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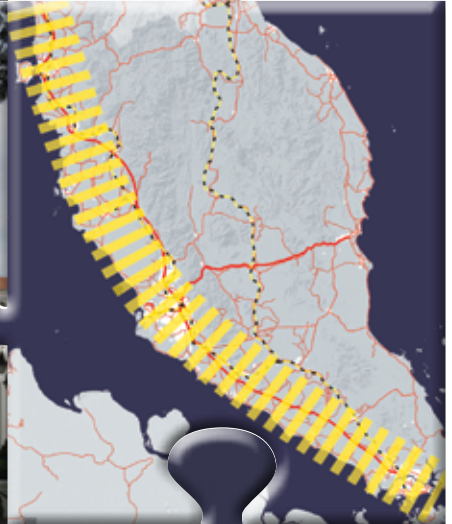


THE MALACCA STRAITS DIAGONAL & THE NEW SCALE OF PLANNING



SAVING THE MASJID KAPITAN KELING

RESCUING AN ICONIC MOSQUE
AND SETTING THE BAR FOR
BEST PRACTICES.



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

HOW AN URBAN
REGENERATION AGENCY IS
CATALYSING CITY CHANGE.



BETTING ON BIDS

ASIA'S FIRST
BUSINESS
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT



THE THINK CITY TEAM



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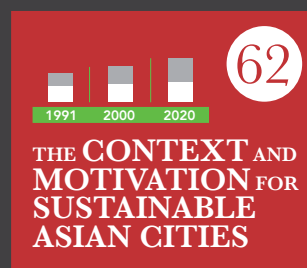
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THE RIPPLE EFFECT

*How an urban regeneration
agency is catalysing city change.*

George Town – Malaysia’s oldest city - faced a future of crumbling decay and decline; its future seemed bleak. Think City became a catalyst at a time when a convergence of factors shifted the city’s trajectory; the agency injected new ideas on sustainability, the economy and quality of life. Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed discusses Think City’s unique approach to urban regeneration and why the 21st century is about the rise of cities.

Could you provide some background on why Think City was established?

We have to go back to 2007 when Khazanah¹ came to Penang as the

Federal Government felt that the state was stuttering, it had all the necessary infrastructure in place including well-established free industrial zones (FIZs), good connectivity and an educated workforce, yet it needed to attract even more talent in order to avoid the middle-income trap.

The widely held belief was that if Penang didn’t start to find its pathway it would go down a slippery slope, so Khazanah’s “Penang Programme” was initiated to anchor Penang and unlock its true potential. George Town the state’s capital was identified as a major asset that needed urgent intervention. The city had over 200 years’ history as a global and regional

trading hub, but was very much in a state of urban decay.

Then, in 2008, George Town was accorded UNESCO World Heritage Site status, the timing was good as we were also looking at how to harness the city’s past with its future. The key then became, how could we take advantage of this WHS status to ensure that the factors that

¹ Khazanah Nasional Berhad is the Government of Malaysia’s strategic investment fund. Khazanah’s role is to promote economic growth and make strategic investments on behalf of the Government. For more information, visit www.khazanah.com.my/



Aerial view of the George Town WHS, with KOMTAR tower in the background.

Marcus Tan

Sketch of old shophouses along King Street, George Town.



made this place interesting and unique would not be lost. At the same time we realised that we needed to infuse new activities as the port which was once the centre of this mercantile city had long died. George Town needed a new anchor.

After carrying out a thorough study to identify the challenges and opportunities, Khazanah set up Think City in 2009 to spearhead urban regeneration. The new team working with the board of directors and experts created a grants programme - the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) inspired by several successful examples including, Yayasan Salam, the Edinburgh World Heritage Grants Programme, the Toyota Foundation Grants Programme and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s social activities.

