

Nurturing Nature for Man

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CONTENTS

Editor's Preface	ii - iv
Abbreviations	v
CHAPTER 1: OBJECTIVIST PARADIGM IN SCENIC BEAUTY ASSESSMENT Jamilah Othman	1 - 9
CHAPTER 2: TAMING THE FLOOD IN URBAN MALAYSIA Izawati Tukiman	10 - 21
CHAPTER 3: MALAY MIDWIFERY AND PLANT SPECIES IN SOUTHEAST PAHANG Rashidi Othman, Noriszai Ishak	22 - 30
CHAPTER 4: MANAGING HISTORIC CULTURAL LANDSCAPE RESOURCES FOR TOURISM: CASE OF SUNGAI LEMBING AND MERSING IN MALAYSIA Ismawi Zen	31 - 40
CHAPTER 5: THE EVOLUTION AND MORPHOLOGY OF KUALA LUMPUR: A CASE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF A COLONIAL URBAN FORM Ismawi Zen	41 - 63
CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC SPACES IN HISTORIC CITIES OF MALAYSIA Nor Zalina Harun	64 - 72
CHAPTER 7: HARD AND SOFT INFRASTRUCTURES OF TEMPORARY MARKETS Khalilah Zakariya	73 - 83
CHAPTER 8: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY Mazlina Mansor	84 - 94
CHAPTER 9: CREATING QUALITY GREEN OPEN SPACE IN MALAYSIA Nurhayati Abdul Malek	95 - 102
CHAPTER 10: TOTAL PLANNING DOCTRINE: AN ANSWER? Ismawi Zen	103 - 115

CHAPTER 10

TOTAL PLANNING DOCTRINE: AN ANSWER?

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ABSTRACT

The need to translate social dimensions to physical planning has been a perennial preoccupation of planners. The debate on physical determinism vs. anthropocentrism is a never ending one. A limited historical view shows a tendency for emphasis on environment and physical solution with doubtful results. In the meantime philosophical dimensions point redirects urban planning from just about optimisation of resources, either natural or otherwise, toward a plane which is much more comprehensive and higher: the manifestation of man's tawhidic relationship with the Creator that eventually governs his relationship with his fellow man and the environment he lives in. A sustainable city is one that is planned to incorporate its vibe and dynamism, rather than one that depends solely on whatever form of exploitation of its resources to short-term satisfaction of its populace.

INTRODUCTION

The first sentence of his now famous book, Good City Form, Kevin Lynch (1981) said:

“Impersonal forces do not transform human settlements. Or at least they do so only on rare occasions, and these are natural disasters: fire, flood, earthquake, and pestilence. Otherwise, the modification of settlement is a human act, however complex, accomplished for human motives, however obscure or ineffective. Uncovering those motives gives us first clues to the connections between values and environmental form”.¹

If we are to agree with Lynch, then we are of the opinion that urban planning is basically mundane human activity driven by his instinct of finding better living to serve his needs, whether this act is purely physical or “spiritual” in nature.² Corollary to this, acts of city constructions or modifications are always looked from the perspective of human values of broad or selfish, implicit or explicit and human norms of good or bad. Because of this mental block, a question of what makes a good city becomes quite irrelevant or at the most pedantic to most people. Cities are considered to be too complicated, too far beyond control, and affect too many people, who are subject to too many cultural variations, to permit rational answer (Lynch, K., 1981). But is this necessarily true? Is there any higher meaning to the inception of cities? Do not cities manifest the very nature of man's creation on Earth?

¹ Lynch, K (1981), Good City Form. MIT Press, Massachusetts, p.5. Underlines are added by the author.