethnic-oriented settlements; the Malays, Chinese and Indians in their own innovative ways opted to settle into their own community areas which might be seen as ‘community territory’ or ‘ethnically-claimed’. The May 13 incident occurred in Kuala Lumpur; it was not as geographically spread as the 1950s battle with Malayan communists, when the movement of the Chinese community in particular had been confined within the ‘Chinese New Village’ system and where the curfew of that time has not been lifted (officially) even to the present day. Those persisting, 1950s controls still provide a context in which rigid control can suddenly be imposed by the political elites on these community territories.

While this project is about the ‘walkability’ of the city, walking always implies the entry or traversing or avoiding of ethnically-claimed territory and the forms of control that might be imposed.

Kuala Lumpur can be described as a developed city in a developing country. It was within the Selangor Malay (Bugis) Sultan territory, founded and developed by Chinese and managed by the British before Malayan independence. After independence, Kuala Lumpur became the national capital of Malaya and subsequently of Malaysia. As a multi-racial nation's capital city, it is a multi-community city. In
fact, Kuala Lumpur is arguably built up from the accretion of multi-community settlements (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1:** The historic multi-community settlement of Kuala Lumpur

Legend:
- Malay
- Indian (Muslim)
- Chinese

“The 1890s city in the present day: … the old spatial divisions persist – Chinese, Indian, Malay.” (King 2008, p.17).

(King 2008, p.17)

Kuala Lumpur is a city that accommodates all communities regardless of their differences. Although various privileges might be enjoyed by a particular community, nevertheless this is seemingly acceptable to other communities. The high level of tolerance of differences among communities is loudly proclaimed in the rhetoric of many politicians of Malaysia who like to play the ethnic card. Nevertheless, the sense
of an interactive mixing among difference communities is noticeable whether one observes it from the macro or the micro level, particularly in new areas of the city. Kuala Lumpur is certainly not the only city exhibiting that situation; it is a global phenomenon. Many large cities nowadays are receiving migration from various parts of the world and are increasingly transforming towards multi-community cities, as more cosmopolitan cities are emerging. Therefore, it is timely to seek an understanding of how multi-community spaces have been planned, appropriated and managed in the present instance to maintain peaceful relationships among communities.

Since the establishment of Kuala Lumpur in the 1850s, the city has emerged from an accretion of various precincts occupied by a number of distinct communities. In the early establishment period, there were Malay and Chinese precincts. The Malay precinct was in the north between the Klang and Gombak Rivers. Its population has been increasing steadily, especially during the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) following the May 13 incident. The Chinese precinct was to the east of the Klang River. Twenty years after the establishment of Kuala Lumpur by Chinese tin-miners and Malay farmers, the British decided to come in by shifting their administrative centre from Klang to Kuala Lumpur in 1880 and settling on the hill-top ground to the west of the Klang River. Then, Indian mass migration into Kuala Lumpur was due to the British decision to construct a railway to transport the tin from inland mines to the port. The first railway track from Kuala Lumpur to Klang was completed in 1886 (Kaur 1985, p.16). The railway tracks in Malaya were mostly constructed and subsequently operated by Indian workers. Therefore, the Indian community precincts were conveniently associated with the railway stations; Brickfields and Sentul are the typical instances. The original site of the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, founded in 1873 by Thamboosamy Pillai, was near the railway station as well, though subsequently it was relocated to the present location in 1885 (Lam 2004, p.98).

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9 There is a map showing the railway lines in Selangor State and the completion dates in a chronological sequence (Kaur, Amarjit 1985, Seabad keretapi di Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Mazium [sic] Malaysia, p.16).
Interestingly, the new site of the Indian-Hindu temple is within the heart-land of the Chinese community. Similarly there is a Chinese-Buddhist temple located adjacent to Kampung Baru, the Malay-Muslim reserved land in the city centre. These suggest tolerance among communities, variously voluntary and compelled, and reflect values of freedom of religion.

Furthermore, more than half a century after Kuala Lumpur’s establishment, there were new emerging communities to be found in what is the city centre of Kuala Lumpur today. In more recent years, some precincts, especially the old Chinese precincts, have been appropriated and occupied by the newly arriving migrants or ‘guest-workers’. These are Indonesians, Nepalese, Burmese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans. In short, the multi-community city of Kuala Lumpur seemingly would now accommodate even more communities. Therefore, more ethnic precincts are likely to emerge in the near future as the city continues developing. Nevertheless, a significant question is how the identities of the Chinese, Malay or Indian communities in Kuala Lumpur are being defined and re-defined in Kuala Lumpur public spaces.

At one level, the project reported here is to explore aspects of the present-day amenity of this patchwork of communities – how pleasant or otherwise is it to walk through and between these various areas? There is, however, a second level of interest: might the amenity or otherwise have an effect in facilitating – even attracting – some interaction of the communities and might there be some discernible effect of relaxing inter-community tensions? Many assumptions underlie this question, and these will need to be explored in Chapter 2 following.

1.2 The question, aim, scope and limitations of the study

The situation

This research, then, is about the ‘walkability’ of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. The
commonly defined city centre of Kuala Lumpur covers an area of 1,813 hectares (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, pp.17-1 – 17-2). It is bounded by Jalan Sg. Besi, Jalan Yew and Jalan Tun Razak circling from the south-east to the north, Lebuhraya Mahameru, Jalan Damansara and Jalan Istana from the north-west to the south (Figure 1.2). This relatively large area, together with the region’s tropical climate, inhibits pedestrian use of its dispersed activities and locations. There is also the lack of supporting infrastructure, such as easily accessible public transport services and continuous and shaded walkways. In other words, the over-sized, hot and humid city centre of Kuala Lumpur is not ‘walkable’ from the general public point of view.

Figure 1.2: The city centre of Kuala Lumpur

Nevertheless, there are prominent places with interesting architectural landmarks located especially along the boundaries of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur which, in
many cities, would be on a defined pedestrian path. For instance, the Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji building (LUTH), National Library, National Art Gallery, National Theatre, Putra World Trade Centre, National Museum, National Mosque, and the Gateway of the National Palace are all isolated from pedestrian access. Although architecturally those prominent landmarks seem to portray a strong identity of a particular community (Malay), nevertheless they are also generally acceptable to other communities (Chinese and Indian) and could perform an integrative or socially reconciliatory role. However, those places are segregated or dispersed, apart from one to another and situated in isolation at the periphery of the city centre which generates a sense of distance. They are not easy to reach, especially by foot. In addition, their specific functions or uses only invite specific groups of people and, in that further sense, they tend to be not walkable in the minds of many people.

As in many other multi-cultural cities, the city centre of Kuala Lumpur also comprises spaces which exhibit vibrant pedestrian activity seemingly linked to specific ethnic or cultural groups. In what is a multi-ethnic city centre, there are streets that noticeably become the ‘territory’ of a certain group or community. These territory streets usually give a strong sense of identity to a particular ethnic group, especially a minority community; for instance, ‘Chinatown’, ‘Little India’ and ‘Kampung Melayu’. The city centre of Kuala Lumpur is no exception; within the city itself, Jalan Petaling, Jalan Pasar (Pudu area) and Jalan Bukit Bintang (Bukit Bintang area) are associated with the Chinese community; Chow Kit (the northern stretch of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman), although it is named after a Chinese businessman (Loke Chow Kit), is closely linked with a Malay community simply because of its location adjoining Kampung Baru (Kg Baru, a Malay settlement on Malay Reservation Land in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur); Jalan Masjid India (the southeast domain of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and the north of Jalan Petaling) is tied in with the Mamak (Indian-Muslim) community. Other than those obviously ethnic territory areas, interestingly, there are some ‘mixed’

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10 The majority community in a general multi-ethnic society might come as a minority community in particular areas.
areas between them. For instance, the Central Market area and the southern stretch of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman exhibit rather mixed communities (Malays, Chinese, Indians, or foreigners, for example new immigrants or guest-workers). These older ethnically-claimed territories present a paradox. Although they are to some extent identified with specific communities, they can also be areas to which members of other communities will venture – seemingly for their shopping opportunities, or their different foods, to witness their ethnically-focused festivals, or simply out of curiosity. So their identity – dialectically definable in terms of their difference – can serve both to exclude and to attract.

Alongside those ‘old’ areas mentioned above, there are more newly established areas as well, such as the Golden Triangle (Jalan Ampang / Jalan Sultan Ismail, between the KL Tower and KLCC) and the Petronas Twin Towers and its public park areas (known as KLCC - Kuala Lumpur City Centre). All the ‘new’ areas are mixed, frequented by the diversity of communities, architecturally more contemporary and with less emphasis on the specific identity of any particular local community. This might possibly be the influence of a trend to modernization, the pressure of rapid development after the period of economic boom in the 1980s, or sensitivity to multi-ethnic issues in the context of the Malaysian political structure. Most newer areas (KLCC, the Mid-Valley Mega Mall) would commonly be considered ‘walkable spaces’.

Thus, the concern in this research is with the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur in general and of the old or ethnically-claimed areas in particular, focusing on the everyday functions and physical conditions of the city in general and, more importantly, observing the contact opportunities provided in the city’s everyday spaces for its communities. The former, the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur in general, will be observed in terms of the dilemma of walkable and non-walkable streets or places or spaces of Kuala Lumpur. In the case of the latter, it will be observed how the strong ethnically-identified spaces have evolved, either through planning or accidentally, to allow ‘otherness’ to emerge harmoniously or to become part of emerging spaces of
difference, thereby, paradoxically, to discuss what are potentially culturally integrative, walkable spaces in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur.

**The situation considered**

In multi-communal Malaysia and in Kuala Lumpur in particular, the walkability of public space will reinforce two contradictory but inter-linked social functions. In the first, walkability underlies communal identity, as it produces spaces in which a community can assemble and forge some aspect of its identity. In the second, specific qualities of walkability can underpin a more integrative assembling of people from a range of the communities, as the dialectic of ‘difference’ and ‘identity’ is negotiated – a place may be identifiably Chinese, Indian or Malay and it may reinforce the sense of that identity, yet people from all the Malaysian communities might go there, even if only occasionally, and be reasonably at ease there. The first function is therefore one of definition, the second is one of negotiation and, at best, conciliation.

The interest of the present study is therefore on how walkable space takes on a special significance as it produces places where a multi-community society can confront, interact with and negotiate its own differences and identities. In this sense a place can be described as walkable if it seems at certain times to bring together different ethnic, class or otherwise defined communities; more importantly, if the various gathered groups show a certain degree of interaction and are ‘comfortable’ with both the space and each other. Hence the idea of walkable space, for purposes of the present project, is close to such concepts as urbane space or conciliatory space that can somehow ameliorate tension.

The idea to be tested is that, at least in the case of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, walkability in this sense will be a function of a range of inter-linked factors:

1. The activities and services that the space provides. Why are people in the space? What might they be seeking?
2. The way in which a communal identity associates with the space. This can
work in two, seemingly paradoxical ways. First, if a place is identified as belonging to one particular ethnic group or community to the exclusion of other communities, this sense of appropriation will militate against its ability to assemble a more diverse population (e.g., Chinatown, Little India, Kampung Baru / Chow Kit). Second, and in contrast, if the space offers desired ethnically-identifiable services, such as Indian food, Malay crafts, Chinese bargain goods (e.g., Central Market) or a certain sense of the exotic (e.g., Jalan Petaling, Jalan Masjid India), it may have a wider attraction. Thus, whenever either one of the two ways comes into play, the sense of appropriation or exclusive identity might become a factor of attraction rather than exclusion.

(3) The time of the day, the time of the week, and the time of the year. There is a ‘time economy’ that operates across the 24 hours of a day: sellers arrive and depart, the shoppers or loiterers change (e.g., the locals depart and the tourists arrive, or the shoppers depart and the eaters arrive, or all depart and the street cleaners arrive). Another time scale is that of the week, with different patterns of activity on different days. A place can be alive at one time, but quiet or excluding at other times (e.g., Sunday Market at Kampung Baru – in this Kampung Baru case, it might be that the space shifts from factor (2) to factor (1) as excluding identity succumbs to the provision of services). Then there are the annual festivals, for example, Chinatown (the Jalan Petaling area, specifically Jalan H.S. Lee) will transform to become a Little India at midnight before Thaipusam day.

(4) The physical conditions of the space. The time economy will be linked to the micro-climate and hence the presence or absence of shading and the psychological effect of landscaping. The steel and glass canopies of Bukit Bintang, Jalan Petaling and Jalan Masjid India take on importance as planning interventions to modify micro-climate and thereby walkability (King 2008). The urban design intervention of Bintang Walk and its precinct is a typical example of such a case. Furthermore, road traffic conditions are also significant and linked to the level of walkability of an area.

The consideration of physical conditions introduces the role of urban planning and
design and thereby a formal political dimension that intersects with the more grass-roots politics of community identity and spatial appropriation.

From the above considerations we come to the guiding question for the present research: how do these various factors interact in the production of walkable spaces in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, and what is their genealogy? Stated otherwise, how is walkability of the city centre spaces of Kuala Lumpur to be understood, and how has it evolved? As intimated at the end of Section 1.1, there is a second level to this question: does observation of these walkable spaces and of behaviour within them suggest any effect of facilitating some intermingling of the communities, even of relaxing inter-community tensions?

**The dilemma of the guiding question**

The circular argument implicit in the guiding research question, as outlined immediately above, is acknowledged. Walkable space has been defined in a quite specific way above; simply stated, it is a space that can be traversed by all communities by foot, without either physical or psychological barriers. However, the measurement of walkability, it is suggested, is to proceed via assessment of the inter-linked factors as described above, namely the activities and services that the space provides, the way in which a communal identity associates with the space, the time of the day, the time of the week, and the time of the year of the space, and the physical conditions of the space. There is something of a methodological problem implicit in such an objective, as we seem to be measuring walkability in terms of itself.

The research question can therefore be viewed from a different perspective. The underlying interest of the project is in the question of identity and difference as embedded in a space of reconciliation of the disabling ‘difference’ that seems forever to undermine a Malaysian society and polity. The present speculation is that, in those spaces where ethnic identity is most powerfully inscribed, the pleasantness (i.e., comfort, ease, and relaxing environment for all communities) of the space is crucial and that its
characteristics are in urgent need of definition.

In the final analysis, the project is therefore one of definition. What are the characteristics of walkable space in the context of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, angst-laden inner Kuala Lumpur? What do we mean by walkable? Physically, the over-size and hot and humid Kuala Lumpur would hardly convince people that it is walkable. However, this city that arose from the accretion of multi-ethnic settlements celebrates many festivals and, interestingly, in those periods it is suddenly transformed into ‘a pedestrian-friendly city’. How, then, is one to analyze, interpret, or understand walkability in the multi-community, public spaces of a celebratory and suddenly ‘pedestrianized’ Kuala Lumpur and, on the other hand, the city of the everyday which is always a bit ‘uneasy’ in which to walk, and how have the identities or differences and the often strained relationships among the communities been negotiated or managed?

1.3 Method of the investigation

The study has adopted a mostly ethnographic methodology. There was a close observation, across the hours of the day, the days of the week and the events of the year of the everyday life of the selected streets, areas or spaces of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. In that sense the study is close to the viewpoint advocated by Michel de Certeau (1984). De Certeau argues that everyday life is constituted by routine, habitual and unintentional practices that occur regularly or daily. However, people usually take the routine, habitual and unintentional practices for granted. De Certeau uses the concepts of “strategies” and “tactics” to sketch out the everyday life in a city whether in space or in time (1984, pp.34-39). The strategies are linked to institutions or authorities that plan and develop the city (i.e., a top-down approach). In contrast,

11 “In ethnographic methodology the pivotal cognitive mode is ‘observation’. … ethnographic methodology gives priority to observation as its primary source of information.” (Gobo 2008, p.5)

12 “… everyday life is distinctive from other practices of daily existence because it is repetitive and unconscious” (de Certeau 1984).
tactics are linked to individuals (i.e., a bottom-up approach) who define spaces of their own lives in the city which, however, has been created under the strategies. For instance, the pedestrians navigating in the city decide to take shortcuts, in ways which are never determined by the plan put up by the authorities. Logically the strategies and the tactics should be two closely inter-linked components, yet they are not interfaced with each other in reality. The close observation in the present instance thus attempts to record the details of everyday life in order to better explain the walkability of the selected streets in the life of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. The observation should not simply take the bird’s-eye view; rather the observer should walk the streets and spaces of the city (see de Certeau 1984, pp.91-110).

At the back of the mind, however, is the question of how the everyday ‘making of the city’ through people’s everyday lives cuts across the dreams of the planners, whether utopian or bureaucratic. So there is also the epistemological question of the social ‘construction’ of the understanding of the city and its spaces: the study therefore explores how the practices of everyday life and the visions of the planners cross-cut each other.

**Methodology**

There are epistemological and methodological issues confronting a study of everyday life in an ethnically-diverse society. Epistemology is concerned with the construction of knowledge: what constitutes a question, what constitutes an answer, and what constitutes a method for getting from one to the other. A Chinese view of his place in the world, it is suggested, may not be the same as a Malay or an Indian. At the most immediate level, different words with different meanings are used to refer to ideas, such as community, nation, identity. Ideas of identity, acceptance, and conciliation are also different with each community and linguistic background. Therefore meanings, in a

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13 Gobo (2008, p.4) argues the rationale for using observation over interview and questionnaire techniques. The ‘character’ of observation is for the writers to be present when the ‘event’ happens and to see it with their own eyes, therefore they can record a large number of details. Gobo notes that that could not be done by interview or questionnaire techniques.
study such as this, will always be problematic.

Also central to the field of post-colonial studies is the question of elite versus subaltern constructions of reality and, accordingly, of the spaces of the city – Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL, the city government, Malay dominated) versus Chinese capital versus ethnically-diverse spatial practices, for example.

An ethnographic approach therefore faces a double challenge. At one level, the imagining (construction) of space will vary with each ethno-linguistic community. As a Malaysian Chinese, how can I ‘cross the border’ to communicate with how a Malay or an Indian experiences the spaces of the city? At a second level, there is the barrier of class and culture (e.g., customs, religion, politics, way of life, etc.).

In addition, Gobo (2008) observes that doing ethnographic research in a field (area, culture, or society) to which the researcher belongs is not easy and can be tricky because the researcher is likely not to notice the details that possibly are of importance to the research. This is simply because of the researcher’s attitude or feeling of familiarity with the field. Gobo therefore warns that researchers should take extra caution to avoid the quite natural attitude that takes every detail for granted as normal or obvious. Furthermore, he suggests that “estrangement techniques” could assist such a category of researchers in order to keep them as strangers to the field, so that the researchers can continue to be surprised and see details, to which they are habituated, as strange and new (Gobo 2008, p.13). I acknowledge the difficulty pointed out by Gobo and have taken extra caution especially during the fieldwork. I have treated all scenes and events that I have observed in the field with my own eyes as new experiences and have recorded them with full curiosity. The outcomes of this work are reported in the following Chapters 4 and 5.

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14 From mixing in both Chinese and Malay circles over several decades, I would observe that members of the Chinese community in Malaysia (at least those born in Malaya and later Malaysia, the generation after the Chinese diaspora) will happily address themselves as the “Malaysian Chinese” (i.e., I am a Malaysian and my origin is Chinese). However, other communities (especially Malay, who claim themselves to be the ‘Bumiputera’ of Malaysia) usually would like to address the Chinese as “Chinese” or “Chinese Malaysian” (i.e., you are a Chinese and you live in Malaysia). My experience is that, generally, “Malaysian Chinese” and “Chinese Malaysian” convey hidden meanings.
Many claim that the researcher is one of the main tools in a qualitative form of study. In that sense, the researcher’s capability in languages (listening, reading and writing), critical thinking, observing, approaching people for conversation are some of the important skills in determining the level of achievement in such a project. I had six years in primary (Chinese) school,\textsuperscript{15} six years in secondary (Malay) school,\textsuperscript{16} eight years in Malaysian (Malay) universities,\textsuperscript{17} and another ten years in the public service (Malay)\textsuperscript{18} before I spent the last forty-eight months in an Australian (English) university for this research. Therefore, lacking an appropriate English vocabulary in expressing or describing ideas was always my major concern in this research writing exercise. In addition to the concern of effective communication, I had been living in Malaysia for more than thirty-five years before doing this research; thus I considered myself one of the insiders of Kuala Lumpur. However, other communities might still consider me as one of the outsiders whenever I walk into their areas. Therefore, I have had to face the challenges of habitually overlooked problems while doing the fieldwork in the familiar setting of Kuala Lumpur and, at the same time, be treated as a outsider by the local communities. Thus, estrangement techniques have had to be employed so that I could see things inside the things that I have usually taken for granted.