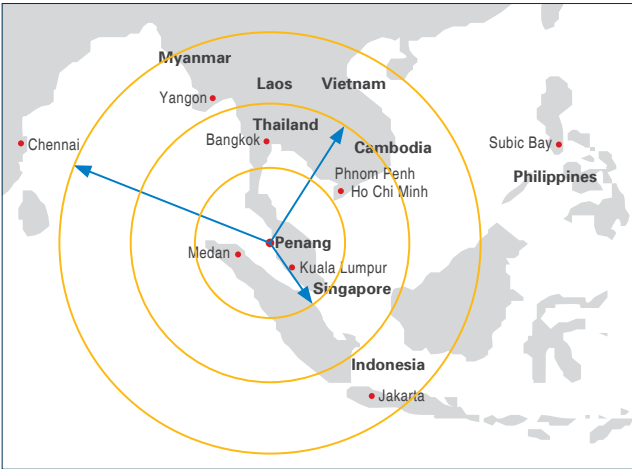
The GTGP was underpinned by RM20 million from the Federal government which would eventually fund numerous projects designed to have a catalytic effect on the built environment, the economy as well as quality of life.

Why the focus on urban regeneration?
Urban regeneration is critical if we take a big picture approach and consider cities as drivers of the economy. History has proven this to be the case, where cities drive innovation, and it’s in cities that you find agglomeration economics – where industries converge and as a result you are able to achieve higher productivity-led growth. It’s worth noting that only 600 urban centres generate about 60% of global GDP. Economic activity is not at all evenly spread across countries, instead

a few areas tend to dominate, and it is generally focused around urban or city regions.

For Penang’s industries to move up the value chain it has to attract the best talent, the only way to retain talent is to provide them with an attractive environment that has character, is clean, safe, has proper amenities, a vibrant arts scene and places for leisure. We strongly felt that given its rich culture and interesting built environment that George Town had that potential to be ‘sticky’, to attract talent and in doing so speed up agglomeration economics and build resilience.

It was also felt that Penang would serve as an excellent test bed for implementing the 10th Malaysia Plan’s strategy of



Overview of Penang’s catchment area as defined by air transport time. Source: Khazanah Nasional Berhad (2007).

"unlocking the development potential within cities through urban renewal and redevelopment of brownfield sites."

It’s no longer Malaysia vs Indonesia, it’s about George Town competing with other cities such as Hanoi, Medan, Aceh... everyone is competing at different levels and we can’t afford to stand still. We can’t do the incremental, we have to be transformative, to future-proof Penang, to allow Penang to have the advantage as a place that attracts high quality human capital.

All successful cities are successful at attracting talent. The middle-income challenge isn’t merely about cost competitiveness, it’s about value and differentiating yourself, offering something where you have core competencies.

What were the initial challenges facing Think City’s work in George Town?
When we set up in 2009, George Town was very much a city in decline, there was no buzz, the city was hollowing out and the local population was moving out, but... it had been thrown a lifeline with the UNESCO WHS listing.

George Town suffered from an ageing population and bucked the national trend with more men than women in terms of gender distribution. It is also overwhelmingly working class with a high number of migrant workers living here.

Although 4,000 students study in Penang, only 400 live here. There are also fewer families compared with forty years ago.

In terms of economic activities, the inner-city has approximately 900 hawkers trading at different times of the day. They serve a visiting population of 20,000 daily-workers, of which 25% actually live in the inner city, there is a relatively high number of vacant buildings (17%); these are symptoms of an area that is experiencing urban decay².

The questions we asked were, how could this space be transformed, how could this space become economically dense? How can the place be made more liveable, more efficient and sustainable? – all of these things become optimisation factors. For all the problems that existed, it was important to remember that George Town had over two centuries of added value, with the right intervention strategies this could create a further 200 years of prosperity.

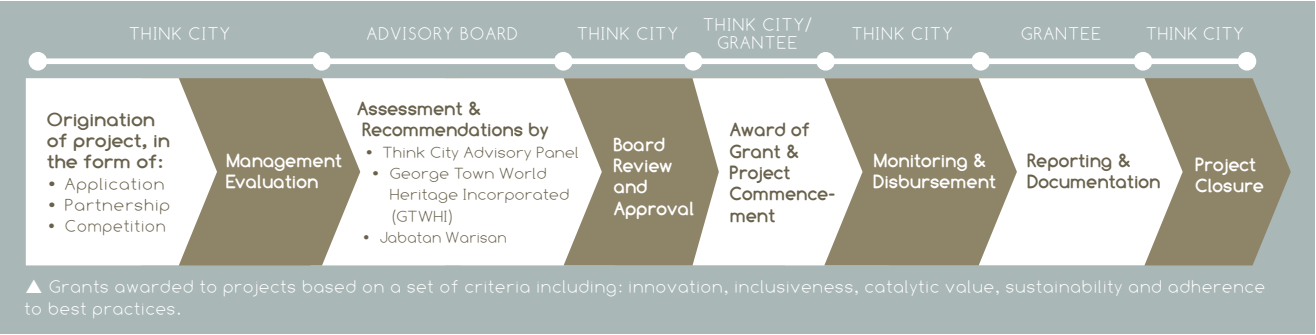
Another challenge was that Think City was a new entity without a proven track record, so we had to work very hard to build relationships with government agencies, the city council, NGOs, the private sector, as well as local and international heritage and urban regeneration agencies. As a small team with a small allocation we really had to put the personal touch into everything we