Approach

A ‘case study’ approach was adopted. According to Yin (1994, p.13), “a case study approach is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.” In addition, a case study is useful when not much is known about the topic to be studied. It is also an appropriate way to develop new knowledge in a specific place as a case is selected to be looked into. However, a case study will not be

\textsuperscript{15} The vernacular Chinese schools in Malaysia have one English language and one Malay language subject beginning in the fourth year of study. Other than that, all subjects are in Mandarin.
\textsuperscript{16} The secondary (Malay/National) schools in Malaysia have one English language subject and one optional other language (Mandarin/Jawi) subject.
\textsuperscript{17} The medium used in the (National) universities in Malaysia was mostly the Malay language, although the references are mostly in the English language.
\textsuperscript{18} The public services in the Government of Malaysia are using the Malay language.
able to achieve population representation because this approach does not aim for statistical generalization but to build up theoretical constructs via analytic generalization (Yin 1994, pp.10-11; Zeisel 2006, pp.98-99). Furthermore, Zeisel (2006, p.99) explains that, if a case study is carried out in a topic that has been studied before and where some theories exist, then results may be generalizable beyond the particular situation examined. Another way to make a case study more generalizable is to choose a setting that is in many ways typical of other settings. In short, in a case study approach, the choice of the appropriate case(s) is more important than the number of cases to be used in the study.

A number of cases will be chosen from the city centre of Kuala Lumpur through which to explore everyday life and, incidentally, its divergences from the grander ideas of planners and administrators. The areas have been chosen for their utility in illustrating the diversity of functions, seemingly manifested in the everyday-life activities of the walkers in the streets of those areas. Those spaces seemingly manifest most factors of a walkable space that were listed before: the activities and services that the space provides; the way in which a communal identity associates with the space; the time of the day, the time of the week, and the time of the year of the space; and, the physical conditions of the space. Three such areas have been considered.

The first area is Jalan Petaling and its alleys (Chinatown). Its genealogy takes one back to the very foundation of Kuala Lumpur in 1857 as a settlement of the Chinese diaspora. Today, this space is the emblematic heart of Chinatown, defining an identity, yet seemingly assembling a wider range of the communities – this, however, is an assumption to be empirically grounded. In addition, how is Jalan Petaling to be seen against other Chinese areas (Bukit Bintang) or other community areas that do not have this urbane, integrative quality (Brickfields or Chow Kit, for instance)?

The second area is Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman (JTAR) and Little India. Like Jalan Petaling, this is also an ethnically-claimed space and it similarly assembles shoppers and strollers from the other communities. It seems, however, to be less
effective in attracting the tourists – again a perception that is to be tested empirically. The precinct of Jalan Masjid India is Indian-Muslim. Hence the question arises concerning the walkers and their activities in this precinct alongside those of more Indian-Hindu/Tamil Brickfields. While the focus in this case study is on JTAR, Brickfields must also be observed. How are patterns of activities and associations different across these two areas? At yet another level, Malay JTAR (the vicinity of Mara, Pertama Complex, Sogo, etc.) has to be seen alongside the more exclusionary (but certainly ‘walked’, if not ‘walkable’) Malay area of Chow Kit. There is also a curiosity of genealogy: although Chow Kit is in the vicinity of the early Minangkabau kampung from Kuala Lumpur’s foundation, it has a Chinese provision and name. So how does this add to its ambivalence as a walkable space? Again, the focus is on lower JTAR and Little India, yet the contrast with upper JTAR and Chow Kit cannot be ignored.

The third area is Central Market (CM) and its surrounding areas. As this was a mixed area because of the nature of its function as a market place to serve the surrounding urban communities, it is not so readily associated with any ethnically-defined community – yet this initial perception also needs to be tested empirically. In relation to its new role as a tourist precinct as Cultural Bazaar (after massive renovation and re-opening in 1986), this is obviously a mixed area. However, ethnic identities are ‘written’ on this space, seemingly in part as a marketing ploy and partly as an official claim of a harmonious, multi-community Malaysian society. Hence ‘ethnic claim’ takes on a somewhat different meaning here than elsewhere. How does this old but renewed precinct compare with contemporary areas, such as KLCC and the Mid-Valley Mega Mall (shopping malls)?

The main task is therefore one of an ethnographic study of (1) three main areas of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur as suggested above, complemented by close observations into (2) a few major streets or areas in Kuala Lumpur city in general, such as Jalan Parlimen, Jalan Tun Razak and several integrated public transport stations, and
(3) several important ethnic-based festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Ramadan and Hari Raya Puasa, Thaipusam and Christmas and New Year (Figure 1.3). The (2) and (3) tasks seem important in order to throw light on how Kuala Lumpur urban spaces are managed or shared by the communities and, more importantly, to what extent walkability is implicated in present city planning approaches. However, the real focus is on defining and understanding walkable spaces of the city and their genealogy, seen in the context of this dichotomy of identity and the acceptance of otherness. Hence, as suggested above, Chinatown will in passing be seen alongside other Chinese space (e.g., Bukit Bintang), JTAR alongside more exclusionary Indian or Malay areas (e.g., Brickfields or Chow Kit), and Central Market alongside contemporary mixed community areas (e.g., KLCC or Mid-Valley Mega Mall).

**Figure 1.3:** The cases

![Map of Kuala Lumpur city centre](image)

(Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2008)
Chapter 1 Introduction

Technique

It has been argued that qualitative and fieldwork techniques support holistic approaches as compared to quantitative and survey techniques, in order to get better understanding of real-life contexts. Qualitative and fieldwork techniques allow direct participation in the actual context as well as contact with participants in order to get better understanding of complex real-life issues. However, according to Low (1987, p.280), studies to better understand the complex relationships between human behaviour and the built environment must be confined within their context and its natural setting. Consequently, fieldwork will not be pre-structured; it will proceed with guidelines, allowing flexibility in adjusting research methods and choice of research instruments as the research progresses. These, it is hoped, will allow the research topic to be studied effectively. Thus, qualitative and fieldwork techniques will be utilized for data collection, analysis and interpretation in this research in order to capture the real-life contextual qualities of walkability in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur.

The research has collected data from multiple sources (to achieve a sense of data triangulation) and through various techniques, namely review of documents, in-field observations and informal conversations/interviews. The main reason to use multiple sources of data and techniques is to develop convergent lines of inquiry, in order to produce more convincing and supported findings. Furthermore, the typical problems of establishing validity in a case study can be addressed via triangulation methods because the multiple sources of evidence provide multiple ‘measures’ of the same fact (Yin 1994, p.92).

Review of documents

The existing documents or reports could be considered as secondary data, due to their having been previously recorded for specific purposes. However, they also might be treated as primary data whenever new perspectives are incorporated or where they might be used as the source of official positions. Zeisel (2006, p.313) cautions that
reuse of such data runs the risk of bias initiated by the people who originally composed the data. For this research, depending on availability and applicability of the data related to the selected cases, formal and informal records will be gathered for a better understanding of how Malaysians address walkability in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. Documents to be accessed and reviewed include those non-confidential or publicly available reports or records that possibly relate to walkability issues, such as the old Kuala Lumpur Plans, Kuala Lumpur Master Plan, Kuala Lumpur Structure Plans, Draft Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020, planning and design guidelines and, where applicable, previous and current planning and design studies. Other records sought include electronic or printed articles from local newspapers, magazines or journals that discuss issues of walking in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. In addition, sketches, drawings or photographs relevant to the selected case areas from formal sources (e.g., government agencies or private organizations) and informal sources (e.g., personal records) will also be gathered for background understanding and discussion purposes.

In-field observations
The research has used ethnographic observation as the primary source of information. The key purpose of in-field observation is to gather data and information for explaining and better understanding the real-life situation of the walking environment in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. According to Burgess (1984, pp.78-79), the researcher is the major instrument in the use of observation techniques for research that involves subjective situations. More importantly, participative observations conducted in natural settings allow rich, detailed data to be collected by the researcher. The purpose of the observations is to generate descriptive data and information for explaining walkability of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur through observing people who walk in the selected cases. The observation has focused on the four inter-linked factors outlined in the earlier Section 1.2 and restated here: (1) the activities and services that the space provides, (2) the way in which a communal identity associates with the space,
(3) the time of the day, the time of the week, and the time of the year of the space, and
(4) the physical conditions of the space. The observations have been carried out across
the hours of the day, the days of the week and the events of the year at the selected areas
in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. At times, other supporting techniques, such as
photography and note taking, were also used to gather data and information for
supporting analysis and discussion purposes.

Informal conversations/interviews
Conversations or interviews with the public and with urban planners have been carried
out in this research. Conversations or interviews here refer to more informal
discussion or talking to ‘interviewees’. The purpose of these conversations has been to
gather data and information from the public and from urban planners concerning the
subject of the research. The focus of the conversations has been to look into how the
people of Kuala Lumpur perceive and experience the walking environment in the city
centre, basically referring to the four inter-linked factors that this research is focusing
upon and outlined above. The interviews have been carried out at the convenience of
interviewees. ‘Snowball’ and convenience sampling were used for determining
interviewees.

Fieldwork
There were two planned fieldwork periods in this research. The first fieldwork was
conducted between 16 October 2008 and 15 February 2009. The second fieldwork
was carried out between 3 August 2009 and 31 October 2009. Although the fieldwork
periods do not include time between March and July, it nevertheless covered a period
that enabled the researcher to observe most of the important annual events in Kuala
Lumpur.
1.4 Outline of the dissertation

This thesis comprises six chapters. The present is Chapter 1. Chapter 2 addresses the conceptual issues to be confronted in the thesis. These are most notably to be seen in the intersections between ideas of ‘walking’ and ideas of ‘community’. Walking as an activity is culture-bound and thereby problematic; by comparison, walkability is more easily conceptualized, albeit inseparable from the more conceptually difficult question of walking. Walking and walkability, in modern discourse, becomes entangled with the debates on quality of urban space and life, community health, tourism and diverse fields of commercial activity in cities. There is also the issue of the discursive construction of the idea of walkability. The chapter must additionally confront an issue that is epistemological but which rebounds into questions of methodology: are we concerned with conciliation (the search for a consensus-based understanding of the space of the city) or with ease in the presence of dissent and its inevitability (that is, with the creative power of cultural tension). How are these conceptually opposed ideas to be seen in the context of notions of ‘community’? This consideration brings the discussion back to the research question of Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 introduces Kuala Lumpur by providing its physical and demographic development and planning history. It looks into the founding and prosperity of Kuala Lumpur and conceptualizes the evolution of the city from an ethnically-segregated but pedestrian-integrated town to the present ethnically-integrated but automobile-segregated city. Additionally, it also explores the planning vision of Kuala Lumpur and discusses the extension of Kuala Lumpur into the Klang Valley, thence to Putrajaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor in relation to the walkability of the city. More importantly, the chapter discusses the shift in social relationships between Malaysians from a society where there was apparently social friendship and contact between ethnically-based communities to one where such contact was greatly reduced. This literature on Kuala Lumpur is especially observed in relation to the negotiation or
The conciliation of public space between the emphasis on community identity and the acceptance of differences in a settlement.

The main findings of this research are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The broad aim of the two chapters is to seek an understanding of the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur. However, the analysis will be at two levels: first, Kuala Lumpur in general (Chapter 4) and, second, the ethnically-claimed areas of the city (Chapter 5). In Chapter 4, I investigate the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur; I analyze a few major streets or areas in the city, observe several important ethnically-based festivals that are celebrated in the city and comment on a number of special events and incidents that have happened in the city. The aim of this chapter is to seek an understanding of the everyday spaces of Kuala Lumpur in general. Nevertheless, in a multi-community city, a more careful observation of its ethnically-claimed areas has to be an integral part of this project. Thus, in Chapter 5, I analyze the everyday spaces of the selected ethnically-claimed areas of Kuala Lumpur. I observe the three areas of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur introduced in Section 1.3, namely Jalan Petaling and its alleys, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Little India, and Central Market and its surroundings areas. The aim of this chapter is to seek an understanding of the everyday spaces of variously ethnically-claimed areas of Kuala Lumpur.

In the last of this six-chapter dissertation, I will conclude the research by presenting an overall discussion on the main findings of the project and revisit the question set in the present Chapter 1.
CHAPTER 2

Perspectives on ‘walkability’

The concern of the thesis falls in a conceptual area between ideas of walking and ideas of community. This chapter will address first walking and its cultural bases, then community and ideas of ethnicity and race with which, in the case of Malaysia, ‘community’ is entwined. From there the discussion will bring these two fields together: can walking in the streets and public places of a city contribute to bridging those rifts in community based in (or justified in terms of) ethnicity or race?

The chapter is in six parts. The first, 2.1, considers a diversity of views on the social role of walking in the age of modernity. This is followed with a review of ideas of walkability (in 2.2), then with the extensive literature on the place of walkability in relation to issues such as the quality of urban space and life, public accessibility, community health, tourism and other commercial fields (2.3). This section, in effect, is to place walkability in the context of a wider discourse; this concern then continues in the next section (2.4) where the discursive construction of the idea of walkability is traced in fields such as architecture, urban design and transport planning. While aspects of community emerge in these first four sections, the problematic field of community per se in the context of Malaysia is directly addressed in section 2.5.

The conclusion to this chapter (section 2.6) takes the form of an outline of the methods to be used and of the methodological issues that will thereby be raised.

2.1 Walking

Nineteenth century French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) dwelt on the experience of the city (Paris) and of modernity (the rapid transformations of his own time) as reflected through the conditions of a new, modern social class – the flâneur; the
idle walker of its streets. The *flâneur* is a ‘watcher’, observing the life of the street rather than making it; his experience is one of alienation rather than engagement.

In sociology, this perspective of the alienation of modern urban life was most notably taken up by Georg Simmel (1858-1918). In his influential 1903 essay “The metropolis and mental life”, he effectively builds on Baudelaire’s phrase, “the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent”, to explore how the division of labour and of social roles leads to over-stimulation of the urban individual – too much stimulation from the hyperactivity of the city – and thence to a blasé attitude to the stimuli of the city and its spaces. We blanket out the stimuli of the streets, simply as a strategy of psychological survival (Simmel 1971). It is social *distance* that marks the experience of the walker in the street.

The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* which results from the swift and uninterrupted change from outer to inner stimuli. … Thus the metropolitan type of man – which, of course, exists in a thousand different variants – develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him. He reacts with his head instead of his heart (Simmel 1950, para.2).

Simmel’s ideas on the power of modern urban space to irreversibly transform individual consciousness to a condition of alienation and a blasé attitude was especially taken up in the 1920s in the work of Robert E Park and the Chicago School of Urban Ecology, also in the wider field of 20th century structuralist philosophy. Louis Wirth (1897-1952), a German émigré and member of the Chicago School, in 1938 published the classic essay “Urbanism as a way of life” in the *American Journal of Sociology*. To Wirth, urbanism is a form of social organization that is harmful to culture, where we face the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of bonds of kinship, the declining social significance of the family, the disappearance of the neighbourhood and the undermining of traditional bases of social solidarity.
Yet, against the essentially anti-city (anti-streets, anti-walking?) bias that runs through the essay, Simmel insists on the superiority of metropolitan civilization. The city everywhere has been the centre of freedom and tolerance, as also of progress, invention, creativity, science and rationality.

An entirely different take on Baudelaire (and on the notion of walking) arises in the philosophy and social critique of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) who used Baudelaire as the starting point and focus for his monumental attempt at a materialist assessment of 19th century culture, Das Passagenwerk (Benjamin 1999). A more immediately accessible account of the Benjamin position is Benjamin (1978). The ambiguity of Baudelaire’s own flâneurie in the streets of Paris, likewise the ambiguity of ‘street walking’ in Benjamin and indeed of all walking – the tension between watching and acting – has been explored notably by Susan Buck-Morss (1981). For Benjamin, Baudelaire’s importance lay in his anatomies of the crowd, the street and modernity. Here, again, the street is a place of distance and alienation, though interpreted thus through an entirely different epistemology from that of Simmel, the Chicagoans and the structuralists.

The difficulty for the present study is that this body of research and social criticism, albeit from diverse intellectual traditions yet variously highlighting the social distancing and alienating effect of the streets of the modern city, is essentially Western. Most specifically, we are regaled with the cases of Paris and Chicago. So, what of Asian cities? In the above paragraphs I have attempted to emphasise the place of epistemes – ways of constructing reality and of one’s place in it – as underlying the view of the street and of the life of its (alienated, distanced) denizens. But what of Asian ways of seeing reality, the self, the space of the city and that fundamental activity of walking in its streets? Here the writings and their ideas seem decidedly less accessible.

There is, however, a ‘comfort’ for the analyst approaching the phenomenon of walking the Asian street in the ambivalence that runs constantly through Western
theorizing of the city and the street. So, as one case, Wirth’s anti-urbanism might resonate with an abiding Malay nostalgia for the life of the kampong (King 2008, p.210), just as his identification of the city with tolerance and freedom will raise the question of Kuala Lumpur’s dishevelled disorder as a condition for the disintegration of both control and intolerance. Similarly, is Baudelaire’s (and Benjamin’s) idling flâneur as product of modern affluence replicated in the streets of affluent Kuala Lumpur or does climate or social mores obstruct such a role of the street? Does walkability – seemingly inhibited in the spaces of Kuala Lumpur – obstruct the more positive potential of the space of the street implied in Wirth, Benjamin and other thinkers on the urban condition?

Hence one part of the task of the present project is to ‘read’ the streets of Kuala Lumpur – to observe or watch the streets and the city’s life playing out there.

2.2 Walkability

In the context of the present study, the idea of walkability is nowhere near as problematic as is walking with its embeddedness in the experience of the city and of modernity. The concept of walkability simply relates to the comfort, both physical and psychological (emotional), of walking in a space – in the limit-condition, walking becomes impossible as the physical barriers are total (the six-lane highway blocking one’s way) or gangs of ‘others’ threaten the would-be walker with violence or death.

Walkability supports walking as a type of transportation. Improving walkability could be one of the options to alter the existing public-private transportation modal share and, therefore, this option possibly helps to relax environmental, social and economic tensions in cities, especially congested cities. One of the advantages of cities that have a high level of walkability is that people can reach their destinations without difficulty; more importantly, people can enjoy the walking journeys besides increasing
physical activity in order to maintain their health (Forsyth and Southworth 2008; Gehl et al 2006; Giles-Corti and Donovan 2002; Tolley 1990).

However, Forsyth and Southworth (2008, p.2) comment that much recent research on walking with emphasis on health in relation to improving people’s physical activity has deflected the other fundamental meanings of ‘walkable spaces’. They accordingly outline five other meanings of walkable environment, mostly related to the physical conditions; namely close, barrier-free, safe, full of pedestrian infrastructure and destinations, and upscale, leafy, or cosmopolitan.

Additionally, according to Gehl et al (2006, pp.106-107), the walking experience in cities, city centres in particular, should be a safe, comfortable and enjoyable one. Therefore, walkability is more than physical provision; it is also about the quality of walking environments. In other words, it is not confined to the provision of physical infrastructure such as walkways or sidewalks and pedestrian crossings that have a direct influence on the quality of walking environments. It also links to non-physical elements, such as local climate and culture that considerably influence the quality of walking environments.

Thus, walkability is now understood as not only about promoting walking as transportation, it also relates to an attempt at improving people’s health and experience by just walking in cities. Table 2.1 lists some present definitions of walkable space. These definitions can be referred to as a set of guiding criteria for evaluation purposes. The present project makes use of these evaluative criteria in observing urban public spaces, especially in a multi-ethnicity environment.
Table 2.1: The definitions of walkable space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Close</td>
<td>A walkable environment involves a short distance to a destination, particularly where driving is inconvenient or people are without cars – this is the perspective in transportation planning. This definition has a great deal to do with an individual’s cost-benefits calculation – are the costs of driving or taking transit great enough to provoke an individual to walk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Barrier-free</td>
<td>A walkable environment is traversable, without major barriers. Walkability can be refined to mean traversable to children, elderly, handicapped or those wearing high heels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Safe</td>
<td>A walkable environment is safe in terms of perceived crime or perceived traffic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Full of pedestrian infrastructure and destinations</td>
<td>A walkable environment visibly displays full pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks or separated trails, marked pedestrian crossings, street furniture and street trees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Upscale, leafy, or cosmopolitan</td>
<td>A walkable place is somewhere where the pedestrian environment is pleasant for upper middle-class professionals, who have other choices for getting around. This is the perspective in much popular and architectural commentary. Such places have several of the following dimensions: an area with coffee shops and interesting stores; a mix of housing types including apartments and condominiums; a grid street pattern and full pedestrian infrastructure including pleasant tree-lined or architecturally interesting streets; well-maintained or scenic green spaces with clear pedestrian paths; a lack of litter, graffiti and obviously down-and-out people. Finally, there should be transit or taxis in case interest lapses. This type of walking is not necessarily brisk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Encouraging physical activity</td>
<td>A walkable environment is encouraging physical activity. In other words, people will undertake more walking exercise in order to maintain their health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Protection</td>
<td>A good quality walking space provides protection against (1) traffic and accidents – feeling safe, (2) crime and violence – feeling secure, (3) unpleasant sensory experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Comfort</td>
<td>A good quality walking space provides opportunities (1) to walk, (2) to stand/stay, (3) to sit, (4) to see, (5) to talk and listen, (6) for play and exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Enjoyment</td>
<td>A good quality walking space (1) is designed to human scale, (2) provides opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate, (3) offers positive sensory experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For Forsyth and Southworth 2008, p.2; Gehl et al 2006, pp.106-107)

In relation to the discussion about walkability in cities, places like the city centre in particular, Zacharias (2001, p.3) points out that there are differences between the planned walking environments in the twentieth-century, traditional walking environments in Europe, and walking environments in the underdeveloped world.