“As a small team with a small allocation we really had to put the personal touch into everything we do, to get things moving. I always tell the team that this isn’t a job, this is a mission.”



Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Executive Director of Think City.

THE GTGP APPROVAL PROCESS



² Data from the 2010 Baseline Study carried out by Think City.



Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Think City and Fundacion Metropoli on 22 April 2011.

do, to get things moving. I always tell the team that this isn't a job, this is a mission.

So how did Think City move forward?

To create a more economically resilient, clean and inclusive city we looked closely at the relationship between space, the economy and of course the people – these three factors would shape all of Think City's initiatives.

Sustainability was also critical, and we felt very strongly that urban regeneration needed to be driven by the stakeholders themselves and not be directed from the top down. This was the only way George Town could move forward. The people who lived and worked there needed to

feel empowered enough to improve their surroundings, and this in turn would attract more life, more economic activity into the city.

The grants programme was about building strong public-private partnerships in a relatively short time frame and on a shoe-string budget. We envisioned three phases for the GTGP; during the first year we focussed on being a catalyst to raise awareness of the grants programme and George Town's heritage, because everything was still so new. Most of the grants were awarded to property owners who wanted to renovate their heritage buildings. This gave us the buy-in and allowed us to demonstrate some success.

In the second phase we already had the momentum going and people could see the physical transformation in the city which began to create a buzz. We funded more community-oriented and intangible heritage initiatives (see Table 1).

Now, in our third and final year our focus is more specific, it's about shared spaces and projects that bring people closer together. There is now more focus on the software rather than the hardware per se. This is when our management initiatives really started to kick in, such as BIDS, Little India and community housing (see pages XX, XX and XX respectively). These management initiatives have accounted for over 40% of the GTGP projects.

Grants programmes don't tend to have a very high success rate, why choose this mechanism?

In the context of George Town, a grants programme was ideal in the sense that it allowed us to build strong relationships between the public, private and government sectors in a reasonably short space of time. We didn't want to be seen as stepping on local agencies toes, we wanted them to see our work as augmenting theirs.

Initially, Think City gave out grants for the physical renovation of heritage buildings, as this would create an obvious change in the cityscape in a short period of time. By demonstrating some success at this level, we could build trust with the various stakeholders and look at more long-term interventions.

Interventions in a space have long-term implications that can't necessarily be seen in the short-term; for instance cultural mapping which underpins all our projects is not always as obvious as the physical renovations.

The George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) is the first of its kind in Malaysia and in a sense a lot of our work has been about taking risks, because we don't know everything ourselves. It's a constant learning process. We build partnerships and trust by keeping our part of the bargain and being 'hands-on' in our projects to get results.

What were the guiding principles of Think City's urban regeneration work in George Town?

Going back to how we could improve the space, economy and quality of life for the people, we decided to initiate, fund (or both) projects that would fall into four broad categories including:

1. Cultural mapping to allow us to understand each specific site in a holistic way,
2. Physical conservation,
3. Enhancing shared or public spaces for people to gather, to relax, be entertained in a safe, clean and green environment,
4. Capacity building, which is essential to ensure the sustainability of the site.

Very simply, we put people at the centre of everything we do, at the centre of the dialogue and removed our egos. It's not

simply about dispensing money but the team sitting together with the grantees to work out innovative and effective solutions together. It's a time consuming process but when we created the GTGP we also set out six guiding principles that needed to be demonstrated in all the projects we undertook (see Figure 1).

How much longer will the GTGP continue to run for?