Zacharias explains that the planned walking environments in the former were mostly “pedestrian districts”, where spaces are dominated by pedestrian movement; although other modes including motor vehicles may be allowed, pedestrians will have the priority at any conflict point. Newman and Kenworthy (1999, pp.27-28) describe the traditional
walking cities as characterized by high density of about 100 to 200 people per hectare, mixed land use, narrow streets, organic city form, and the size of the cities as not more than 2.5 kilometers radius so that destinations can be reached on foot in not more than half an hour on average. However, there is no explanation of walking environments in the underdeveloped world. In fact, not much is known or we simply take the meaning of walkability for granted in Eastern cities, Southeast Asian cities in particular. If there is any perception of walkability in cities of SEA, I believe it might be more complex than or vary from Western definitions or understandings, especially when it links to the issue of Southeast Asian communities. Most cities in SEA, Malaysian cities for example and Kuala Lumpur in particular, house a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. They might interpret or understand walkability in other ways than that from a Western insight.

2.3 Walkability in a wider discourse

Traditionally, walkability has been of interest in the discourses of architecture, town planning and more recently urban design. However, in recent years the relationships between walking and the built environment have attracted curiosity from other fields, such as population health experts, social scientists and economists, eventually leading to inter-disciplinary research (e.g., Chin et al 2008; Cerin et al 2007; Giles-Corti et al 2005). Walkability in the urban environment nowadays stretches beyond the concerns of the professions of the built environment. Walking is also far more than just a transportation mode. The health profession defines walking as one type of physical exercise while, in the urban design field, Gehl and Gemzøe (2001) have suggested that walking is also a kind of recreational or social activity. Besides, numerous studies reveal that the walkability of a place not only contributes to reduced environmental, social, and economic stress; it also benefits public health (e.g., Giles-Corti and Donovan
Chapter 2 Perspectives on ‘walkability’

2002; Handy et al 2002; Powell et al 2003; Pucher and Dijkstra 2003; Vojnovic et al 2006). While much recent attention to walking has been associated with public and personal health, this trend could divert attention from other meanings of walkability as cautioned by Forsyth and Southworth (2008, p.2). Nevertheless, most of the walkable space characteristics identified are related to the physical condition or environment of a space. This might reasonably raise a question whether the physical planning or control of a place or a city is the essential factor to be dealt with in order to improve walkability? Was the place previously walkable? If yes, what are the elements that made it walkable? Or else, what are the factors that make it less walkable now? Is there any intervention from the planning authorities to maintain or improve walkability of the place? Is future planning to favor or improve walkability of the place or otherwise? These specific genealogical and planning related questions will be explored in later chapters, especially in Chapter 3.

Generally, cities are the places where most environmental damage has taken place, seemingly due to the poor planning and lack of environmental awareness of people; therefore, it is there that many rectifications should be made (White 1994, p.109, cited in Jenks et al 1996, p.4). One of many approaches towards a better city centre environment is to improve walkability in city centres (Tolley 1990). To support Tolley’s suggestion and to stress the potential contribution of walkability to the overall city environment, I borrow the words of Forsyth and Southworth (2008, p.1) – “walkability is the foundation for the sustainable city”; and, I would further suggest, an additional understanding of a sustainable city could be included, namely as a place that can forge positive social interaction between communities. Thus, the following review explains the importance of walkability, particularly in places like city centres and, more importantly, in the centre of a multi-community city.
Walkability and community identity in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur

Level of accessibility

Accessibility has been defined as the ability of people to reach their basic needs or desired goods, services, activities and destinations in order to sustain their quality of life (Victoria Transport Policy Institute accessed 28 October 2007; Litman 2005, 2004; Lau and Chiu 2003). Walking is the most prevalent form of access in city centres because almost all trips start and end with walking. While there are many studies of accessibility and walking, most of them are focused on residential neighborhood areas (e.g., Chin et al 2008; Cerin et al 2007; Khairani 2006, 2004; Giles-Corti et al 2005). There is limited attention given to the levels of accessibility in city centres, which is probably because we have taken the complex people movements in city centres for granted.

The increasing urban population indicates the importance of accessibility, particularly in city centres. Accessibility facilitates people movements in order to ensure the city’s functioning and serving the public well. For instance, public transport services without easy access to stations will not encourage people to use them. Public spaces with poor accessibility will in turn jeopardize their usage and discourage the possibility of social interaction (Litman 2004). People with disabilities, elders, children, and low-income groups need accessibility mostly in order to be able to afford independent mobility. All those concerns about the lack of accessibility could be simply assisted by providing some kind of physical linkages, such as walkways that are friendly to pedestrians.

A few researchers suggest that the way to achieve high accessibility in city centres is to allow mixed land uses or building uses, build at higher intensity, ensure compactness, provide more connectivity and, more importantly, to keep the origin-destination distances within walking distance (Vojnovic et al 2006; Handy et al 2002; Duany 2001; Calthorpe 1993; Krier et al 1992; Jacobs 1961). In short, walkability remains the main consideration for getting higher levels of accessibility. There is,

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however, limited theoretical explanation of walkability and ways to improve it in city centres that can directly enhance the levels of accessibility. Furthermore, in a wider context, whether higher levels of accessibility in cities could contribute to better social interaction among its inhabitants, especially in a multi-community city, is at present unclear.

Quality of urban space
In recent decades, numerous scholars have noted that the traditional functions of cities and their physical structures have changed, grown or evolved, due to the effects of rapid urban development, both horizontally and vertically. Urban sprawl, on one hand, has handicapped a planning approach based on walking distance and has resulted in difficulty to maintain the traditional functions and structures of old cities. The increasing numbers of highways and traffic volumes in city centres, on the other hand, have also jeopardized the safety and comfort of people, pedestrians in particular, and degraded the quality of urban spaces (Gehl et al 2006; Pasaogullari and Doratli 2004; Gehl and Gemzøe 2001, 1996; Newman and Kenworthy 1999; Gehl 1987).

Many urban scholars have stated the importance of public spaces in city centres. Pasaogullari and Doratli (2004) have summarized that public space is one of the key land use elements of a healthy urban setting. Urban public spaces provide a platform for social interaction. For instance, the public spaces in city centres have traditionally been used as formal and informal meeting places. Besides, urban public spaces have also served as commercial market places (Gehl and Gemzøe 2001; Worpole 1992). Thus, urban public spaces play an important functional role to forge interaction among people, as well as between people and their environments.

Therefore, it seems likely that urban spaces could only function well and invite more people to use them if good quality walking environments are provided. The underlying basic principle of high quality urban public spaces, however, is that they are
human in scale and offer barrier-free accessibility. In other words, a high quality urban space is a walkable place that could forge social interactions.

**Quality of urban life**

The quality of urban life is about the levels of satisfaction of people based on their experiences, perceptions and evaluations (see Turkoglu et al 2006). The city centre is a centre of attraction which has had the most intensive development, as compared to its surrounding areas, such as inner city, suburb or country-side. It attracts major public and private development investments. At the same time, it also receives the most pressure of negative impacts, such as dust, air and noise pollution.

The environmental issue, seemingly, is one of the main factors that have degraded the quality of urban life and particularly the mood for social interaction and the pleasure of walking in the city centres. Furthermore, over-emphasis on accommodating increasing automobiles in the city centres has both consciously and unconsciously negated the importance of walking as a part of the whole urban transportation system, worsened the level of walkability, and jeopardized the quality of urban life.

Nevertheless, there have been examples of situations where city centres have been successfully reclaimed for pedestrians. The strategies and approaches might be varied, ranging from the macro-level of policy determinations to the micro-level of on-site practical design treatments (Gehl et al 2006; Pucher and Dijkstra 2003). However, almost all pedestrian-privileging cities are associated with temperate and mild climates and in high-income countries. There are limited success stories associated with hot and humid climates and in low-income countries. Moreover, the current knowledge about walkability in the city centre is generally derived from numerous practical experiences in a quite homogenous society rather than from a theoretical understanding and in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society.
Healthier community

The healthy community is a sociological concept that covers all levels of the conception of health and community. The concept is applicable to individual, family, community, society, right through to natural and built environments as a whole. It is promoting healthy behaviors and social connectedness to enhance the quality of urban life (Department of Health and Human Services accessed 30 October 2007; Barton et al 2000; Wilson 1990).

In recent years, there have been increasing concerns about physical inactivity and sedentary life styles of the general urban population. Many studies suggest that the strategy to increase physical activity of the urban residents is to incorporate such activity into their daily life. Research suggests that one of the easier ways to achieve acceptable level of physical activity is by walking, at least 30 minutes a day of brisk walk (e.g., Vojnovic et al 2006; Powell et al 2003; Handy et al 2002).

Achieving a particular level of physical activity is important in order to maintain health. Physical activity or simply just walking has many benefits. For instance, preventive medicine research confirms that regular physical activity reduces risk of many serious cardiovascular diseases, depression, and non-communicable diseases such as obesity (Beaudoin et al 2007; Bauman and Craig 2005; Oguma and Shinoda-Tagawa 2004). Correspondingly, Frank et al (2004) explain that car dependency increases the likelihood of obesity. In contrast, a higher level of land-use mix in urban developments can encourage more walking and is linked with reduction in the likelihood of obesity. More importantly, it also generates more opportunities for people to meet with each other. Therefore, walkability not only provides potential opportunities for social interaction, but also reduces environmental stress in city centres and helps people improve their state of health.

Sense of community

In the past, people opted to settle down at a place for community living and protection. Nowadays, numerous studies explain that cities have incrementally lost their ability to maintain community spirit and ensure a safe living environment. It is believed that there are various factors underlying this phenomenon; for example, the privatization of public spaces is becoming common (Worpole 1992), there is more dependence on private vehicles rather than public transport (Newman and Kenworthy 1999), and the decline of a civic-minded society becomes obvious (Jacobs 1961). The phenomenon is not simply due to the change of private-public considerations, it is also a dilemma of ‘class’ and ‘values’ in present society that needs careful investigation, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Besides, a few scholars even suggest that the mass-media, who over-emphasize the reporting of crime, deserve part of the blame for creating the impression that the cities are unsafe (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995; Worpole 1992). In more recent years, many physical and social planners have attempted to make the cities safer through physical design or social programs, such as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) (see Wekerle and Whitzman 1995; Gehl 1987; Newman 1973, 1972; Jacobs 1961).

Urban crime is a serious social problem. It is likely that reforming the sense of community to battle the fear of crime is important. In order to regenerate community spirit, it is important to create more potential opportunities for people to interact. This is where the physical planners could contribute to the solution of a social problem. Thus, improving walkability of a place is crucial. On the other hand, reducing physical obstructions in public spaces, getting people out of their private cars, and cultivating a civic-minded society are also not irrelevant to reinforce a sense of community in what is at present an individualistic society. There may be additional challenges in this regard if we are investigating a multi-ethnic society, as compared to a generally homogenous society.
Indeed, in the case of Malaysia, ‘community’ takes on quite distinctive connotations: the term will refer to ethically differentiated groups and sub-cultures; it can evoke memories of inter-community clashes and it can be used to incite political rivalries. Hence the questions of community living, protection, civic-mindedness and safety from crime, raised above, can take on quite diverse meanings in Kuala Lumpur. We return to this issue in section 2.5 below.

**Revitalizing retail businesses**

Numerous scholars have claimed that the out-of-town large shopping centres and regional shopping centres have jeopardized the traditional retail businesses of the city centres (Tolley 1990; Knee and Oxford Institute of Retail Management 1988). The in-town modern shopping complexes may even worsen the situation. The city centres’ retail businesses have to face many challenges besides their more dispersed competitors, as the degradation of city centre environments is also affecting their businesses.

Whitehead et al (2006) report that there is a positive relationship between urban environmental quality improvement and business location choices, and they suggest environmental improvements as a way to generate economic growth. However, Quddus et al (2007) studied the impact of a congestion charge on retail business in London. They compared retail business performance before and after the implementation of the congestion charge scheme in 2003, and present evidence that it has reduced the retail sales volumes. However, their study could not conclude that the scheme is the main cause because there were many unusual events happening in 2003, such as the Iraq War, the closure of the Central Line of the underground rail system, terrorist fear and economic downturn. Whitehead (2002) has suggested that the congestion charging scheme will have a positive impact on retail businesses only in the long term. Nevertheless, Whitehead et al (2006) question whether urban quality improvements in existing high quality city centres will have lesser impacts than in low quality city

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21 It had been believed that the implementation of the congestion charge scheme would reduce the traffic volume in London city centre, and thus enhance the urban environment quality.
centres, suggesting that the evidence is at present unclear and needs further investigation.

It is possible that the development of large shopping malls that provide easy access to people who are mostly private vehicle users, as well as the restriction put on private vehicles that enter the cities, are likely to disadvantage the retail businesses in city centres, as they lose potential customers. However, as its name suggests, the retail business must focus on retail customers who include public transport users, walkers and tourists. These groups of retail customers are not going to purchase in bulk as the private vehicle users usually do in shopping malls. These non-private vehicle users usually buy things in a retail manner. This is simply because they could not carry too many things while walking. Thus, at least within the retail business places, providing a good walking environment should be the priority or concern of planning authorities in order to support the development of retail businesses in the city centres.

**Support to the urban tourism industry**

Since the 1980s, there has been a significant move towards the tourism industry in many cities (Tiesdell et al 1996; Law 1993). Law (1993) further describes how this new trend could lead to physical regeneration and the revitalization of the city centres. Usually the old city centres have many attractions to offer for tourism purposes, such as heritage and culture (Tiesdell et al 1996). Hence city centres need innovative and creative support from residents in order to achieve greater success (see Albrechts 2005).

The city centres are the strategic gateways for visitors and tourists. In order to strengthen urban tourism, the cities need to develop high quality attractions, offer distinctive products, and expand their attractions so as to draw in more tourists (Law 1993; Worpole 1992). However, the success of a tourism city is subject to the creativity and innovation of the local public agencies and private business entrepreneurs to market their products to the visitors and tourists. The higher the ability to attract tourists and keep them staying longer, the more the cities will gain as a whole.
There are many strategies to keep people staying longer in a place, keeping them on foot might be one of them. The walking environment must be at high quality in the first place, so that the visitors and tourists can enjoy and spend more time and money during their journeys in the cities. The approach of providing high quality walking environments, on one hand, supports the urban tourism industry; on the other hand, it benefits local residents, as they could enjoy better facilities, increasing local pride and enhancing their quality of life (Tiesdell et al 1996; Worpole 1992).

2.4 The social (discursive) production of walkable space

The discursive idea of walkable space has a lineage that is essentially Western, linked to the wider discourses of architecture and urban design and, thereby, to issues of transport planning and what many might see as its dialectical opposite in community planning.

Architecture and urban design
Walking has been a central consideration in physical planning since the origins of the planning profession in the early twentieth-century. The concept of Garden City advanced by Ebenezer Howard in 1902 reflected a serious consideration to create pleasant walking environments for the inhabitants (Howard and Osborn 1946). The decentralization strategy, the principle of growth, and limiting area and population size has been reiterated by many planners in arguing for the walkability of a place. For instance, there are the concepts of Pedestrian Pockets (Kelbaugh 1989), Transit-Oriented Developments (Calthorpe 1993), and Urban Quarters (Krier et al 1992). Most of the concepts are focused on suburb or neighborhood settings, but the walking distances described in most of the concepts can be used as a guide for the research in city centres. Generally, the suggested walking distances range from 400 meters to 2.5 kilometers, or approximately from 10 to 30 minutes walk.
With increasing environmental concerns in recent decades, there are numerous writings that discuss urban sustainability, which goes beyond the focus of pedestrian-automobile conflict as emphasized for example in the Radburn concept (Hass-Klau 1990; Stein 1957, pp.37-74). Calthorpe argued that communities desire “high-quality open spaces, but they also need density and street-life” (Calthorpe 1993, p.44). Therefore, in Calthorpe’s opinion, approaches such as “greenways” in Radburn and Modernism’s “buildings in the park” are not to be encouraged in the Sustainable Communities concept because they indirectly help kill street-life (Calthorpe 1993, p.44). The design principles of Sustainable Communities are again partly backing Howard’s idea, which is against centralization, as well as being against specialization and standardization because it is believed that every place has its unique built environment qualities (Van der Ryn and Calthorpe 1986).

Like Calthorpe, Leon Krier also criticized the Modernist approaches. He has particularly focused on two important aspects, “the disintegration of [the] building industry and the destruction of our cities” (Kier et al 1992, p.9). Krier’s idea, the “reconstruction of the city”, has been influential in Europe (see Urban Village, Franklin and Tait 2002) and in the United States of America. His design principles are obviously in contrast to Modernist ideas and new towns. He suggests a return to the urban quarter instead of land-use zoning. Krier strongly argues that we need to work towards pre-automobile cities, regenerate pedestrian plazas and squares, practise mixed-use buildings and streets, encourage piece-meal infill, and build low-rise buildings. In addition, we need to discourage car usage in cities, and revitalize the common community spaces (Van der Ryn and Calthorpe 1986, pp.233-234).

**Transportation planning**

In the 1980s, the growth of suburban shopping had challenged the sustainability of city centres. Tolley (1990, p.1) has suggested that one of the strategies to maintain the competitiveness of the city centres is to provide high quality pedestrianized city centres.
Alongside the Tolley suggestion, Monheim (1990, p.245) has also argued that “a town without representative pedestrian areas now appears hopelessly antiquated”. Tolley (1990, p.2) further claims that “the reduction of car use that would result from more walking and cycling would be accompanied by falls in local, national and global pollution levels”. Nevertheless, Whitelegg and Transport Geography Study Group (1992, p.7) have pointed out that the reduction of pollution levels by reducing car usage is a difficult task because people have accepted the traffic congestion as part and parcel of their everyday life.

However, numerous attempts have been made to control the movement of cars in many cities in a diversity of innovative ways, such as pedestrianizing the streets, road pricing, economic penalties on private cars, and traffic calming. Newman and Kenworthy (1999, pp.191-237) presented six case studies of how cities have reduced automobile dependence. The six case studies involved thirteen cities in six regions (Asia, South America, Europe, Canada, America, and Australia). Newman and Kenworthy group the strategies for overcoming automobile dependence in those cities into four categories: traffic calming, favoring alternative modes, economic penalties, and non-auto-dependent land uses. They reported that cities in Asia (Singapore and Hong Kong) are showing great success, while cities in America and Australia are not faring well, but are now showing some signs of commitment. Interestingly, almost all cities involved in the case studies are implementing extensive local or regional traffic calming, as well as having pedestrian areas or increasingly pedestrianizing their city centres (see Newman and Kenworthy 1999, pp.193-235).

Whitelegg and Transport Geography Study Group (1992, p.8) have commented that the responses of government and professions in relation to the issue of increasing car ownership and the growing distances to obtain basic services are somewhat aligned, which is making the problem worse as the cities either build more roads or focus less on public transport and indirectly marginalize walkers and cyclists. Despite the journeys made by private car or public transport, basically all trips contain walking even if
merely a short walk to get to the car park or public transport station (Behrens 2005; Hathway 2000; Worpole 1992; Whitelegg and Geography Study Group 1992; Whitelegg 1985). Unfortunately, little attention has been given to those important journeys. Hathway (2000, pp.221-222) has explained that formal pedestrian ways often obstruct or else require detours whenever they meet with vehicular traffic; similarly, pedestrians on informal ways face a greater possibility of walking under uncomfortable conditions. This has left pedestrians feeling that priority is given to automobiles and that they have been marginalized. Thus, Hathway (2000, p.222) suggests four possible approaches to resolving potential conflicts between vehicular traffic and pedestrians (Table 2.2).22 Besides, Hathway (2000, p.223) also suggests a list of the fundamental principles of good pedestrian planning. These are,

(1) a legible network of routes that will be well used and meet at recognized focal points;
(2) clear signing and sufficient night time lighting to encourage use;
(3) careful design of surfaces and surrounding vegetation to create a pleasing and interesting environment whilst not encouraging antisocial behaviour;
(4) routes that are relatively direct, avoid significant changes in level and provide easy access for pushchairs and wheelchairs;
(5) enhanced personal security by placing routes so that they are overlooked by nearby buildings (eyes on the street);
(6) avoiding conflict between pedestrians and traffic, with the pedestrian route taking design priority at crossing points (Hathway in Barton 2000, p.223).

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Table 2.2: Approaches to resolve vehicular traffic and pedestrian conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizontally</td>
<td>A segregation strip or verge in a different material can provide a comforting feeling of protection. In very busy areas some form of railing or barrier may become necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertically</td>
<td>The traditional kerb provides some protection but a slightly higher raised footway can lift the pedestrian above the worst fumes and give greater security. In the past, pedestrian bridges and underpasses have been designed for the benefit of the motor vehicle leaving the pedestrian with a change in gradient and extra distance to travel. This need not be the case. Structures can be built that keep the walkway direct and flat whilst the traffic is taken over or under the pedestrians. Some good examples exist in Beijing (Hathway 1994 and Shen 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Light-controlled crossings allow time for the pedestrian to cross the road. Newer designs of pedestrian crossings (puffins) can monitor the number of pedestrians waiting by the kerb and also hold the traffic on red until the last person has crossed. This is of particular benefit to older people. Temporary street closures are possible at predetermined times of the day (e.g., for shopping) or time of year (e.g., play streets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Vehicles and pedestrians can use the same surface area. By reducing the speed of traffic priority can be given to safe and comfortable pedestrian movement. There are now many examples of traffic-calmed roads, mews, courts and bus-only streets where pedestrians and vehicles mix together successfully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hathway in Barton 2000, p.222)

In short, walking is one of the transportation modes; to a certain extent, it is a trendy type of transport mode, and it is definitely a sustainable type of transport mode. Walking trips are generally short in distance. Almost all walking trips are less than half a mile or 800 meters (Hillman and W[h]alley 1979, cited in Hathway 2000, p.221; Newman and Kenworthy 1999, pp.27-28; Stein 1857, p.50). The generally acceptable average walking distance is a quarter of a mile or 400 meters. Thus, in order to encourage people to prefer to walk instead of drive, amenities and facilities should be located within that range of distances (Barton et al 1995, cited in Hathway 2000, p.221). However, Hathway (2000, p.221) argues that distance is just one of the factors that influences people’s decision to walk or not to walk. Hathway believes that there are other factors influencing the decision, such as safety, convenience, comfort and quality of environment.

Community planning
Cities have been used as arenas for interaction between the human and the built and natural environments. To generate a high quality place for interaction among people in
the built and natural environments, the most effective way is to provide a good environment that allows people to walk rather than drive through it. In urban settings nowadays, in the perspective of community planning particularly, the main consideration before people decide to walk would be the issue of safety (Hass-Klav 1988, p.5). The pedestrian safety issue is usually divided into two dimensions: violent crime and accidents (conflict with automobile traffic). In this section, safety refers to the former dimension because the latter is linked to architecture or urban design and transportation planning factors.

Regarding the factor of fear, Davis queried “whether an ‘ecology of fear’ will become the natural order of the twenty-first century American city?” (Davis 1992, cited in Oc and Tiesdell 1997, p.3). The phenomenon of “Community Severance” as described by Appleyard et al (1981) is one of the signs. In relation to the city centres, Oc and Tiesdell (1997, p.5) have argued that one of the factors leading to city centre deterioration is the lack of safety. They have suggested that increasing the number of people in the city centres via residential developments in city centres will ensure safer city centres (Oc and Tiesdell 1997, p.168). Wekerle and Whitzman (1995, p.2-3) have observed that “the fear of crime” is usually associated with fear for personal safety, such as from violent crime and harassment in public when alone or after dark. They stated that it is the fear-of-crime factor that keeps people off the streets, especially women. They have discussed three approaches that have been used to battle urban crime: first, strict enforcement of the law; second, actions that focus on the root of urban crime; and third, implementation of safer cities initiatives. However, they believe that urban crime is closely related to the design of our built environments. Thus, they were strongly supportive of the strategy of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995, pp.12-13). That, however, will bring the discussion back to consideration of architectural and urban design factors.

The factors influencing walkability discussed in this section are, seemingly, inter-related with each other and most likely lead to something of a circular argument.
However, all influential factors can be seen as linked to an attempt to achieve a better and competitive urban environment for people, particularly to create spaces that could facilitate more interaction among people. There remains, however, the question of walkability and Kuala Lumpur. How is this essentially Western-focused discourse to be brought down to the context of Kuala Lumpur?

**Walkability and Kuala Lumpur**

One needs to return to the understanding of walkability as a function of comfort, both physical and psychological (emotional) as outlined in section 2.2 above.

In Kuala Lumpur a first form of *physical* discomfort relates simply to climate: the heat and the threat of inundation deter the walkers of the present time to a degree that would surely dismay earlier generations. The private automobile has provided increasing proportions of the urban population with deliverance from the discomfort of climate but thereby turned the city into one of highways and homicidal traffic flows that constitute a second level of physical inhibitor (a major theme of the chapters that follow).

*Psychological* or *affective* comfort is conceptually more difficult. The Simmel and Chicago School notion of distance, alienation and a blasé attitude as psychic defence may help to focus the attention on the streets and public spaces of Kuala Lumpur yet, in the Malaysian situation, there is always the question of how *ethnic* or *community* distance is constitutive of any experience of distancing or alienation in the spaces of the city. It is this question that brings the attention of the present review to the issue of community, ethnicity and race.
2.5 Community

The term ‘community’ in everyday use commonly refers to a group of people living in an area, however loosely defined. The area thereby could be of any size, can be as small as only comprising a few houses with very few persons, or as large as a housing estate, a town, a city or the wider scale of a nation with thousands or millions of people.

The idea of ‘community’ takes on an especially ominous significance in Malaysia as it is used to refer to specific ‘communities’ – Malay, Chinese and Indian – and hence to the rifts that underlie the fiercely contested politics and economy of the country. Yet the racially signified communities of Malaysia are themselves inventions, screens over yet further differentiations and fragmentations.

Charles Hirschman (1986) argues that prior to 1850 inter-ethnic relations among Asian populations, notably in Malaya, were marked by cultural stereotypes and occasional hostility, yet there were also possibilities for inter-ethnic alliances and acculturation. Direct British colonial rule brought European racial theory and the ‘need’ for a social and economic order structured by ‘race’. The British helped to create a “racial ideology [which] continues to haunt contemporary Malaysia”, adds Hirschman (1986). The pseudo-science of race was especially taken up by writer Mahathir Mohamad in his seminal The Malay Dilemma (1970).

Malaysian anthropologist Shamsul AB, however, convincingly argues that all understanding of race-based communities in Malaysia is inevitably grounded in colonial knowledge. Indeed, citing Anthony Milner, Shamsul asserts that political discourse and discussions about identity in the pre-World War II period were mainly informed by and conducted within the framework of colonial knowledge (Shamsul 2004, p.139). That framing of identity-as-race has, seemingly inevitably, persisted in post-Independence academic discourse.

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23 For an extended critique of The Malay Dilemma, see Bakri Musa (1999).
Chapter 2 Perspectives on ‘walkability’

(Shamsul 1999). In a further paper Charles Hirschman observes the considerable heterogeneity within categories as well as vague boundaries between them.

The Indian population encompasses Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Christians and is also differentiated by a variety of Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan mother tongues. The Chinese population is similarly crosscut by religion and language (Hirschman 1987, p.555).

The Malay population is no less heterogeneous, comprising groups who had variously migrated to the peninsula over recent centuries, mostly from various parts of what is now the Indonesian archipelago.

In considering alternative pathways to ideas of nationalism and the idea of ‘the nation’, Anthony Reid (2004) distinguishes between territorial nationalism (the nation defined as a territory, to which various groups can be appropriated without reference to their ethnicity) and ethnic nationalism (the nation defined as a particular group of people for whom the tasks are to construct a boundary and then to exclude ‘others’ from the newly constructed nation). The former or civic model is essentially porous; the latter, ethnic model is exclusionist:

While in the civic variant “nationality is at least open and voluntaristic”, in the ethnic variant “it is believed to be inherent – one can neither acquire it if one does not have it, nor change it if one does” (2004, p.2).24

It is the ethnic variant that came to inform the Malaya/Malaysia idea of nation, as variously recounted in Harper (1999), Andaya and Andaya (2001). ‘Malay’ has always presented a problem of definition: Anthony Milner has given a history of the diverse origins of peoples variously described as ‘Malay’ and of the attempts to define them, from the archipelago either broadly or narrowly understood but also occasionally appropriating Arabs and Persians (Milner 2004) – a world of diverse ethnicities is

24 Reid is quoting Greenfeld (1992). On the production of the idea of a Malay ‘race’ from the heterogeneity of (ethnic) origins, see the various papers in Barnard (2004).
described as “adjustable”, “expansive”, “problematic”, “blurred” (Sutherland 2004, in specific reference to the Makassar Malays).

These diverse origins have left their mark in ethnic differences between and within Malay states as well as between the kampong and other settlements that constitute the metropolis of Kuala Lumpur (King 2008, p.249). Further, Joel Kahn (2006) suggests that, despite processes of hybridization and modernization or perhaps because of them, an identification with distant origins persists for many people whom others would label Malay. People in Kahn’s study referred to ‘hometowns’ in Minangkabau, Kerinchi, Java and elsewhere in the archipelago. He suggests that there might be some process of rediscovery of a more cosmopolitan identity that cuts across the officially extolled ‘Malay’. 25

If the exclusionary concept of ‘race’ is a social construction, so also, Hirschman argues, is ethnicity, albeit differently.

At a given point in most societies, ethnic divisions appear fixed and clear-cut. Yet a historical or comparative perspective reveals that ethnic boundaries are often fluid and can be based on a variety of criteria …. Physical and cultural markers that are used to differentiate one population from another can be ambiguous; they are subject to change across generations. For ethnic groups to persist, such markers must be reinforced by social arrangements and practices that solidify group identity and heighten divisions between groups (1987, p.557).

In the chapters that follow, the role of distinctive urban spaces in reinforcing such group identities will be seen as being in tension with any role of bridging those identities. Eric Hobsbawm sees ethnicity as a decidedly less malign categorization than race: ethnicity is to be seen as a real way of expressing group identity linking the members of “we” because it emphasizes their differences from “them”. Yet, on a more positive note, he also reminds us “how easily ethnic identities can be changed”

25 Kahn elsewhere offers comparative evidence (Malaysia vis-à-vis Britain and America) against claims made in the name of race. Racism is “shaped as much by social, economic and political factors as cultural circumstance [ethos or worldview]” (Kahn 2001, p.131).
(Hobsbawm 1992, pp.13-14). Is there a place for the spaces of the city in supporting such identity change?

**Crossing boundaries**

Building in part on the Hobsbawm argument of the slippages in ethnic identity, Sumit K Mandal (2004) has written on what he terms ‘tranethnic solidarities’, which he describes as “a variety of efforts whereby Malaysians actively participate in society without respect to ethnic background and by rejecting primordial notions of ethnicity” (2004, p.50). He refers to the social and cultural activities of arts groups, religious communities, civic and business groups where ethnic boundaries are crossed. He draws attention to cases of creolization of ethnic identities and to the role of contemporary reformasi politics, also to evidence of occasional opposition among younger groups to ethnic politics and their barriers. Ultimately, however, Mandal sees the dilemma of such divisions as rooted in the ambiguity of UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) politics: UMNO and the Barisan Nasional (BN) government that it heads advocate, in the public forum, a bangsa Malaysia (Malaysian ‘nation’). Yet UMNO’s basis of mobilization is the promotion of bumiputera (mostly Malay) interests, thereby reinforcing notions of Malay dominance.

In this context, the question for the present study is whether the streets and public places of the city are functioning (can function) as milieus for the formation of tranethnic solidarities in Mandal’s sense. As people of various ethnic community backgrounds ‘rub shoulders’ in these spaces, is any such effect discernible? As the spaces of the city are variously mobilized for government (UMNO) initiated celebrations, how does the ambiguity of UMNO’s position – bangsa Malaysia versus bumiputera advancement – play out? Can the ambiguity be ‘read’ from the spaces of the city on such occasions?

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26 ET Gomez, among others, has analysed contemporary transformations in Malaysian politics, business and ethnicity (Gomez 2004).
To explore this question of whether or not the spaces of the city are venues for the formation of such new forms of solidarity – whether spontaneously or under some official (BN) guidance – one needs some theory of how this could be possible – how might the ‘rubbing of shoulders’ in the streets and public places of the city assist the erosion of ethnic (community) barriers and the production of new ‘transethnic solidarities’. One such theoretical perspective is offered in the arguments of American psychologist Gordon Allport (1897-1967).

Allport and the contact hypothesis
According to Brown (1995, p.236), the core principle of the contact hypothesis is that “the best way to reduce tension and hostility between groups is to bring them into contact with each other in various ways”. Forbes’s (1997, p.2) idea, that “more contact, in the right circumstances, means less trouble”, carried a similar principle. However, if the divisions among communities are exacerbated due to conflict between groups, the form of ‘friendship contact’ that Allport’s model rests upon might became increasingly impossible.

Allport’s argument, in The Nature of Prejudice, is that interaction between members of different social groups can reduce inter-group prejudice and improve inter-group relations. Nevertheless, Allport (1954, p.261) realized that “the case is not so simple” as Lee and Humphrey (1943, p.130 cited in Allport 1954, p.261) had claimed, namely that “people who had become neighbors did not riot against each other”. Allport (1954, p.261) further commented that some sociologists believed that the communities’ relationships usually developed through four non-violent progressive phases: “… there is sheer contact, leading soon to competition, which in turn gives way to accommodation, and finally to assimilation”. They believed that many immigrant groups have gone through those four phases before finally engaging with their new homelands. However, these progressive types of mere contact contribute little to ease the hostilities or tensions among communities and to improve inter-group attitudes,
especially if the participants have had unpleasant experiences (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1991 cited in Forbes 1997, p.24). It was reported that competition in particular helps little in reducing tension between groups; in fact, it will occasionally be manipulated by rival groups to attack each other and create greater conflict between communities (Sherif 1966, p.88 cited in Brown 1995, p.237). Furthermore, the main idea of interaction should be “cooperative rather than competitive” (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994, p.180 cited in Forbes 1997, p.24). Additionally, there was also debate on the phase of assimilation, for instance, Schofield (in Hewstone and Brown 1986, pp.79-92) has argued about assimilation versus pluralism.27 Pluralism, or “tolerance and coexistence” as Worchel and Coutant (2008, pp.423-442 in Nadler et al 2008) suggested, is an approach for conflict resolution and reconciliation. In other words, mere contact did little to ease tense relationships among communities, especially to alter groups’ preconceived attitudes and to yield subsequent behavioral change. However, contact can be a factor that generates positive or negative effect; thus, it is the situation of the contact that is crucial in order to forge a positive or negative outcome from a contact (Allport 1954; Brown 1995; Forbes 1997).

Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis suggests a number of conditions in order to achieve good contacts between communities and subsequently to ease tense relationships effectively. The conditions of contact set by Allport in 1954 have been reviewed and discussed by many social psychology scholars, such as Cook (1962, 1978), Amir (1969), and Pettigrew (1971). In more recent times, Brown (1995, pp.237-246) in the book Prejudice: Its Social Psychology has discussed four most essential conditions of the contact hypothesis; these are: (1) social and institutional support; (2) acquaintance potential; (3) equal status; and (4) co-operation.

Stated otherwise, mere contact or contact alone is not enough to reduce prejudice or tense relationships among communities effectively. There are external conditions to

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27 According to Hewstone and Brown (1986 p.21), “assimilation is the process whereby different cultural groups adopt the culture of the mainstream, whereas pluralism refers to the maintenance or development of separate cultures or distinctive ethnic identities in a given society (see Berry 1984; Triandis 1976; Ward and Hewstone 1985)”. 

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be achieved in order to forge positive contact that can ease the tense relationships among communities, particularly to reduce prejudice against marginalized ethnic groups and promote social inclusion. Thus, it is the situation of the contact, particularly “equal status between the individuals having contact, common goals and cooperative interdependence in reaching them, and the support of social and institutional authorities for equal-status contact” (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, accessed 24 May 2008),\(^\text{28}\) that play an essential role to ease tense inter-group relations. It seems that the type of facilitative contact required to effect a generalization of positive attitudes from a single member of the ‘other’ group to the whole ‘other’ group is contact that is ‘pleasant and cooperative’, as in friendship.

**The contact hypothesis in context**

Allport’s 1954 formulation of the *contact hypothesis* was in part derived from research based in World War II experiences when General Eisenhower, faced with a shortage of combat troops, had allowed Black soldiers to volunteer for combat duty, leading to integrated platoons of Black and White soldiers. The question was: can inter-group contact reduce prejudice (assuming the “right conditions”) or is it more likely to increase negative attitudes (if, for example, “competitive parties” are involved)?

Allport proposed that properly managed contact between groups should reduce stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination and lead to better interactions if four conditions are met (also Brown, 1995 above):

- Equal status: both groups enter into an equal status relationship.
- Common goals: both groups work on a problem or task and share this as a common goal, sometimes termed a *superordinate goal*.
- Acquaintance potential: group members have an opportunity to know each other as friends and not merely as actors playing out roles or as representatives of their social groups.

• Support of authority, law or customs: there needs to be some authority that both groups acknowledge, as well as defined social norms that support the contacts and interactions between groups and members.

So, how might these four conditions be manifested in the specific instance of inter-communal relations in Malaysia, more specifically in Kuala Lumpur? “Equal status” might be seen as a chimera: the Malay and the Chinese seem to claim status on different grounds – hereditary claim (bumiputra) and economic connectivity, respectively. Following the 1969 inter-ethnic upheaval in Kuala Lumpur, there may have been a “common goal” represented in the economic development focus of the NEP. That, however, became a fundamental basis of the communal rift: economic “development” came to be seen as economic realignment to favour the Malay majority. “Support of authority, law and customs” may be less problematic: while the exercise of authority may be seen as tilted in favour of the politically dominant Malay, all communities would support the principle of the rule of law.29 “Acquaintance potential” is more difficult to identify and is, to a large extent, the focus of the present text – do the public spaces of Kuala Lumpur offer any such potential? Might both the physical and psychological comfort of their walkability catalyze any such potential that might exist?

At least in the terms of the above formulation of the hypothesis, it becomes clear that the present study investigates only one part of the conditions that might enable amelioration of the nightmare of prejudice, namely “acquaintance potential”.

In a 1985 study, however, Rothbart and John argued that the contact hypothesis can be effective if three criteria somewhat different from those above are met:

• The behaviour of the minority group members is not consistent with their stereotype.

• Contact between group members occurs often and in a variety of social contexts.

29 Against that, note the long-term presence of Muslim fundamentalist groups in the Malay community who would advocate an extra-legal objective of an Islamic state (King 1998, pp.206-08, 224-25).
• The minority members are perceived as typical of their social group (Rothbart and John 1985).

The second of these conditions may seem relatively unproblematic in a Malaysian context: one of the more positive effects of the NEP was in its requirement for a Malay presence in corporations and enterprises that were previously the domain of the economically dominant Chinese. A question for the present research relates to the place of public space in enriching those opportunities for inter-communal contact. More problematic are the first and third conditions, as these present seemingly opposed notions of group identity: the third might require Chinese participants in a contact to be clearly representative of Chinese, while the first would require them to avoid what a majority group might perceive as stereotypical ‘Chineseness’. If particular spaces are popularly portrayed as expressing a community identity (‘Chinatown’, ‘Little India’), to what extent are these to be understood variously as stereotyping and as representing?

The question of community identity and its expression in specific spaces of the city becomes crucial.

One might, however, question the Allport argument on epistemological grounds and thereby come to altogether different concerns regarding the city and its denizens. Allport claimed that prejudice is a direct result of generalisations and oversimplifications made about a whole group of people and based on incomplete or mistaken information. The argument is that prejudice can be reduced as one learns more about a category of people. The emphasis on information (incomplete, mistaken, distorted) places the hypothesis in a particular historical context that is in part structuralist and in part what Lechte (1994) terms post-Marxist and represented by such thinkers as Adorno, Arendt and Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas’s advocacy of the idea of communicative action, like the ideas of Allport, also arose from experiences of World War II and its aftermath. In the context of a wider theory of communication, wherein all statements are seen to involve testable validity claims, Habermas insisted on a distinction between manipulation and distorted
communication. It is the difference between lies and ideology. Manipulation is always strategic, where one of the actors in a communicative situation convinces another of his good faith, hiding his real intent. In distorted communication, on the other hand, the distorting actor deludes both himself and the object of his communication regarding his honesty and good faith. Habermas sees both as ‘pathologies’ and as aspects of ‘strategic action’, which is action oriented to the achievement of goals; the opposite of strategic action is ‘communicative action’, oriented to mutual understanding and consensus and constituting ‘ideal’ communication (Habermas 1979).

From a Habermasian perspective, the communal stereotyping and prejudice of Malaysia is to be seen as pathological in this sense: communication is constantly manipulated for political ends and with the effect of systemically distorted communication which Habermas equates with ideology. King and Idawati (2010, pp.231-32), on the basis of a Surabaya study, have argued that the line between manipulation and distorted communication does not hold: manipulated communication will commonly transform into ideology while ideology can come to underlie strategic manipulation. The requirement to dispel such stereotyping and prejudice is to subject its validity claims to communicative action – action oriented to consensus on interpersonal validity claims as to what constitutes the true, the morally right and a truthful representation.