As of 17 June 2013, Think City has committed just over RM16 million to 198 projects, so the GTGP has come to an end in the sense that the RM20 million allocation has been completed. Just because the funding has stopped doesn't mean that the impact of the various programmes will come to a complete halt. You see, people are the actors and when you empower the actors, then the process of urban transformation is already seeded, it starts moving forward. Once that takes place it's easier to bring in investors, policy makers and others, leading to sustainable urban regeneration.

So, how would you evaluate Think City's impact?

It's not about us assessing ourselves, it's whether or not the people out there feel that we have made an impact. My sense is that we are making positive progress, but it's too early to celebrate.

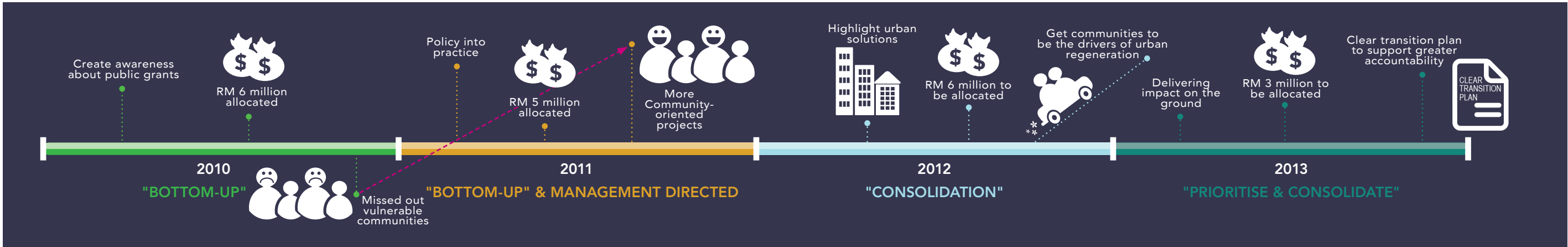
We may not have the perfect model for urban regeneration, but we're continuously improving it, enhancing it. In many ways, this is a pathway of discovery for the team, but we are

EACH THINK CITY PROJECT NEEDS TO DEMONSTRATE ALL SIX CORE PRINCIPLES:



▲ Figure 1

Table 1: THINK CITY'S FOUR PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT





Before and after images of Seven Terraces – a boutique hotel in George Town, restored at a cost of RM6 million, Think City's grant represented approximately 4% of the total costs.



saying rather than waiting for a perfect environment let's go and do it together with all of us participating. Then we can shape it and achieve a collective outcome.

It's not about Think City, it's about the people and making sure that they have a better outcome. Think City is here to light the fires, we wanted to encourage a bottom-up environment - the people know what to do, we're just creating an environment that allows their energies to be directed to make a difference.

Urban transformation is a process that takes at least one or two decades, it doesn't happen in the space of a few years, it's a process of evolution. I hope that over the long-term, our role in George Town will be viewed positively.

What does the future hold for Think City beyond the GTGP?
Our work is not just about running a grants programme, Think City is about providing innovative thinking about urban transformation. This is what we have been pioneering (in George Town) by bringing in experts, participating in shaping policy, developing studies that have helped to shape the Special Area Plan³.

We have certainly brought the debate (over urban regeneration) to another level, and published a joint study together with the World Bank which was central in shaping the urban policy direction both at local and national levels. For the first time in Malaysia we're talking about the need for growth to be concentrated in cities

"Think City is here to light the fires, we wanted to encourage a bottom-up environment – the people know what to do, we're just creating an environment that allows their energies to be directed to make a difference."

³The George Town World Heritage Site Special Area Plan was prepared to guide and control the development carried out within the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site.

and how managing cities has become important. Well managed cities create a positive development outcome.

Three years of implementing a broad range of urban regeneration projects have allowed us to fine-tune our mechanism and we're confident that these ideas can be syndicated successfully in other cities. It is a system that allows for flexibility in its approach rather than a 'one-size fits all' dynamic which is not realistic.

Basically, we're still a very young agency that has only been around for three years, but we must be doing something right judging from our network of international partners who want to connect with us.



more dynamic especially when we were faced with the prospect of losing World Heritage Status because of issues such as urban swiftlet farming.