The parallel between Habermas’s theory of communicative action and Allport’s more pragmatically directed contact hypothesis is striking. Both see emancipation from prejudice and ideology in the exchange of validity claims where individuals and groups are prepared to grant each other equal status in the communicative situation.

Habermas was careful to indicate that his theory related to verbal communication and the uses of language. In the case of the streets and public places of Kuala Lumpur, however, communication is only partly verbal – the representation of the built environment and of oneself in that environment can be seen as the principal medium of communication. More recently, Habermas has begun to admit the significance of non-
verbal communication, acknowledging that actions, gestures, traditions, institution and worldviews can all enter into validity claims (Habermas 2007). Linked to such communication is dramaturgical action.

Dramaturgical action refers to participants-in-interaction constituting a public for one another, to whom they present themselves. In this setting the actor presents a certain image or impression of him/herself, revealing a certain subjectivity. This ‘presentation of self’ does not suggest impulsive expressive performance but a stylisation of the expression of one’s own experiences with a view to the audience. Such action can become entwined in manipulation and distorted communication, as “dramaturgical action can take on latent strategic qualities to the degree that the actor treats his audience as opponents rather than as public” (Habermas 1984, p.112).

The question of epistemology
Habermas’s position (and by implication that of Allport) has been criticized for its focus on the ideal of consensus. While the debates between Habermas and Jacques Derrida were more public, Jean-François Lyotard’s critique of Habermasian consensus is more germane to the present discussion. Where Habermas extolled the universalist claims of the Enlightenment, Lyotard opposed these and all other generalities, proposing instead what he called an extreme simplification of the “postmodern” as “incredulity towards metanarratives”. The Enlightenment criteria of critique (of the true, the morally right, the truthful representation) are to be eschewed.

Lyotard (1984, 1986) argues that we have ceased to believe in “grand narratives” such as the progress of history, the knowability of all things by science, and the possibility of absolute freedom. Instead we have become alert to difference, diversity, the incompatibility of individual aspirations, beliefs and desires and, for that reason, the age is characterized by an abundance of micro-narratives – Chinese constructions of reality (epistemes) against Malay constructions or, for that matter, profound differences within Malay constructions of knowledge (Kahn 2006; King 2008).
All discourse for Lyotard is based on a language game, including the discourse that must underlie a claim of consensus. If the participants in that game come with different constructions of the situation in dispute (different rules by which the game is to be played), the outcome will not be consensus but a determination that one participant’s rules are ‘right’ for that situation and the other’s are ‘wrong’. The ‘wrong’ rules are to be silenced.

Lyotard invokes the idea of the differend (1986, p.9):

I would like to call a differend [différend] the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim. If the addressee, the addressee, and the sense of the testimony are neutralized, everything takes place as if there were no damages …. A case of differend between two parties takes place when the “regulation” of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.

Silencing or eliminating a player from a game is, for Lyotard, equivalent to a terrorist act (Lechte 1994, p.248). In such an act, no position is to be presented that is at variance with the dominant rules of argumentation and validation.

Hence, if all consensus is a chimera (worse, a strategy of manipulation by hegemonic groups to dismiss the interests of minorities), then there is only the possibility of dissent – dissensus against consensus. If I firmly believe in the rightness of my position, how can I possibly compromise this in the name of some universalizing, dumbing-down consensus? When the judgement of the hegemonic (perhaps the majority) goes against me, my only recourse is dissent, perhaps resistance, subversion.

This can be seen as representing the situation in Malaysian society at a macro-level, as the rules-of-disputation (“regulation”, the rules of the game) are set by one community in a situation of forced “consensus”. Certain things are never to be questioned and the political game will be played within such unquestionable rules. What, however, is to be said about the rules of civil society – of Mandal’s ‘transethnic solidarities – and the rules of the streets and public places – of Allport’s ‘contact’ (if,
indeed, that hypothesis is to be translated into the engagements of civil society, the every day and public space)?

**Consensus or dissensus**

While King’s 2008 analysis of the streets and places of Kuala Lumpur makes only a single, passing reference to Lyotard, its focus is overwhelmingly on a city of tensions and dissension. It interprets the city through a Lyotard lens, as it were, rather than a Habermas/Allport lens. Thus King’s accounts of Jalan Petaling/Chinatown and of Chow Kit/Kampung Bahru, which also feature in the present thesis, are from a perspective of resentment, suspicion and anxiety. A focus on dissension (Lyotard) might be easier to sustain in the light of the upheavals and tensions of Malaysian recent history that King reports; however, it is ultimately pessimistic and defeatist and it avoids the ‘hard task’ of seeking paths to reconciliation. Note, however, that Lyotard eschews all ideas of reconciliation, instead seeing all human emancipation in dissension (resistance), as the wellspring of intellectual difference, inventiveness, heterogeneity of practices and ideas (Lyotard 1986, p.xi; Belsey 2002, p.97).

Also more concerned with the bases of dissension in Malaysian everyday life are the frequently anecdotal essays that make up the collections of Farish Noor (2002; 2005). Unease and angst also run through the accounts of the city in Ziauddin Sadar (2000), likewise the various essays in Heryanto and Mandal (2004). More recently, Richard Baxstrom has examined development and governance in Kuala Lumpur through the specific case of the (mostly Tamil-Indian) community and streets of the city’s Brickfields neighbourhood, again with a focus on the bases of inter-community angst rather than on any ideas of Habermas/Allport reconciliation and consensus (Baxstrom 2010).
Other cities

As this question of consensus versus dissent (Allport/Habermas versus Lyotard) underlies the concerns of the present project, albeit with the focus and intellectual interest more on Allport and the possibility of reconciliation, it is worth turning the attention briefly to the literature on other Southeast Asian cities. What might be learned from other cities?

There has been much writing on cities in Southeast Asia (SEA), mostly concerned with their background. *In search of Southeast Asia: A modern history*, edited by Steinberg (1987), is one of the many comprehensive history books about SEA. Additionally, the series of books “Images of Asia”, published by Oxford University Press and contributed by various writers, have covered a range of subjects for the general understanding of SEA’s communities. These have included *Old Kuala Lumpur* (Gullick 1994), *Old Singapore* (Jayapal 1992), *Old Jakarta* (Jayapal 1993), *Old Bangkok* (Smithies 1986), *Old Hanoi* (Sidel 1998) and *Old Manila* (Zaragoza 1990). Moreover, as those books’ titles suggest, they are about the long-past history, such as the founding or early establishment and development of the present ‘mega’ cities in SEA. None, however, has tackled the issue of walkability or the role of walkability in the cities directly. In fact, all mega cities today were walkable in the past, simply because all settlements were small in size and there was little availability of automobile transportation.

There has been other research into the cities in SEA. The focus has varied due to considerations of their different physical, social, economic and political-historical backgrounds, as well as the present challenges or future potential of the cities. The following is a review of literature on a few Southeast Asian capital cities that are heavily populated and generally developing rapidly.
Hanoi

Hanoi is the capital city of Vietnam and its second largest city after Ho Chi Minh City (also known as Saigon). The book by Logan (2000), *Hanoi: Biography of a City*, provides a historical background of Hanoi, in large measure to draw attention to the issue of architecture and streetscape preservation for Vietnamese cities in the future. Likewise, the work of Dinh (2010, 2008), notably *Village architecture in Hanoi: Patterns and changes: Case study of Bat Trang, a pottery-making village*, is concerned with preservation, conservation and restoration of the local architecture and community culture. Both Logan and Dinh eventually are in search of the identity of Vietnamese cities. However, one difference between the two is in their approach, the former being an ‘outsider’ perspective and the latter an ‘insider’ insight. Neither, however, specifically deals with the issue of walkability of the city.

Jakarta

The city of Jakarta has always been cosmopolitan as Jayapal (1993, p.vii) has explained. It also displays social, cultural and political contrasts and tensions (Grijins and Nas 2000; Helmond and Michiels 2007; Permanasari 2007; Kusno 2010, 2000). Much literature about this heavily populated city is closely associated with its *kampungs* and informal settlements, rather than the main downtown or city centre area, which has a few public areas that are restricted (fenced or guarded) due to security reasons. These restrictions impede the walkability of the city centre. In fact, the *kampungs* and informal settlements themselves, located within and at the periphery of the city, are presumably walkable; however, no literature on the subject of walkability in the city centre has been found on this Indonesian city.

Bangkok

Askew (2002, p.i) has examined Bangkok and describes it as “a city of contradictions, both in its present and its past”. Kanika R’kul (2008) investigated Bangkok by talking
with “Bangkokians” informally and concluded that Bangkok is “a city in flux”.

Generally, much of the literature on Bangkok is associated with the everyday street life and cultural events of this city (e.g., Warren 2002; Askew and Logan 1994, pp.85-116). Although these link to the issue of walkability, nevertheless it seems that no literature has discussed and defined walkability in Thai cities nor dealt with their multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society specifically. A recent exception is King (2011).

Singapore

The Singapore city-state covers an area of approximately 700 square kilometers; it has a population about 4.35 million, an average density of 62 persons per hectare (Department of Statistics Singapore 1974-2006 cited in Olszewski 2007). The city of Singapore has demonstrated that rapid urbanization and economy prosperity do not necessarily result in traffic congestion and pollution (Olszewski 2007). These successes distinguish Singapore and direct the present research to the systematic and comprehensive approaches of the physical planning, development and control of the city-state by the Singaporean government.

According to Yuen and Chor (1998), the initiative to control the traffic in Singapore had started at the end of the 1960s, when “area licensing” was introduced in Raffles Place, one of the more intense business districts in the city centre of Singapore. The government committed a high priority to avoid traffic congestion in the city in order to ensure its attractiveness for trade and tourism businesses. To enhance the quality of urban space and its urban life further, pedestrianization was adopted as a policy to support urban conservation in the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, numerous pedestrianization projects in the city centre of Singapore were implemented, namely Change Alley and Clarke Quay/Boat Quay in 1993, and Bugis Junction and Little India Arcade in 1995. Yuen and Chor (1998) reveal that the reasons for pedestrianization in Singapore mainly related to transport concerns. This is different from Western countries where pedestrianization has been more associated with city centre deterioration and
competition from the suburbs. They have also explained several key factors that are significant to the success of pedestrianization in Singapore. These include the connection between pedestrian areas and public transport stations and car parks; the safety and security of the pedestrian from motorized traffic; the variety of businesses and activities along the pedestrian streets; and the provision of suitable and adequate people-attracting features, such as comfortable seating, outdoor cafes and street performers, to draw people into the pedestrian streets. Additionally, in dealing with its tropical rainforest climate, covered and air-conditioned spaces have been constructed to ensure the areas can function in all seasons and times (day and night). The uncovered pedestrian areas are unable to serve the pedestrian on a raining day, and are only active in the late evening and night. Pedestrian streets in Singapore are mostly associated with shopping and urban conservation.

Lang (2005) has suggested that the success of Singapore’s development is strongly associated with the unique organizational structure of the planning and development authority. He explained that the democratically elected government of Singapore is fully responsible for planning and design of Singapore development, while the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is the appointed de facto agency that carries out technical coordination work including planning, implementation and control. The URA is a ‘one-stop-centre’ for the development of the whole of Singapore, which is quite different to other cities in the SEA region that usually involve multi-agencies in planning, implementation and control of a city. Therefore, to a certain extent, Singapore should be considered as a unique case and perhaps as something of an ‘ideal’.

Although Singapore and Kuala Lumpur are both multi-ethnic cities, nevertheless the composition and proportions of the ethnic communities are different, where the majority of Singaporeans are Chinese while Malaysia is dominated by the Malay community. Further, the formation of the present governments are different, with Singapore governed by one multi-ethnic political party (albeit controlled by Chinese) while Malaysia is by an alliance of a three major ethnic-based political parties (though
dominated by the Malays). The planning control systems of the two cities are also different, where Singapore’s is a one-stop-centre (URA) while Kuala Lumpur’s is ‘multi-departmental’ (DBKL). However, there is similarity in that both are nationally-focused (on national/community identity) and on an ethnic division (ethnic/community identities such as Chinatown, Little India or Malay Kampong). It seems that in a multi-ethnic city, regardless of its being dominated by any one ethnic community, questions of ‘identity’ (national identity or ethnic identity) and ‘differences’ (of the ethnic groups) are salient in political disputation, government policy and planning exercises.

2.6 Conclusion: the question of method

In Chapter 1, four factors were hypothesized as underlying the genealogy and present production of walkable spaces in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur. These were (1) the activities and services that the space provides, (2) the way in which communal identity associates with the space, (3) the time of the day, the week and the year, and (4) the physical conditions of the space. Accordingly, the guiding research question for the project was posed as: how do these various factors interact in the production of walkable space in the city centre? There is a second level to the research question: what is the social effect of walkable space in Kuala Lumpur? Does observation of these walkable spaces and of behaviour within them suggest any effect of facilitating some intermingling of the communities, even of relaxing inter-community tensions?

In the context of the epistemological rift outlined above (Habermas/Allport versus Lyotard, the contact hypothesis and its underlying ideal of consensus versus the ‘realism’ of dissent), this second level of the research question would be located on the consensus side of the divide. In view of the seeming preponderance of accounts of the spaces of Kuala Lumpur that appear to be coloured by an episteme of a world of inevitable dissension and conflict (Baxstrom, Farish, Kahn, King, Ziauddin), it is argued
here that there is a case for a counter-account, from the opposite epistemological position. This thesis will accordingly explore such a counter-account: on the basis of simple observation of what goes on in the streets and public spaces of Kuala Lumpur, are there signs that might point to some confirmation of the Allport argument?

It is acknowledged that there will be no simple answer to this second level of the question. The contradictions attributed to the UMNO position – advocacy of a bangsa Malaysia against commitment to continuing Malay privileges – are inevitably to be read in the signs and practices of the streets. So also are other contradictions and compromises of Chinese community positions (embeddedness with UMNO versus angst over all such compromises) and of the Indian community situation (religious and ethnic differences). These contradictions simply suggest the nuances that are to be read from the spaces and activities of the city – things to be observed in the fieldwork and the chapters that follow. They also suggest that these messages to be read from the spaces of the city will themselves be contradictory – signs both of negotiated consensus and of both suppressed and expressed dissent.

The methodological approach to be used here is therefore to be mostly based in observation – watching the streets and public places of the city and their life. These observations were augmented by opportunistic interviews and conversations with denizens of the streets and their visitors. While there may be venerable antecedents to such an approach, its limitation is certainly acknowledged: it would be far more satisfying to move on from direct participant observation to systematic surveys, to ask people about their intra- and inter-community contacts, friendships and antagonisms. Such surveys, however, would be far beyond the scope of the present study.
CHAPTER 3

History of the planning of Kuala Lumpur

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it seeks to understand the development of Kuala Lumpur from the past to the present, physically and demographically. This geographically and historically focused investigation is significant to the study as it helps to understand the formation of the multi-community city of Kuala Lumpur and its evolution. Most importantly, it serves to conceptualize how the city has emerged physically; it also throws light on the formation of the multi-community nature of the city particularly, and on the politics of the multi-racial society in Malaysia generally. Second, this geographically focused literature investigation of Kuala Lumpur has an underlying micro-planning concern, namely to examine planning for the walkability of the city. Thus, the chapter aims to read the development of Kuala Lumpur from a town planning perspective rather than provide a piece of history writing about the city. A critical review of the development of the city from the town planning point of view at this stage of the research would help to contextualize the past of Kuala Lumpur particularly, and of Malaysian cities more generally.

Therefore, I begin this chapter with the geography and demography of Kuala Lumpur, which indicates something of the natural constraints on walking in the city and the founding of community-based politics, respectively. Then, I investigate the story of the foundation of Kuala Lumpur and its development towards a capital city, which has been closely associated with the Chinese community. The early settlement of Kuala Lumpur under the British advisory administration followed. This additionally led to the arrival of the Indian community in Kuala Lumpur and, eventually, the forming of ethnic segregation but ‘a pedestrian-integrated town’. The investigation also further discusses the British strategies in managing the multi-community and in planning the

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30 The diversity of ethnicities in Malaysia is rich, as Mestrovic (1976, p.45) notes that “… no Asian who comes to Malaysia will be a stranger.”
physical development of Kuala Lumpur in the period before the British granted Malaya independence in 1957. Next, the town planning of Kuala Lumpur from the British administration to the Malay administration is presented. There was also a period of Japanese Occupation during Second World War (WWII); although this was a short period, it is essential to be discussed in assisting an understanding of the tense relationships between communities, the Malay versus Chinese in particular. In the more recent planning exercise, the imagined “world-class city” of Kuala Lumpur and the implied importance of the walkability of Kuala Lumpur will be discussed. This in turn will introduce Putrajaya – the Malaysian federal government administrative centre that has allegedly considered pedestrian needs in its planning. Putrajaya was associated with the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), which is physically the southern extension of the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan area. The examination of public policies and the rapid expansion of Kuala Lumpur lead the discussion into the shaping of a hoped-for ethnic integration but ‘an automobile-segregated city’. The last section will provide a summary to this chapter; in addition, it draws lessons from the present chapter and raises further questions for the task of the following chapters.
3.1 Geography and demography

Malaysia is one of eleven countries that form the region of Southeast Asia. The capital city of Malaysia is Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur, or KL as most people call it, is an inland city in the valley of the Klang River basin of Selangor State, west-Malaysia (Figure 3.1). It is located approximately on the imaginary lines of latitude 3 degrees north and the longitude 101 degrees east and hence close to the Equator. It experiences an annual average temperature between 22 and 32 degrees Celsius, and the daily range of temperature is about 5 to 10 degree Celsius. The humidity in KL is constantly high, with the mean monthly relative humidity falling within 70% to 90%. This hot and humid tropical rain forest climate is one of the main concerns for people walking longer distances in the city; additionally, sudden heavy rain is a problem.

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31 The region of Southeast Asia consists of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Burma (Myanmar) and East Timor.
32 People of Malaysia like to use abbreviations for various reasons; for instance, it is ‘economical’ (less words to be used in writing), easy to remember, easier pronunciation, and probably ‘glamorous’ (for example: USA, the United States of America; UK, United Kingdom; and KL, Kuala Lumpur).
33 See Malaysian Meteorological Department (MMD) accessed 10 June 2008.
Figure 3.1: The location of Kuala Lumpur

[a] “Colonialism in Southeast Asia, 1939” (Mestrovic 1976, p.125)

[b] “Three different states – Malaya, Sarawak, and Sabah – make up Malaysia. (Four lands made up the original Malaysia when it was formed in 1963, but Singapore left the Federation in 1965.) Time has been too short to merge all these diverse peoples, cultures, economies, and life-styles.” (Mestrovic 1976, pp.46-47)

[c] (Southgate and Bracken 2008, p.15)

Malaysia is one of the Southeast Asian countries. It consists of west (the peninsula) and east (part of Borneo island) regions. Kuala Lumpur is located in the centre of the west region or west-Malaysia.
Generally, Kuala Lumpur has four seasons: the southwest monsoon is from May to September; the northeast monsoon is from November to March; and two shorter inter-monsoon seasons are in April and October. The northeast monsoon usually brings more rainfall than other seasons and it sometimes causes serious floods in some states. Floods mostly hit villages, probably due to the poor planning and insufficiency of maintenance work on the villages’ drainages or simply because villages are mostly established on sites that are too close to riverbanks. Kuala Lumpur is a good example of this ‘bad’ siting. KL is not only located in the centre of a valley, it is also at the confluence of the two major rivers of the valley – Gombak and Klang Rivers. Its up-stream is quite hilly but down-stream is more flat, while the immediate surrounds of the city comprise undulating land. Therefore, topographically, Kuala Lumpur is located on a flood plain. As Figure 3.2 shows, there have been several times when the town was seriously flooded. The sudden flood not only damages properties; more importantly, it virtually disables the city instantly. The city stops functioning suddenly because businesses and services close immediately and people cannot move from one place to another easily and safely. The city is not walkable at all whenever flood has occurred. The only activity for people is to wish that the flood water could drain out as quickly as possible while they find a safe place to wait. Due to its serious impacts, much capital has been invested by government to mitigate and control the flood problem in KL. However, local residents believe the problem of sudden flooding in the city centre is hard to resolve totally due to its natural topography. This raises the question of the siting of KL, why it was located there at the first place? The obvious reason relates to accessibility, particularly to Klang. Klang was the Selangor State Capital before Kuala Lumpur and subsequently Shah Alam. In the past, there were two ways to reach Klang from Kuala Lumpur; the river way via the Klang River would be preferred rather than by foot crossing mostly jungle. Within KL itself, the centre of the early settlement would be the jetty. The residential areas would be located as close as possible to the jetty and its shops or in proximity to the workplaces. The distances
from residential areas to the jetty, shops and workplaces were important considerations simply because the only local transportation mode at that time was by foot.

**Figure 3.2:** The ‘big’ sudden floods in Kuala Lumpur

(a) 1911 flood (G20057).

(b) 1926 flood (G18083).

(c) 1926 flood, Mountbatten Road (G20053).

(d) 1926 flood, High Street (G23879).

(e) 1971 flood, Municipality building (G10581).

(f) 1971 flood, Rodger Street (at the far end is the Central Market) (G10587).

(g) 1971 flood, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman (G10584).

(Photographs are from the National Archives of Malaysia. The number in parentheses after each caption is the record number of the particular photograph recorded by the National Archives of Malaysia)

Despite its occasionally sudden flood problem, Kuala Lumpur is arguably one of the more rapidly developing cities in the Southeast Asia region, physically and demographically. In the 1880s, it was a small but reasonably vibrant Chinese tin miners’ settlement. Lam (2004, p.88) has noted that KL had only about seven streets at that time. In addition, according to Chay (1989, p.12), it had about 300 houses, of which fewer than one-third were occupied by Malays. Nevertheless, after more than 120 years, the 2004 gazetted Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (KLSP 2020) shows the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur covering an area of approximately 243 square kilometers (24,300 hectares) with population of about 1.4 million in 2000 (Dewan
Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.4-3). The average density is about 58 persons per hectare. This 1.4 million population of KL in 2000 consisted of 38% Bumiputera, 43% Chinese, 10% Indian, and 9% others and non-citizens (Department of Statistics cited in Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.4-4). Thus, it has been a Chinese community dominated area since its establishment (Steinberg 1987, p.255).

However, Kuala Lumpur remains administered and controlled by the Malay community due to various reasons. The most obvious one relates to political considerations. In the British time, the British needed support from the Malays, notably the Bugis Sultan and the Minangkabau community, in order to better control the rapidly increasing Chinese community in KL. Agricultural land reserved specifically for the Malay community in the town was one of the British actions to sustain support from the Malays; Kampung Baru, a Malay agricultural settlement land reservation from 1891 is one of these. Besides, the introduction of a town council, the Sanitary Board to replace the Kapitan Cina appointment, can be interpreted as another action by the British to gain support from the Malay community and at the same time suppress Chinese influence in the town. After the British departure, the Malay dominated Government of Malaysia had to ensure it had a hand over KL which was important to the Government simply because most federal government administrative offices were located there before Putrajaya, the new Federal Government Administrative Centre of Malaysia was built. There were several strategic actions taken by the Government to pave the way for Malay administrative power over KL. First, the Local Government Election was suspended in the 1960s and later repealed permanently under the Local

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34 **Bumiputera** is a Malay word that literally could be translated as “sons of the earth”. In the understanding of the general public, it refers to the group of people who are (1) Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula, (2) Natives in any of the Sabah and Sarawak States, and (3) Malays (‘Malay’ means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and [a] was before Merdeka Day [31 August 1957] born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or was on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or [b] is the issue of such a person [Article number 160, Constitution of Malaysia]).

35 **Kapitan Cina** are Malay words, literally ‘Chinese Captain’ or ‘headman of the Chinese community’. In this writing, **Kapitan Cina** or Chinese Capitan will be used interchangeably. Kuala Lumpur had five Kapitan Cina before the system was abolished by the British and replaced with a council system. The five Kapitan Cina of Kuala Lumpur were: (1) Hiu Siew (1859-1862), (2) Liu Ngim Kong (1862-1868), (3) Yap Ah Loy (1868-1885), (4) Yap Ah Shak (1885-1889) and (5) Yap Kwan Seng (1889-1901).
Government Act 171, 1976. Under the provisions of Act 171, all local council members were appointed by the state government. This would seem to have been a strategy to ensure that the Malay dominated Government of Malaysia would not lose control over areas dominated by the other communities; Kuala Lumpur is one of the obvious examples with a high percentage of non-Malay population. However, this strategy could not work well if the Government of Malaysia lost control over the state government as variously happened in Kelantan, Pulau Pinang, Selangor, Perak, Terengganu and Kedah States, where political opposition parties have successfully taken over the state governments in previous national general elections. Therefore, the Government of Malaysia took action to gazette Kuala Lumpur, which was in the Selangor State, as the Federal Territory in 1974. This strategy obviously worked well in the 2008 National General Elections, where the Government of Malaysia led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) remained in control of the city, although they only won one parliamentary seat out of 11 seats in the Kuala Lumpur area. Most decision-makers of the city, the Datuk Bandar (Mayor) and council members are appointed by the federal government; therefore they are answerable to the federal government, specifically via the Minister of the Ministry of the Federal Territories, and not to the people of KL. In other words, the tense but always suppressed relationship between the people of the city and the administrators or authorities, the British in the past and the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL)\textsuperscript{36} at present, is understandable because, first, they come from different groups of the community, and secondly they are politically opposed.

\textsuperscript{36} Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), in English the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KLCH), is the City Council of Kuala Lumpur.
3.2 The discovery and prosperity of Kuala Lumpur

In order to better understand a city, it is always necessary to study the history or evolution of the city in the past. In any wider history discourse, Kuala Lumpur is considered a young city; it has only had about one hundred and fifty (150) years as compared to other cities in the world that could be hundreds or thousands of years old. A number of scholars have written about KL comprehensively, but only a few are relevant to this section of the research, namely Gullick, Middlebrook and probably Swettenham. However, they were only able to cover the period before the 1940s. Therefore, there is limited systematic research and comprehensive writing specifically about the town, particularly for the periods of Japanese Occupation and post-World War II, the early period after independence, the economic ‘boom’ period in the 1980s, and the period during and after the financial crisis in 1997 through to the present. The most recently published research book that has focused on Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya is by King in 2008.

Many have claimed, and it has become accepted as fact, that the settlement of Kuala Lumpur began at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers about 150 years ago. In 1857, Raja Abdullah, the Malay chief of the Klang Valley at that time, employed a group of 87 Chinese miners to explore for new tin mine sites in the upper reaches of the Klang Valley. The Chinese miners began the exploration from Klang. They were first transported by boats to the up-stream reaches of the Klang River, landing at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers. From there they continued their tin mine searching mission heading in the northeast direction along the Klang River by foot. Eventually, this group of miners successfully discovered new tin mine sites in the area of Ampang today.

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37 S. M. Middlebrook was killed in 1944 during the Japanese regime in Malaya. At that time he had yet to complete his writing about Yap Ah Loy. Later Gullick helped to complete the book and published it in 1951.

38 Sir Frank Swettenham was the British Resident of Selangor and Perak States before serving as the first British Resident-General of the Federated Malay States from 1896 to 1901. He wrote a number of books about Malay communities in Malaya, Malay Sketches being one of them.
After the tin mining area was identified, they started to clear the site, as Ampang at that time was still jungle, in order to set up a new base for tin mining. Many of them, however, were struck down by malaria and wild animals, as a result of which only 18 survived from these incidents (Gullick 2000, p.6; Teoh 2005, p.2-2; China Press n.d.). After Raja Abdullah learned of the situation, he requested support from his brother, Raja Jumaat, who had control of Lukut at that time. Raja Jumaat immediately transported another group of 150 Chinese miners to Ampang to help in setting up the new tin mining base. After two years of hard work from the group of Chinese miners, finally in 1859 the tin from Ampang started to be transported out to Klang via Kuala Lumpur (Gullick 2000; Teoh 2005). The Klang River was the important route to transport tin from Ampang to Klang before the railway track was constructed in 1886. Figure 3.3 shows the ‘tin waterway’ between Ampang and Klang, where Kuala Lumpur played a significant role as the inland-port of the tin mining industry at that time.

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39 In the 19th century, Selangor State was divided into five areas; from south to north there were Lukut, Langat, Klang, Kuala Selangor, and Bernam (S. M. Middlebrook 1951: Yap Ah Loy cited in Teoh 2005, thesis). Lukut is now in Negeri Sembilan.

40 The railway track link between Kuala Lumpur and Klang (Bt. Kuda) was built in 1886 (Kaur 1985, p.16).
Figure 3.3: The ‘tin-waterway’ between Ampang and Klang

(a) The area of Selangor State in the 1870s. Kuala Lumpur located at the confluence of Klang and Gombak Rivers in the territory of Selangor State.

(b) Sketch map of Kuala Lumpur in 1875 by Swettenham, the British Resident of Selangor State, 1882-1883.

(c) The map shows part of Selangor State in the 1890s, now known as the Klang Valley. The arrow marks the waterway for transporting the tin from Ampang to Klang via Kuala Lumpur. It was also the route of the tin mines exploration by the 87 Chinese miners in 1857 from Klang to Kuala Lumpur and Ampang.
To a certain extent, Kuala Lumpur was at a strategic location because it was on the only main route to travel from Klang to Ampang at that time; it became the transit point between Ampang and Klang, and many miners lived in the town and worked at Ampang. The success of Ampang tin mining drew many laborers and miners to this newly established area. The rapidly increasing population accordingly provided many business opportunities. In that era, at most tin mining sites, there were shops set up mostly by Chinese to sell basic goods and to provide daily services for the miners.\(^{41}\) Therefore, shops were increasingly set up along the east bank of the Klang River. It is believed that Hiu Siew was invited by Sutan Puasa, who was headman of his Sumatran community at that time, to operate his business in Kuala Lumpur.\(^{42}\) Hiu Siew and his partner Ah Sze set up a sundry shop somewhere near Cross Street (now Jalan Tun Tan Siew Sin). In 1859, Hiu Siew became the first Kapitan Cina of Kuala Lumpur with the assistance of Sutan Puasa (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.19; Lam 2004, p.18).

Two year later, in 1861, Liu Ngim Kong came to Kuala Lumpur after recovering from the 1860 Sungei Ujong Massacre,\(^{43}\) and somehow Kapitan Cina Hiu Siew appointed Liu Ngim Kong to assist him to oversee the Chinese community in the town. Before Liu Ngim Kong’s arrival in KL, he was an assistant to Shin, the Kapitan Cina of Sungei Ujong, who died in the Sungei Ujong Massacre (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.19). Liu Ngim Kong succeeded Hiu Siew as the second Kapitan Cina of Kuala Lumpur in 1862.\(^{44}\) The mines in KL flourished in the following few years. Yap Ah Loy, who was the acting headman at Sungei Ujong at that time, became interested in KL because of the wealth of the new settlement and, with an invitation from Liu Ngim Kong.

\(^{41}\) Many businessmen went to the tin mining area (i.e., Kuala Lumpur) to do business by exchanging goods with tin, and then bringing the tin out from the area to sell it to tin collectors (in Klang). It is believed that this was profitable business, and many businessmen got rich by doing so.\(^{42}\) According to Middlebrook, Hiu Siew and Sutan Puasa knew each other while doing business in Lukut (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.19).\(^{43}\) The Sungei Ujong Massacre was a fighting incident between two Chinese groups that sided with different Malay headmen of the tin mines. The incident, lasting six months, claimed about four thousand Chinese lives. Interestingly, three of the future Kuala Lumpur’s Kapitan Cina were directly involved in this incident, namely Liu Ngim Kong, Yap Ah Loy and Yap Ah Shak.\(^{44}\) According to Middlebrook’s record, Liu Ngim Kong was a rapacious and ungrateful person. It is believed that he seized the private property of Hiu Siew as well as the post of Kapitan Cina (he was self-elected, however without incident) (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.20).
Kong, Yap Ah Loy left for KL and joined Liu Ngim Kong. Yap Ah Loy soon gained considerable wealth after his arrival in the town because he had his fixed income as manager of Liu Ngim Kong’s mines and additionally he owned two mining sites. In 1865, Yap Ah Loy opened his first druggist’s shop named Chop Tet Sang. It was during this period that he built the Sin Sze Si Ya Temple (仙四师爷) (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, pp.21-22; Lam 2004, p.22).

Before Liu Ngim Kong passed away in 1868, he requested Yap Ah Loy “to be his successor, manager of his property and protector of his family” (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.29). Yap Ah Loy succeeded Liu Ngim Kong as the third Kapitan Cina of Kuala Lumpur in 1868, and he served for a period of seventeen years.45 By the time he died in 1885, the town was already a significant local transit and trading centre. Figure 3.4 shows the growth of the town during the Yap Ah Loy era, 1868 to 1885. Although Yap Ah Loy’s investment was concentrated in the centre of the town which he had rebuilt three times in his life, he also constructed roads to link up the town with the surrounding mining areas (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, pp.93-94). Additionally, his personal influence was not confined within Kuala Lumpur. He also invested in many mining areas within the Selangor State, namely Ampang, Petaling, Pudu, Setapak, Kuala Kubu, Serendah and Kepong (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.97). Besides the mining industry, he was also involved in other industries, such as tapioca production at Jalan Petaling, brick production at Brickfields, and brothels at Pudu. He was a risk taker, but his perseverance granted him fortune. He was a great entrepreneur, administrator and leader, as Swettenham reported after having visited the town in the last months before Yap Ah Loy died:

45 The historical stories about Yap Ah Loy, especially during his seventeen years Kapitan Cina period, are well articulated by Middlebrook and Gullick (1983) in the book entitled Yap Ah Loy 1837-1885.
“The Capitan China, Ah Loi [sic], is still the leading spirit in Selangor, his energy and enterprise are extraordinary. During the disturbances before the inauguration of the Residential System, this town was three [sic] times burnt down by the Malays and rebuilt by the Capitan China, who in spite of disaster held the place at the earnest request of Tunku Dia Udin. The Capitan China has connected the chief mines with Kuala Lumpur by long roads, his perseverance alone, I believe, has kept the Chinese in the country, and until quite recently, his exertions have kept the peace in Kuala Lumpur and the vicinity without, the Superintendent of Police informs me, one single serious crime being committed. He has provided the sick with an Asylum, administrated justice to the satisfaction of his countrymen, opened a brickfield where he is doing excellent work and planted a tapioca estate larger than any in the Colony (sc: Straits Settlements), the flour being obtained by machinery put up at Kuala Lumpur and now under the superintendence of English engineer” (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.95).

**Figure 3.4:** Kuala Lumpur before and after the 1880s

(Kuala Lumpur in the 1870s (above left), the settlement is concentrated at the Medan Pasar site today. While in the 1880s (above right), the map shows roads extended southeast, north and west.

It is believed that during Yap Ah Loy’s era, particularly after the end of the Selangor Civil War\(^\text{46}\), Kuala Lumpur was a thriving, prosperous, peaceful and crime free settlement. That probably is one of the significant factors that attracted British interest in the town. The vibrant and steadily growing Kuala Lumpur had somewhat challenged and over-shadowed Klang, the State Capital of Selangor at that time. This could be traced by reading the texts of Isabella L. Bird who, as a traveler and writer,

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\(^{46}\) The Selangor Civil War was between 1869 and 1873 (see Middlebrook and Gullick 1983). It started due to the conflicts between Malay headmen over the power of the tin mine sites in Selangor State. The involvement of Chinese miner groups in backing different Malay headmen complicated the conflicts.
described Klang as an uninteresting village, deteriorated, under-developed, poorly managed and mostly only with public servants; Kuala Lumpur by contrast, is described as an attractive settlement, developing, advanced in plantation and enterprises, well governed, full of business energy and mostly housing Chinamen (Bird 1985, pp.219-221).

In 1880, the British in the Selangor State decided to shift the administrative centre to Kuala Lumpur from Klang. This decision of the British indirectly indicated that KL had physically out-done and administratively replaced Klang as the principal town of the Selangor State. Ten years later, after Yap Ah Loy had died and as the influence of the British had expanded into other states in Malaya, in 1896 Kuala Lumpur became the capital town of the Federated Malay States. At this point, most of the areas in the centre of the town, such as Old Market Square, Petaling Street, Batu Road and the Padang were already in place as one could locate them today. Figure 3.5 shows the 1895 plan of the town prepared by the authorities. The physical layout and structure of this old Kuala Lumpur area had already formed and developed. At that point of time, the Chinese community in the town was headed by the Fifth and the last Kapitan Cina Yap Kwan Seng (1889-1901), who succeeded the fourth Kapitan Cina Yap Ah Shak (1885-1889). Figure 3.6 shows the continuing physical improvement and spatial development of the town over the years under the supervision of the Kapitan Cina and later the British administration before Malaya gained independence. A hundred years after it was founded, Kuala Lumpur was prosperous and vibrant enough to be crowned as the capital city of the Federation of Malaya in 1957, and later Malaysia in 1963 through to the present day.

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47 Federated Malay States consisted of four states: Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang.
48 The Federation of Malaya, formed on 31 January 1948, consisted of eleven states: Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Melaka, and Johor; the Federation of Malaya was later recognized as an independent nation on 31 August 1957.
49 Malaysia was formed after Singapore, Sarawak, and British North Borneo (Sabah) joined the Federation of Malaya on 16 September 1963; later Singapore separated from Malaysia on 9 August 1965.
The pattern of the old Kuala Lumpur had formed and developed before the introduction of town planning to the city.
Figure 3.6: The spatial development and physical improvement of Kuala Lumpur

[a] KL in the 1860s

[b] KL in the 1880s (i) The thatched (atap) houses on the east bank of the Klang River

[c] KL in the 1900s (ii) Shophouses replaced the atap houses

[d] KL in the 1920s (iii) A view of the Old Market Square

[e] KL in the 1950s (iv) A view of Jalan Petaling in 1953 (G11482) (v) A view of Batu Road in 1953 (11481)

(The maps [a], [b], [c], [d] and [e] are in Datuk Bandar Kuala Lumpur 1991; the photographs [i], [ii] and [iii] are in Gullick in Chen (ed.) 1998, pp.74-75; the photographs [iv] and [v] are from the National Archives of Malaysia)
3.3 Ethnic segregation but ‘a pedestrian-integrated town’

Although the Kuala Lumpur settlement was developed and dominated by diaspora Chinese after it was founded in 1857, it was actually part of Selangor State, the territory of a Bugis Sultan. Meanwhile the question of the ‘founder’ of Kuala Lumpur presents an inconclusive debate to the present day. However, the town was obviously built and rebuilt by diaspora Chinese, from a diversity of Chinese locations. The argument over the founder(s) arose because there are scholars who believed that there was a Minangkabau kampung existing to the north of the confluence of the Gombak and Klang Rivers even before the coming of Chinese miners and retailers. Nevertheless, the dominance of diaspora Chinese in Kuala Lumpur was obviously clear when the Kapitan Cina was appointed by the Bugis Sultan under the British advisory, to oversee, develop and manage the town. The Chinese-British-Bugis-Minangkabau interactions underlay the complexity of KL in terms of administrative and ethnic composition. In other words, there was a British administration, imposed on a diaspora Chinese town, alongside a Minangkabau kampong in a Bugis state.

Kuala Lumpur has always been a multi-ethnic town comprising many different cultures or life-styles of its people. However, it seems natural that people would find it easier to adapt or live within their own community (Steinberg 1987, p.257). Diaspora Chinese chose to stay within their community for an obvious reason – protection. However, even among themselves, they formed a number of groups based on their speaking different dialects, such as Hakka, Cantonese and Hokkien. Although sometimes there were conflicts between groups, generally they lived together as a

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50 The Bugis Sultan at that time had no interest in the local administration, so long as he was receiving the taxes (Middlebrook and Gullick 1983, p.19).
51 Kampung is a Malay word, which means village or kampong.
52 The construction of a building with a Minangkabau roof design (the Menara Bumiputera building, now occupied by Bank Muamalat), located near the present Masjid Jamek LRT station, might be one of the physical representations of the claim.
53 Bugis and Minangkabau all call themselves Malay or Bumiputera in Malaysia.
54 Each dialect group had its own temple, i.e., Sin Sze Si Ya Temple was built (1864) and visited by the Hakka dialect group; Kwong Siew Temple was built (1888) and visited by a Cantonese dialect group; and Guan Yin Temple was started (1890) and visited by mostly the Hokkien dialect group.

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Chinese community on the east side of the Klang River, which is the areas of Medan Pasar, Jalan Petaling, and Jalan Pudu today. However, the wealthy Chinese later settled further east on the higher ground of the Bukit Bintang and Jalan Ampang areas.

Meanwhile the Minangkabau (Malay) community lived in the *kampung* located to the north of the confluence of the Gombak and Klang Rivers, which are the areas of Masjid Jamek, Jalan Melaka, Jalan Melayu and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman of the present day. There were also kampongs located in remote areas that are now the periphery of Kuala Lumpur city centre. The Bugis (Malay) Sultan lived in Klang. However, there was an *istana* (royal residence) located on the present St. John Primary School site next to the Catholic Church on Jalan Bukit Nanas.