As a result of the GTGP, people can see the changes with the physical makeover of properties and this has created an interest from investors. By and large I think this is an effort that involved the people in restoration work.

I've been an MP and am currently a state assemblyman for my constituency in George Town. Since the repeal of the Rent Control Act in 2000, communities have been dislocated by rising rents and many buildings have simply been left to ruin.

After the UNESCO inscription in 2008, the problems continued as there was not enough direction over how the World Heritage Site should be run. I think that Think City came in at a critical period with their grants programme, to give funds to property owners to rehabilitate their buildings, not only was the funding very important, it was also about doing things properly and leading the initiative.

I would say two years after the inscription things started to become

One essential component of Think City's projects is community engagement, for every programme that they initiate they hold engagement workshops to get the community involved. Of course this is a very tedious process, sometimes you don't get to see the results straight away but I always see this engagement as a more secure way to win over people and get buy-in and make the programmes more successful. Instead of just doing all the planning in an office and just running it without people having a say.

Chow Kon Yeow,
State Assemblyman for Padang Kota,
Member of the Executive Council of the state of Penang as Chairman of the Local Government Committee, Former Member of Parliament for Tanjung.

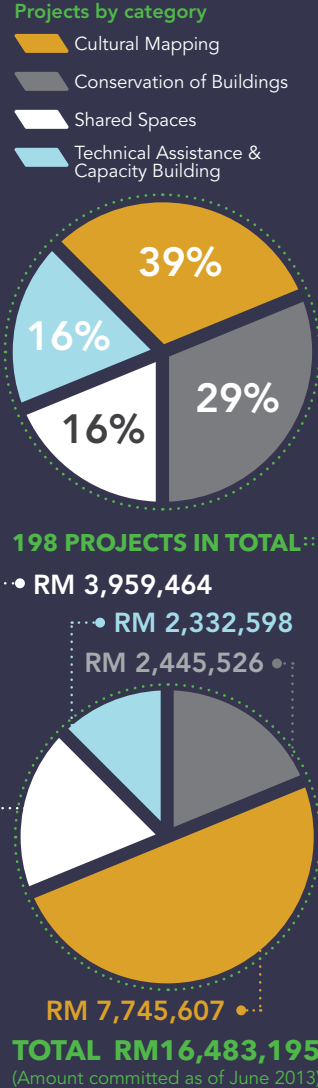


A Think City grant helped the Cheah Kongsu to improve the facades of their shophouses.

THE GTGP – A PROTOTYPE FOR URBAN REGENERATION

The George Town Grant Programme (GTGP) is the first grants programme of its kind in Malaysia. All applicants outline their project and the impact it will have on the local community; the small Think City team and external assessors then review the project, its feasibility and evaluate the potential positive outcomes before deciding whether or not to award a grant to cover part of the costs. The entire process is transparent and full details are published on the Think City website.

The RM20 million GTGP which ran over three years (from 2010-2012) is not a large allocation but as Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Think City’s Executive Director observed, “We want to spread awareness that with a little money you can go that extra mile, the grants programme is a way of demonstrating to people that they need to organise themselves. It may sound like a cliché but this is the reality of what we’re trying to do.”



Before and after images of the Yin Oi Tong, one of the oldest Chinese medicine halls in SE Asia, restored with the assistance of a Think City grant.

The restoration of a building's original Chien Nien (porcelain works).



Increase in property value.

15mil



Cumulative audience from media impact.



The number of people who attended Think City's capacity building programmes.

Think City funded the publication of a series of guides on building materials and correct restoration techniques made available for free to the public.



Number of buildings restored or in the process of restoration.



Numerous capacity building workshops were organised by Think City and its partners to expose local craftsmen, contractors and architects to best practices.



Co-investment for every RM1 GTGP allocation.

23 Love Lane
A Think City grant paved the way for the restoration of the ornate Chinese gateway by specialists from China.



Think City, working with various partners carried out a pilot greening project along Jalan Carnarvon as part of the Greening George Town Master Plan.