In the early period of Kuala Lumpur, the Indian community had not yet arrived. Many Indians were imported to Malaya as labor in the plantation estates by the British only in the early 1900s. However, there were already some Indians in Selangor State before the great Indian migration wave that contributed directly to the forming of the Indian community in Kuala Lumpur particularly and Malaysia more generally. Indians in Malaya before the 1900s migration wave were mostly skilled workers or professionals that worked under the British administration. For instance, there were army, police and office administrative clerks; among others, the leading Indian figure was Thambusamy Pillai. He was popular among the Indian community and his house was in Batu Road (now Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman). Meanwhile there were some Chettiars, Indian-Muslims and Indian-Hindus doing business in the area of Lebuh Ampang today. Besides the ‘elite’ defense forces and office workers, self-employed businessmen and the labor on plantation estates, many Indians were transported to Kuala Lumpur by the British as labor for railway construction. There were therefore many Indians settled near the main railway stations as one can still observe the Indian

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55 See King 2008, p.70: The map of the Malay Reservation Areas.
56 See Figure 3.7. The Kuala Lumpur plan dated 1889 drawn by W.T.Wood in Khoo (1996, p.45).
57 Thambusamy Pillai come to Selangor State in 1875 as a clerk in the British Resident’s office in Klang. In 1889 he began his career as a tin miner, moneylender (Chettiar), and government contractor. He was skilled in public relations. A curry tiffin at his house in Batu Road was well known. The Sri Maha Mariamman Temple was his main legacy to his community (Ziauddin 2000, pp.71-72).
community in the KL railway centres of Brickfields and Sentul today.

After the British decided to shift the administrative centre to Kuala Lumpur from Klang in 1880, they established some administrative offices on the far western side of the Klang River, which is the area of Kuala Lumpur Lake Garden today, while they chose to live further to the north in the area behind the present day Bank Negara. The British settled into the hillsides areas. They located their offices closer to the Chinese area, probably to better control the Chinese, while they built their residences closer to the Malay, seemingly to enjoy the tropical village environment. In fact, the British seemed to make use of the natural barrier of the Gombak and Klang Rivers to draw a virtual physical buffer, presumably for security reasons.

**Figure 3.7** shows the ethnic settlements in the early period of Kuala Lumpur. It is obvious that Kuala Lumpur was an ethnically-segregated town; each ethnic group had its own territory except the Indians, who were squeezed and mixed in between the other communities. For instance, the Indian-Muslims settled between the Malays and other communities, while Indian elite located between the British and the other communities. These locations were perhaps due to the nature of their religion or language capability. However, as noted above, the Indian community has two significant areas in proximity to the city centre of Kuala Lumpur: Brickfields and Sentul. Both areas are closely associated with the civil construction of the railway. While Kuala Lumpur was an ethnically-segregated town, it was also a pedestrian-integrated town because the common areas, especially the *padang* and market, were all located in the middle of the community territories and seemingly within walking distances of them.
Figure 3.7: Ethnic settlements in early Kuala Lumpur

(The background map is the 1889 Kuala Lumpur Plan drawn by W.T. Wood found in Khoo 1996, p.45)

Legend:
- Chinese community
- Malays community
- Indians community
- British offices and residents
- Common area
In the British administration period, the ethnic segregation not only appeared in the territorialized settlements; there was also an ethnic division of labor and a stereotyping of roles. For instance, Chinese were in the mining, commerce and finance sectors; Malays in agriculture and aquaculture fields; and Indians in estate plantation and civil construction industries. Meanwhile the British were supreme over all communities in order to help the Bugis Sultan to manage his land and people and ensure the taxes arriving at the istana on time. I believe that this was the “divide-and-rule” strategy introduced by the British in order to fully exploit the potential of each ethnic community for the British long-term economic benefit. The segregation also followed the current British ideology of planning on ‘scientific’ principles. Raffles had advocated such planning for the Straits Settlements.\(^58\)

Generally, the British were segregating the communities for various reasons, mainly for easy control and management. However, the underlying reason seems to have been for their colonial safety; it was to avoid the unification of the different communities, which could perhaps empower the wider community to cast the British out from the region that had ample natural resources to be exploited.

Alongside the stereotyping approach, the British also employed an ‘open’ or vernacular education system, which had English schools, Chinese schools, Tamil schools, and Malay schools. Although there was no restriction on any ethnic group to study in an ethnic school, it was natural for Chinese to go to a Chinese school, Indians to a Tamil school, and Malays to a Malay school. The English school was usually only accessed by the ‘elite’ (probably from the royal families) or those rich enough at that time to send their young children to an English school, then eventually to go to study in a foreign country, mostly Great Britain. This seemingly leads to the issue of ‘social class’ within a community and between communities.\(^59\)

Many believed that it was the British stereotyping approach and the vernacular

\(^{58}\) The Straits Settlements was established by the British in 1826. It comprised Penang (Pulau Pinang), Malacca (Melaka) and Singapore.

\(^{59}\) On the present class/ethnic structure of Malaysian society, based on electoral and financial data, reference can be made, respectively, to Gomez (2004a) and (2004b); also Gomez and Jomo (1998).
education system that segregated the communities, with Kuala Lumpur giving every appearance of an ethnically-segregated town at that time. However, the town was actually a socially and functionally integrated town. Although we can identify quite clearly the areas of different communities, there was social interaction and relationships between each community and a degree of harmony; at least there is no record of serious conflict between different communities in the past, before the incident of 13 May 1969.\textsuperscript{60} Maybe the only conflicts were between Chinese and Chinese about territory of mining sites or personal conflicts, or between Malay and Malay about administrative or authority powers. According to Gullick (1994, pp.40-47), during the British colonial administration times, different communities gathered at the Padang (Dataran Merdeka today) during the fete, as different cultures would mount performances, such as Chinese theatre, Malay theatre, and Tamil theatre, which were set up and shown at the Padang. The gathering of multi-community Kuala Lumpur at Dataran Merdeka during festivals is still a practice today. However, the arrangement of the celebration ground nowadays is somehow more formal than in the past. Today, the segregation is not between the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities but it is between the general public and the public agencies directly controlled by the political parties (Figure 3.8). Besides the occasional fete and the celebration of festivals, there was also an everyday place – the market. The old market place, located at what is the Medan Pasar today, drew the different communities together every day. People would go to the market place for various reasons, though most obviously for food, sundry shopping, games, meeting someone or for reasons best known to themselves. In short, Kuala Lumpur in the past was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural town; although it was a physically-segmented town, there was much social integration at a number of levels between different communities.

\textsuperscript{60} Francis Loh Kok Wah (2010, pp.17-18) has listed a number of incidents that had happened before 13 May 1969; however, most were outside Kuala Lumpur and not as serious as May 13. As Loh puts it, “the most severe … clashes were the ‘May 13, 1969 racial riot’.”
Figure 3.8: The fete on the Padang in 1897 and the festival at Dataran Merdeka in 2008

Kuala Lumpur in the early 20th century was a pedestrian town. This was simply because there were not many motor-vehicles at that time. Although people who had extra money could hire a rickshaw, or ride a horse, or even take a horse-drawn carriage (while a bullock cart would be used to transport goods, rubbish, drinking water, and sick people), nevertheless most people would walk to work, shops and recreation. The Kuala Lumpur town was obviously small, therefore walkable (Figure 3.9). The shops were concentrated near the Klang River; residential houses were just a few streets from the shops and workplaces, or just upstairs from the shops (the concept of shophouses). It was therefore a pedestrian town, albeit ‘unplanned’.

61 There was a casino at Medan Pasar even before that at the Genting Highlands and a red-light district with brothels around the Pudu area; mostly owned by the Chinese administrator, Yap Ah Loy. Besides, the Padang was always the formal and informal recreational place created by the British administration.
Figure 3.9: The physical development of Kuala Lumpur in the 1890s

Legend:
- 250 meter radius
- The interaction / common area

The map shows the layout of the capital city of the Federated Malay States, Kuala Lumpur in the 1890s.

The size of central KL is approximately 2 kilometers from north to south, and 1 kilometer from east to west. (It is about the same size as the Melbourne city centre today.)

Its facilities were presumably within walking distances at that time and, to a certain extent, are still so today.

Besides, the map also shows that the old areas of KL, which one could see in the present day, had actually been structured before the 1890s.

The circles were drawn on a 250-meter radius, which can be suggested as the walking distance of people of the present day.

(King 2008, p.15)
3.4 The town planning of ‘the unplanned town’

Kuala Lumpur was a rapidly developing town. Its replacement of Klang as the capital town of Selangor State was one evidence of its fast growth. In addition, the expansion of its boundaries was further evidence of its dynamism. The defined physical boundaries of the town in the 1930s were, from east to west, the horse race field (KLCC today) to Kuala Lumpur Lake Garden (now Taman Tasik Perdana); and from north to south, it was from the General Hospital to Sg. Besi Airport. This ‘town of Kuala Lumpur’ in the 1930s, in fact, defines the area of the ‘city centre of Kuala Lumpur’ today as indicated in the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.17-1). In fact, Kuala Lumpur was an ‘unplanned’ town, although most planners like to call it an ‘organic’ town instead. In the past, it grew or developed rather naturally or in an ad-hoc manner. It is believed that most developments were initiated by individuals based on the immediate need or demand or opportunity. While the intensity and uses of the developments were very flexible or negotiable between the proposed individuals and the authorities, nevertheless there was little planning intervention by the colonial authorities.
Figure 3.10: The 1930s Kuala Lumpur town

The formal request for town planning services for Kuala Lumpur was first made by W.F. Nutt in 1912. His justification was to prevent further unplanned development and further uncontrolled expansion of the town boundaries. However, the request was only answered nine years later on 18 January 1921 when the first Kuala Lumpur town planning office was opened. The first town planner was Charles Reade from the South Australian Government. Some of the town planning work by Charles Reade covered the Victoria Institution relocation, roads widening, realignment of the Klang River (Figure 3.11), building government quarters and public housing. Besides those physical works, I believe Charles Reade’s most significant contribution to town planning in Malaysia, particularly for Kuala Lumpur, was the suggestion of the first planning legislation,² which also introduced the General Town Plans. In 1929, there

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² The Town Planning Enactment of 1923, reviewed in 1927.
were five qualified town planners, who were from Great Britain working under Charles Reade. Charles Reade retired in 1929 and was succeeded by R.P. Davies. In the 1933 worldwide economic recession, all town planners were terminated except R.P. Davies. The planning office was then closed during the Second World War (WWII), in which the Japanese regime invaded Malaya and the British colonial authorities departed.

Figure 3.11: The Kuala Lumpur 1929 plan and the 1930s plan

Comparing the 1929 and 1930s plans, they show the Klang River has been realigned (as marked in circles). The realignment of the river was presumably to deal with the flooding problem. Besides, these maps also show the development of Kuala Lumpur after 70 years of its founding and before WWII.

The Japanese Occupation in Malaya during the WWII is a period that is important to be noted, particularly in understanding the subsequent tense inter-community relationships in Malaya, the Malay-Chinese in particular. The British colonial administration attempted to return to the previous “divide-and-rule” strategy as discussed in the previous section, based on racial stereotyping and the vernacular education system. These policies were in fact to minimize disturbance to the local
communities in the interests of the British economic benefit. Although the policies did not seem to have encouraged interaction and unity within the communities, neither did they foster inter-community antagonism. Nevertheless, the ‘normal’ everyday relationships among the communities in Malaya were seriously affected and turned into an ‘uneasy’ (suspicious) relationship during the Japanese Occupation period. The Japanese brought with them a hatred of the Chinese; hence, on the one hand they treated the Chinese cruelly, while on the other hand actively fostered Malay hatred of the Chinese. In addition they offered the Malays positions in civil administration that apparently contributed to the tense inter-communal relationships. Steinberg (1987) has described the Japanese regime’s differentiated approach to the communities in Malaya:

“Toward the Malays the Japanese had been, if scarcely paternalistic, somewhat conciliatory, pursuing … Toward the Chinese the invaders had been initially brutal, … and subsequently mistrustful and harassing. … Indians … thousands … were carried off to work, and die, on the Burma railway. Many Malays, at least for a time, filled positions in the civil administration to which they had not been permitted to aspire under the British.” (Steinberg 1987, p.405)

The extreme opposite treatments of the Japanese regime towards the communities in Malaya caused long-term negative effects to the inter-communal relationships in Malaya. For instance, the immediate post-WWII era saw the Chinese regarding the Malays as ‘traitors’ and the Malays seeing the Chinese as ‘usurpers’. These kinds of prejudice among communities persist, even escalate, to the present day.

Not long after WWII and the British return to Malaya, in 1946 the planning work resumed, headed by T.H.H. Hancock, an architect-planner under the Public Works Department (PWD). The scope of town planning work widened and the town planner was then known as the Malayan Union Town Planning Officer. T.A.L Concannon was the head of town planning for two years before Malaya gained independence from the British colonial regime in 1957. However, the town planning practice was still headed by several British town planners after independence until the 1970s when Dato’ Rosli
Buyong was appointed Director-General of the Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia. His appointment marked the official the end of British town planners in Malaysia, although the British influence persists as many town planners were educated and trained under the British planning system.

Kuala Lumpur was generally a Malay administered, Chinese city after the British departed in 1957. As a national capital, Kuala Lumpur functioned as a town before it was granted ‘city’ status on 1 February 1972 under the Kuala Lumpur City Act 1972. Furthermore, with the reason to better develop and administer the capital city, the Federal Government of Malaysia initiated the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur on 1st February 1974, while Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) was established as the local government of the city. The area of Kuala Lumpur thus was expanded from approximately 93 square kilometers to 243 square kilometers as it is now. Apparently, it seems that the creation of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur was to face the challenges of a modern city so as to be able to compete with other cities within the Southeast Asia region and around the world. However, the underlying reason was, as discussed above, the political consideration. It is now (2010) nearly 40 years since the formation of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur; the city has been led by nine appointed Mayors including the present one. Interestingly, all are ethnic Malays.

Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), ten years after its establishment, finally formulated and adopted its own planning act, the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 (Act 267), that generally incorporated two previous acts: the City of Kuala Lumpur (Planning) Act 1973 (Act 107) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172) (Omar and Ling 2009, p.32). Although DBKL took a longer time to finalize its own planning act than did Charles Reade who drew up Town Planning Enactment


1923 within two years from his appointment, in 1984 the first Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan (KLSP) was formulated by DBKL under the provisions of Act 267. However, before the implementation of Act 267 that introduced a two-tier development plan approach (structure plans and local plans), DBKL was referring to the Kuala Lumpur Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) for town planning matters. The CDP was the Draft Town Plan (DTP) drawn up to replace the old General Town Plan (GTP). The CDP is slightly more comprehensive than the GTP in term of quantity of plans. Instead of one plan as in the GTP, the CDP had three plans: the Land Use Zoning plan, Density Zoning plan and the layout of the Central Commercial Area (Figure 3.12). Basically, the CDP was still applying the GTP or master plan approach whereby the plan was the main guide and the only source of reference for the development of Kuala Lumpur. DBKL used the CDP to guide the development of the city from the 1970s until the 1984 Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan (1984 KLSP) was finalized and gazetted.

Figure 3.12: The Comprehensive Development Plans of Kuala Lumpur

[a] CDP 1041; this is the plan that the authorities used to guide the development of the town before the 1984 KLSP was completed. The town has been zoned, different colors used to show the allowable uses of land.

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64 According to Lee (n.d., p.77) in his writing ‘Planning and the Kuala Lumpur Metropolis’, the 1965 review of the 1950 amendments of the 1939 General Town Plan noted that the plan was not adequate due to the rapid growth of Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, the Draft Town Plan was prepared in 1970.
[b] CDP 1040; this is the plan that the authorities used to control the density of the development of Kuala Lumpur. The town has been divided into several density zones, different colors used to show the allowable density of land.

[c] CDP 1039. The detail plan that the authorities used to develop or control the development of the central commercial area of Kuala Lumpur.
The two-tier development plan is a different approach from the master plan. To a certain extent, the 1984 KLSP is more comprehensive than the CDP. This is because the structure plan took into consideration more aspects rather than being merely focused on physical planning. It included social, economic, environmental aspects and to some extent ethnic-political considerations. There were 11 sectors reported in the 1984 KLSP. In other words, it covered a wider scope of town planning than the CDP covered. The structure plan contained two important components. First, a key diagram illustrated, in an indicative way, the land use zones and some major amenities and utilities within the administrative area of DBKL (Figure 3.13). Second, the policy statements spelt out the action to be taken by the authorities concerned in the valid implementation period of the structure plan. If there was conflict between the key diagram and the policy statements of the structure plan, the policies would prevail. In the two-tier development plan system, the structure plan is a macro planning document; it is a policy statement document and thus needs local plans to detail the implementation of the policies in physical form. It is interesting to note that, in the two-tier development plan approach, the completion of structure plans should logically be followed by the preparation of local plans. However, there were no local plans prepared under the 1984 KLSP.

The 11 sectors are: (1) *perumahan* [housing], (2) *pengangkutan* [transportation], (3) *membeli-belah, perniagaan dan perkhidmatan* [shopping, commerce and services], (4) *perindustrian* [industry], (5) *setinggan* [illegal settlement], (6) *perkhidmatan masyarakat* [social services], (7) *keperluan awam* [public utilities], (8) *kemudahan lipurdiri* [recreational facilities], (9) *senitaman, senibandar dan pengekalan* [parks, urban and natural landscapes conservation] (10) *kawasan simpanan Melayu* [Malay reservation area], (11) *kawasan perancangan pusat* [central planning area].
In the 1984 KLSP, the authority, DBKL, had strongly committed themselves to the plan. Their commitment could be traced from the text printed in the report; of the 128 policies, there were 87 policy statements that began with “The authority will …” (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 1984, pp.xv-xxv). However, there is not much positive impact that could be claimed from the implementation of the 1984 KLSP, particularly concerning the walkability of the city. For instance, of the 128 policies, there is only one specific policy that mentioned pedestrian physical infrastructure development:

“PB15. Pihak Berkuasa akan memberi keutamaan pada pembangunan sistem jaringan jalan kaki yang lengkap dalam bandaraya.” [PB 15. The authority will give priority to the development of a complete walkway network system in the city.] (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 1984, p.211)
The 1984 KLSP had a life period of 20 years and has recently been replaced by Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (KLSP 2020). DBKL refreshes and shows further commitment in the KLSP 2020: of the 190 policies, every policy statement now starts with “CHKL shall …” (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, pp.xxxv-xl). The new KLSP 2020 shows very little more concern about pedestrians as compared to the 1984 KLSP. There is a section on pedestrians under the heading of “Non-Motorised Transport” to briefly discuss pedestrian networks in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur and to suggest a policy to improve the pedestrian networks (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, pp.10-7 and 10-17):

“TT 17: CHKL shall develop specific guidelines and standards to provide for the needs of the aged and handicapped to be applied to pedestrian networks, new public transport terminuses and stations as well as multi-modal interchanges.” (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.10-17)

Despite the consistency of the term used, “the authority will …” or “CHKL shall …” in the policy statements, which suggests the commitment of DBKL to the plans, the KLSP 2020 adopted a slightly different way of planning for Kuala Lumpur as compared to the 1984 KLSP. While the planning of the 1984 KLSP was land use zoning orientated (e.g., housing, commercial, industry, institutional, parks, public utilities and infrastructure, see Figure 3.13), the KLSP 2020 draws on development strategy. The future functions, actions to be taken, hierarchy of centres and transportation corridors are shown on a development strategy plan. Considering the readability of the key diagram, the ten major development strategies have been illustrated in two separated diagrams in the plan (Figure 3.14).

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66 The ten development strategies are (1) enhance the working, living and business environment of the city centre, (2) designate and develop international zones, (3) designate and implement comprehensive development areas, (4) encourage and facilitate development of Malay reservation areas, traditional kampungs and new villages, (5) initiate and implement the redevelopment of blighted areas, (6) consolidate the development and enhance the environment of stable areas, (7) a complete and integrated city linkages, (8) priority and incentives development in areas around transit terminals, (9) functional distribution of centres and facilities, and (10) consolidate development and enhance environment at major entry points (see Figure 3.14).
**Figure 3.14:** Development strategy plans of the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020

Legend:

(a) The diagram shows the six development strategies and the functions and actions to be taken of the KLSP 2020.

Legend:

(b) The diagram shows the remaining four development strategies, and the hierarchy of centres and transportation corridors of the KLSP 2020.

(Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.6-12)

(Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.6-13)
In the KLSP 2020, the boundaries of the city centre of Kuala Lumpur are extended to cover a larger area of 18.13 square kilometers (1,813 hectares). This new, larger defined area of the city centre is bounded by Middle Ring Road I (MRR-I), consisting of Jalan Sg. Besi, Jalan Yew, Jalan Tun Razak, Lebuhraya Mahameru, Jalan Damansara, and Jalan Istana. The city centre reported a population of 128,721 and employment opportunities of 396,036 in the year 2000 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.17-1), a ratio of about 1:3. Its administrator, DBKL, has planned to increase the population and employment opportunities to 245,600 and 438,010 respectively by 2020 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.17-1), which will alter the ratio to about 1:1.8; this is assuming that more people might live and work in the city centre by 2020 if the KLSP 2020 is successfully implemented. This is apparently a good move to increase the city population and job opportunities in order to make the city livelier, both day and night. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the DBKL area has potentially lost population and job opportunities consequent on the relocation of the federal government offices to Putrajaya, the newly constructed administration centre of the Malaysian federal government located approximately 25 kilometers south of Kuala Lumpur (Figure 3.15). The planning of KLSP 2020 had commenced in the early 2000s, which was after the relocation of the Prime Minister’s office to Putrajaya in 1998; thus, the planning of KLSP 2020 has had to consider the mass relocation of the federal government offices from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya. Therefore, the proposal to increase population and employment opportunities in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur was a planned challenge for DBKL that needed to be achieved. Considering that the city loses the central administrative role and thereby its population and employment opportunities, there are however still many other attractions in this 150 years old city, namely heritage and strikingly contemporary architecture, unique natural and man-made environments, and both formal and informal and old and modern types of business activities dispersed through the city centre. Borrowing the words of John Gullick (1998, p.75), “… Kuala Lumpur was neither an old nor a modern town but an untidy
mixture of the two”. It will be argued following that it is that “untidy” character that makes Kuala Lumpur attractive and interesting. Perhaps the potential of the urban tourism industry could assist DBKL to achieve its targets.

**Figure 3.15:** The Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area – Klang Valley and Putrajaya

(Bunnell 2004, p.92)

The extension of Kuala Lumpur: the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) with Putrajaya, the new federal government administrative centre, located between Kuala Lumpur and Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).
In contrast to the ‘organic’ or ‘unplanned’ and ‘untidy’ Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Administrative Centre of Putrajaya – a live, work and play garden city of 335,000 people on an area of 4,931 hectares (Ariff and Goh 1998 and Putrajaya Holdings 2003 cited in King 2008, p.147; Liu n.d., p.1) – is presumably ‘a well-planned township’ crafted from scratch by the Government of Malaysia; or more fundamentally, by the 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad (Liu n.d., p.2).

From an initial idea to develop a planned capital of Malaysia followed by the determination of site and financial sources, institutional establishment, acquisition of land, conceptual planning and designs, master plan production, architecture drawings, infrastructure and building construction until it first occupation, all happened in a period of fewer than 10 years and within the 22 years of the Mahathir prime-ministership. According to Liu (n.d.), the realization of Putrajaya was closely associated with two powerful men: Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin who played the roles as the master-mind and master-developer, respectively.

Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur are opposites in many aspects, particularly in the physical appearance and population composition. Kuala Lumpur is physically compact and houses a multi-cultural community, whereas Putrajaya is physically dispersed and houses mostly a Malay-Muslim community. In relation to the issue of walkability, it is claimed that pedestrian needs have been taken into consideration during the planning and design stages of Putrajaya. The evidence is the presence of walkways in all housing precincts located at the periphery of the Putrajaya core-island area. In fact, the housing areas are on the other side of the man-made lake and are at quite a distance from the core area of Putrajaya. Within the core-island precinct, the walkway is more obvious, especially along the grand Boulevard connecting the Prime Minister’s Office Complex and the Putrajaya International Convention Center (PICC). Nevertheless, the immense scale and unshaded walkways serve very few pedestrians.

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67 Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin was the president and chief executive officer of Petronas Nasional Berhad (Petronas) and chairman of Putrajaya Holdings.

68 Public servants in the Malaysian Government are mostly ethnic Malay.
Putrajaya in a wider spatial context is located in the heart of the 15 kilometers by 60 kilometers Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) (Figure 3.16), considered as a southern extension from the Klang Valley. According to Mahathir, the MSC is a gift to the world multimedia community offered by Malaysian (Mahathir 1998 cited in King 2008, p.134). There were several designated ‘cyber-cities’ located within the MSC area. The focus was on the “paperless electronic government” of Putrajaya and on its immediate neighbor, Cyberjaya, an information and communications technology (ICT) city (Ariff and Goh 1998 cited in King 2008, p.145), as well as a few other cyber-cities, namely Tele-suburbs, Cyber-village and Airport-city. However, these other cyber-communities are yet to be built. The development of Putrajaya seems to have slowed after the retirement of Mahathir in 2003 and the death of Azizan in 2004.

Figure 3.16: The Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area – MSC and Putrajaya

(Putrajaya Holdings n.d.)
Returning to the planning activities of Kuala Lumpur, preparation of a local plan for the city commenced after the KLSP 2020 was gazetted in 2004. The Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020 (KLCP 2020) is a planning document prepared under the provisions of the Federal Territory (Planning) Act, 1982 (Act 267). KLCP 2020 is in general known as a local plan for the city. The local plan is prepared to detail specific ways to implement the policies outlined in the structure plan. Thus, the KLCP 2020 is to translate the KLSP 2020 policies into an action plan for DBKL, to be implemented before 2020. The draft KLCP 2020 was opened for public participation in 2008, and it will become a statutory plan after going through the gazette process of the federal territory. From the town planning point of view, this planning document would be an additional planning instrument for DBKL to better control and manage the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The KLCP 2020 is a more physical or map-based document that seemingly will become the guide for planning decisions, and for stimulating the pattern of growth for Kuala Lumpur, leading the city towards a “world-class city”\(^69\). Figure 3.17 shows two examples of plans included in the KLCP 2020. The KLCP 2020 is detailed up to individual lot level. Although the KLCP 2020 is a planning document that is plan orientated, there is a section specifically discussing the walkability of the city, where it suggests 5 minutes walking radius as the reasonable walking distance in Kuala Lumpur (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2008, p.6.13).

\(^{69}\) A “world-class city” is the vision of Kuala Lumpur to be achieved in the year 2020 as explained in the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, pp.3-1~3-4) and draft Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2008, vol.1, pp.1.1~1.2).
Figure 3.17: Examples of the Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020

Legend:

[a] The plan shows the height control zone of the heritage area inside the city centre of Kuala Lumpur.

Legend:

[b] The plan shows the category of heritage buildings and the secondary heritage area.
The Government of Malaysia, through its agent the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), has envisioned Kuala Lumpur to be a world-class city by the year 2020. There are four principles: world-class working, living and business environments and a world-class city governance as described by DBKL to be achieved before 2020 in order to realize the vision of world-class city (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, pp.3-1~3-2; Dewan Banadaraya Kuala Lumpur 2008, vol.1, pp.1.1~1.2). However, one obvious quality of a world-class city nowadays should also relate to ‘sustainability’, in the context of global discussion of ‘climate change’. In relation to the sustainability of a city, whether connecting to the living, working or business environments, walkability is one important element that can support the sustainability of the city. In other words, enhancing the level of accessibility and quality of urban space in order to forge healthier community, working and business environments is a way of pushing the city a step towards achieving the vision of a world-class city.

There are at least three main arguments to support an objective of walkability for Kuala Lumpur. First, walkability is important as an ingredient of amenable, pleasant, inviting, relaxing public space. If it is easy and pleasant to walk through an area, people will most likely do so. If it can be inviting to different, in other ways isolated groups in the city, the isolation will be broken down; people become more cognizant of other people not like themselves. They face the inevitability of diversity and, over time, may come to accept that inevitability. Thus, walkability contributes to the ‘urbanity’ – a sense of relaxation in urban space – of the city. People somehow tend to be polite while walking in public spaces, moreso than when sitting in or driving their private car, particularly on congested roads that sometimes cause driver intolerance of other drivers. Moreover, walking possibly causes fewer conflicts than driving when there are accidents. Walkers bumped by strollers would possibly exchange words, usually apologize or find other polite ways or signs to express apologies to each other. Car crashes or road accidents more likely result in property and financial losses and, more seriously, can be life threatening; therefore, car accidents would usually create a
more tense situation. In light of the Allport argument outlined in Chapter 2, it would however be mistaken to see this process of walkability – enhanced urbanity – leading to significant change in the social structure. These walkable spaces of the city may discourage isolation and avoidance; however, far more would be needed, following Allport’s notion, to achieve real tolerance or integration.

Second, walkability can get people out of their private cars. A place that is walkable could simply encourage people to walk more and drive less. There are far more benefits from walking than from driving in cities. Generally, pedestrian-friendly cities are more attractive and livelier than cities that are automobile-based. Walking is simply a kind of physical exercise that contributes to healthier individuals; on the other hand, it reduces the personal expenses for vehicle maintenance and petrol. Thereby, the third but not least important factor is that walkability can reduce petrol consumption and pollution. This indirectly contributes to reduce the impacts of climate change. Places that are walkable usually have a better environment to live, work and recreate.

The imagined future of Kuala Lumpur, the vision of a world-class city, however, currently places only limited emphasis on walkability of the city, particularly the city centre, and therefore raises a question of its achievability. In fact, there have been studies of pedestrians in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, though mostly piece-meal, ad-hoc and project-based. Of these, the most comprehensive was *The Study For A Pedestrian Friendly City In Kuala Lumpur Malaysia* by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and DBKL in 1999. Unfortunately, the report of this study had been shelved until it was recently reviewed by DBKL while preparing the KLCP 2020. However, one of the outcomes of the review – *The Proposed Pedestrian Network Of The City Centre Strategic Zone* was kept separate from the KLCP 2020 documentation for various reasons. According to the town planners whom I have talked with, this was to allow “flexibility” in the implementation of the proposal. If the proposal is incorporated into KLCP 2020, then once gazetted it becomes a statutory document which, if it becomes necessary to amend, especially during the
implementation stage, will take a longer time. Besides, the gazetting also indicates the legal commitment of the authority to implement the plan. Thus, that is the dilemma of the planning practice in Malaysia – gazette, or allow flexibility by keeping the development plans ungazetted. The planners pointed out a very important consideration of the planning process, which is to allow flexibility in order to deal with immediate changes, either forced by the public or manipulated by political parties to gain political capital. In fact, there are many local and state governments that do not gazette their development plans, although the plans are ready to be gazetted. In that situation, apparently there are future plans covering most areas in Malaysia but development has remained ad-hoc, at best ‘unplanned’ in the name of flexibility. There are other practical implications of the flexible plans; for instance, borrowing words of Steinberg (1987, p.405), flexibility might lead to “… decrease in standards of social trust [towards the planning authorities] and an increase in corruption.”

3.5 Ethnic integration but ‘an automobile-segregated city’

All development plans prepared by DBKL thus far are confined within their administrative boundaries. There are limited channels for coordination with neighboring local authorities. As a result, Kuala Lumpur is increasingly spreading, and at no time more than during the economic boom period in the 1980s. Today, Kuala Lumpur is a region that cannot really be defined in terms of boundaries. KL is now far more than ‘KL’ as administratively defined. If we wanted to specify the boundaries of the city today, they might be seen, from east to west, as stretching from Ampang to Port Klang and, north to south, from Gombak to Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). The region covers the Klang Valley (east-west) and the Multimedia Super Corridor (north-south). This is an area of approximately 2,843 square kilometers (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur 2004, p.2-4). In such an
‘over-size’ city, there is overwhelming car dependence (Figure 3.18). This is against the rationale to support the objective of walkability for Kuala Lumpur discussed in the previous section, which is to reduce dependency on private cars and thereby reduce petrol consumption and pollution, more importantly, to forge urbanity and encourage more positive interaction between communities.

Figure 3.18: The ‘over-size’ Kuala Lumpur – the Klang Valley and MSC areas

(Department of Town and Country Planning n.d.)

However, the newer established residential areas, the shopping malls likewise, are relatively effective in strongly encouraging integration between the different communities. For instance, the new towns of Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya comprise
mostly mixed communities. It is hard to define Chinese, Malay or Indian areas in those new towns or the satellite towns of Kuala Lumpur. Likewise, the large shopping malls, such as the Mid-Valley Mega Mall, Sunway Pyramid, Mines Wonderlands and One Utama, are attracting shoppers from all communities. However, there are also some exceptions; for instance, Shah Alam and recently Putrajaya are overwhelmingly Malay. Over-emphasis on a single ethnic identity by advocating the vision of an “Islamic City”, for example, has excluded communities other than Malay-Muslim so that Shah Alam is a Malay-Muslim town. In the case of Putrajaya, the town was created to house all the federal government offices and possibly house all the civil servants. It is supposed to be a very ‘Malaysian town’; but as the majority of civil servants are Malays, therefore it has also become a Malay town.

The old centre of Kuala Lumpur remains physically ethnically-segregated, and one could point out the territories of Chinese (Jalan Petaling, Jalan Pudu), Malays (Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Chow Kit, Kampung Baru), or Indians (Brickfields, Sentul) quite easily; however, there is integration in term of social interactions. In fact, the interactions lead to the emergence of integrated areas situated between the definable ethnic areas. An obvious example of that is the Central Market area. Besides, it is also notable that even the ethnic ‘heartlands’ will attract the strollers, diners and shoppers of the other ethnic communities. It should also be noted that these areas remain walkable to all communities.

Alongside the increasing financial affluence and the advance in technologies, people need to be cautioned of the signs of economic prosperity of a young nation. For instance, the increasing personal affluence can be manifested in an increasingly sedentary population (over-weight or obese) or, in a wider context, the increasing affluence of the nation allows the government to invest heavily in an automobile industry and the subsequent building of many sophisticated highways seemingly to shorten the distances or to allow people to travel by car comfortably. In Kuala Lumpur, many highways were built in the period where the economic situation was looking good
(the Federal Highway to link KL to Klang; the North-South Highway and Karak
Highway to link KL to the North, South, and West regions; the KL Inner Ring Road,
Middle Ring Road I, Middle Ring Road II and Outer Ring Road to allow the driver to
by-pass KL; and KESAS Highway to link KL to West Port and Port Klang). Further,
numerous highways have been built to link KL to its more immediately surrounding
areas, such as the Shah Alam Expressway, Damansara-Puchong Highway,
Cheras-Kajang Highway, Ampang Elevated Highway, Pantai Highway, Sprint Highway,
Sg. Besi Highway and, most recently, the Dedicated Highway to link KL with Putrajaya
and KLIA.

The ‘prosperous’ ways of the Government in developing Kuala Lumpur have
changed people’s expectations towards the level of comfort and mobility. In addition,
the introduction of air-conditioning technology contributes towards higher levels of
comfort expectation in the context of the naturally hot and humid climate of Kuala
Lumpur. Therefore, the concept of walkability has collapsed because of both the high
expectations of comfort of the people and the constraints imposed on walking by heavy
traffic. At this juncture, with a ratio of about 2 cars to a household, Kuala Lumpur is
heading to be considered an automobile city.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has provided the background for an understanding of the formation of
Kuala Lumpur and its evolution, physically and demographically. Kuala Lumpur was
an ‘unplanned’ settlement. It developed in an ‘organic’ way in the first 60 years or so
after its founding, led by the Chinese community. Then, for another 60 years or so, it
practised only short-term planning that could be considered ad-hoc and with limited
planning intervention, led by the British. More recently, over the past 30 years or so,
long-term planning has been applied, however ‘flexibly’ implemented by the city
The long-term, two-tier development plan system nevertheless remains an ‘incomplete’ planning instrument to the present day, with structure plans but without conclusive local plans. Apparently the incomplete planning instruments, the loosely coordinated development plans, especially with neighboring local authorities and, additionally, the political interventions in planning decisions, have resulted in a dramatic change in the physical pattern of Kuala Lumpur, from ‘a pedestrian town’ in the past to ‘an automobile city’ today. Thus, the walkable space idea that Forsyth and Southworth (2008) identified as “close” and “barrier-free”, in particular, can hardly be applied in the present ‘over-sized’ Kuala Lumpur.

The population of Kuala Lumpur has increased and become more complex and economically diverse since its establishment, especially under the British. The richness of natural resources, particularly the tin mines, resulted in Malaya being colonized by the British for over a century. It was during the British administration that other ethnic groups, especially Indians, were imported to Kuala Lumpur, most of them to work as labor in plantation estates and civil construction. Although the British had officially colonized the Malay peninsular, yet they needed support from the Malay community to suppress and control the seemingly increasing influence of other communities, such as the Chinese community, in order to sustain the British long-term mission in Malaya. One of the approaches that the British used to raise political support was to set aside agriculture lands close to the town for the Malay community as ‘a gift’. As a result of that political strategy, the Malays supported the British to keep administrative control over areas that were dominated by other communities, such as in Kuala Lumpur. Also, due to the political initiative of the British, the “divide-and-rule”

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70 I consider the development and evolution of Kuala Lumpur has had three phases: First, the ‘unplanned’ phase from its founding in 1857 to the introduction of town planning in 1921. Second, the short-term planning from 1921 to the adoption of the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 (Act 267). Third, the long-term planning leading to the development plan system from 1982 until the present.

71 The Pangkor Treaty of 1874 provided the opportunity for the British to expand control over the Malaya. Tracing back further, the British landed in Penang and named the island as Prince of Wales Island in 1786.
strategy has apparently resulted in ethnic segregation, although this was never total. In the past, different communities shared some common areas in the city and came together during special events. These inter-community interactions were gradually lost during and after WWII; in turn, a tense inter-community relationship emerged. As Mahathir (2008, p.14) claimed, there was no real racial harmony between the communities in Malaysia; there was, however, also no real ethnic conflict until 1969. Although suppressed, the mutually suspicious attitudes among ethnic groups became obvious during the Japanese Occupation, intensified in the early post-WWII period and became even deeper after the 13 May 1969 race riot incident. The tense relationship among communities was then further inflamed by the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP). More recently, ethnic relationships have become worse and uncontrolled due to politicians playing the ethnic card in relation to policy making and decisions.

Besides discussing the physical and demographic development of Kuala Lumpur from the past to the present, this chapter has also discussed the physical extension and the imagined future of the city. More importantly, it has thrown some light on the issue of walkability of Kuala Lumpur in association with its physical and demographical evolution. There are several constraints to walking in the city. First is the hot and humid climate. This climate could cause discomfort while walking outdoors, particularly under little shade and over a long distance. In addition, the natural undulating topography is another factor that discourages people from walking in the city. Further, the sudden rain, especially during monsoon seasons, could cause flash floods that would definitely get pedestrians into trouble. Second is the issue of ‘unplanned’ development and the form of planning of Kuala Lumpur. The city was initially an ‘organic’ town but walkable because it was simply small in size and had not

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72 The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced by the 2nd Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, after the incident of 13 May 1969. Apparently there were “two fundamental objectives: first, a reduction and eventual eradication of poverty across all races and, second, a social reconstruction to gradually remove the identification of race with economic function …” (King 2008, p.85). In fact, reserving a greater share of resources and opportunities to Malays seems more obvious during its implementation; this eventually divided the communities further.
that many man-made physical constraints, such as heavy traffic roads that broke up the walkways as one will find today. The small town developed rapidly, while the uncontrolled development not only spread horizontally, but also vertically. Additionally, to support the development of a national automobile industry, the building of expressways inside and by-passing the city has indicated that the national policy direction in general and the town planning of KL in particular, is favoring the formation of an automobile city rather than designing towards a pedestrian-friendly city. Further, town planning that only provides macro-planning policies and strategies without detailed physical design plans, such as local plans or layout plans, has allowed flexibility, ‘uncertainty’ and ‘ambiguity’ in the proposed future development of the city. In that further sense, provision for pedestrian needs is easily overlooked and uncoordinated.

Apparently Kuala Lumpur is handling the issue of walkability at the macro-planning level, but somewhat vaguely. Although there are planning policies outlined in the KLSP 2020 and KLCP 2020 to encourage the making of walkable spaces in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, these are over-shadowed by the automobile transportation policies and there is little emphasis on their implementation. KL development plan policies at present are providing a general guide for macro-planning purposes. These are however too abstract to practically guide the micro-design exercises. Although there are micro-planning initiatives, such as the dedicated pedestrian study by JICA and DBKL in 1999 and its revision by DBKL in 2008, nevertheless, these are not treated as part of the statutory documents as with the KLSP 2020 or KLCP 2020. This is at least a positive sign that the city authorities have tried to plan its walking environment, even though not backed by regulations, but in an internal administrative approach.
Next steps

This chapter has traced the evolution of KL as a multi-community city where there have been shifting attitudes and practices linked to identity and difference – from a geographically divided town but with functional integration in colonial times, to sharp division in the post-WWII era, to the uneasy alliance of ethnic elites at Independence, to the tragic explosion in 1969, then a slow 40-year evolution of a society marked by a sense of compelled co-existence.

This most recent phase might be seen as one of carefully managed urban sharing. How is this management effected? To what extent is a walkable city implicated in such management? To pursue these questions is the task of Chapter 4 following. The chapter will explicitly address the place of public policy in making a grand display of seemingly walkable space for purposes of state propaganda, against the manifest neglect of walkability where issues of state display are not in play. It is a story of the selectivity of urban design, as something of a continuation of the story of the city’s planning, outlined above. However, the chapter will also examine another significant aspect of public policy, namely the state’s periodic transformation of the city from scarcely walkable to a ‘paradise’ of the pedestrian on days of celebration (mostly ethnically specific). This second part of the chapter returns the story to questions of urban difference, also introduced in the chapter above.

In effect, Chapter 4 will bring the story of the city’s planning from the macro scale of Chapter 3, to the micro scale (urban design). It will also focus the community differences, traced above in Chapter 3, down to the time scale of the annual cycle of the city. The chapter will need to consider two broad questions. First, do the walkable spaces and the walkability of Kuala Lumpur encourage contact among its different communities? If so, what kind of contact is generated, and does the contact generate positive or negative effects towards community integration?
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