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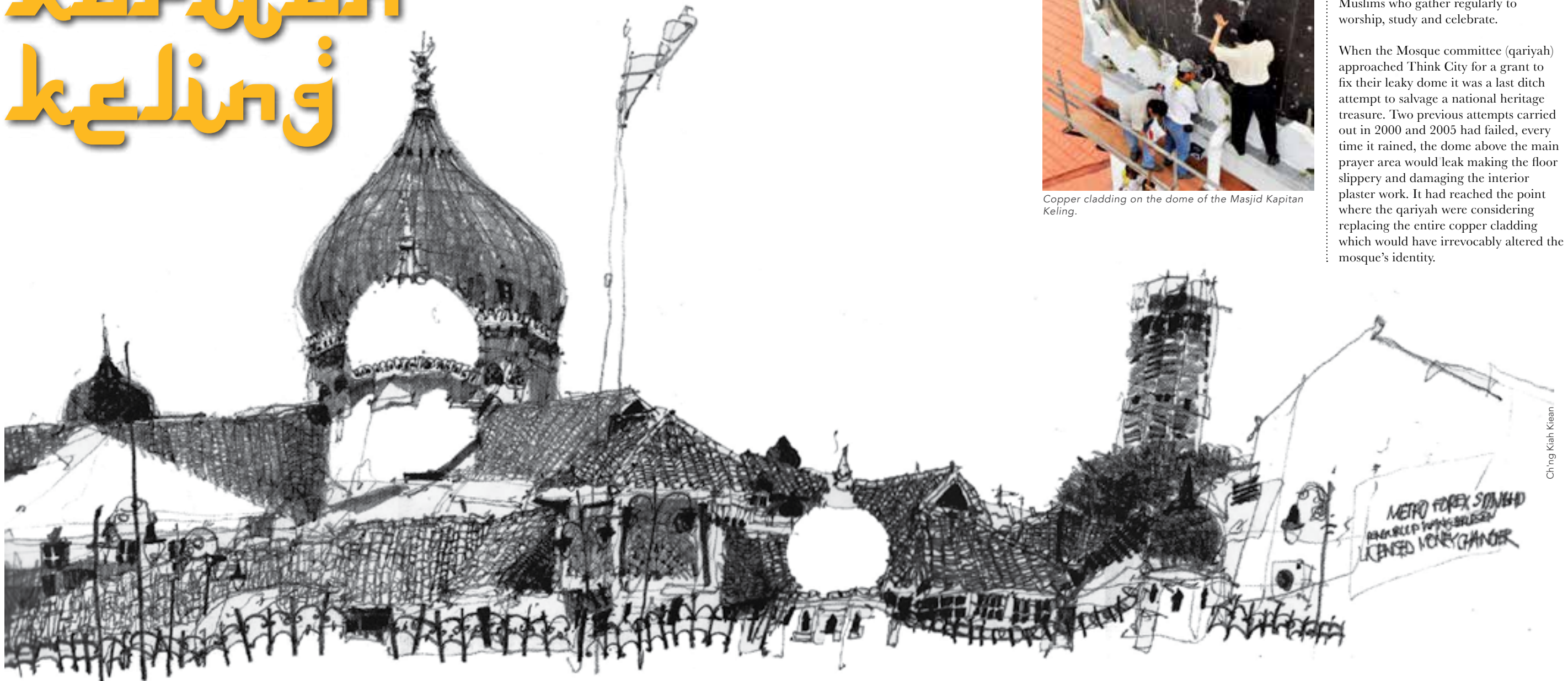
How Think City's first demonstrative project in George Town rescued the iconic mosque and set the bar for best practices in project conception, conservation and community-engagement.

The Masjid Kapitan Keling (MKK) or Kapitan Keling Mosque is nestled along a street that bears its name in the heart of George Town's Muslim enclave. It may not be Malaysia's largest mosque but it is certainly one of its most historic, tracing its origins back to 1808; it is listed under Malaysia's National Heritage Act as a national monument. Beyond the bricks, mortar and famous copper domes, the mosque is still very much a focal point for George Town's Muslims who gather regularly to worship, study and celebrate.

When the Mosque committee (qariyah) approached Think City for a grant to fix their leaky dome it was a last ditch attempt to salvage a national heritage treasure. Two previous attempts carried out in 2000 and 2005 had failed, every time it rained, the dome above the main prayer area would leak making the floor slippery and damaging the interior plaster work. It had reached the point where the qariyah were considering replacing the entire copper cladding which would have irrevocably altered the mosque's identity.



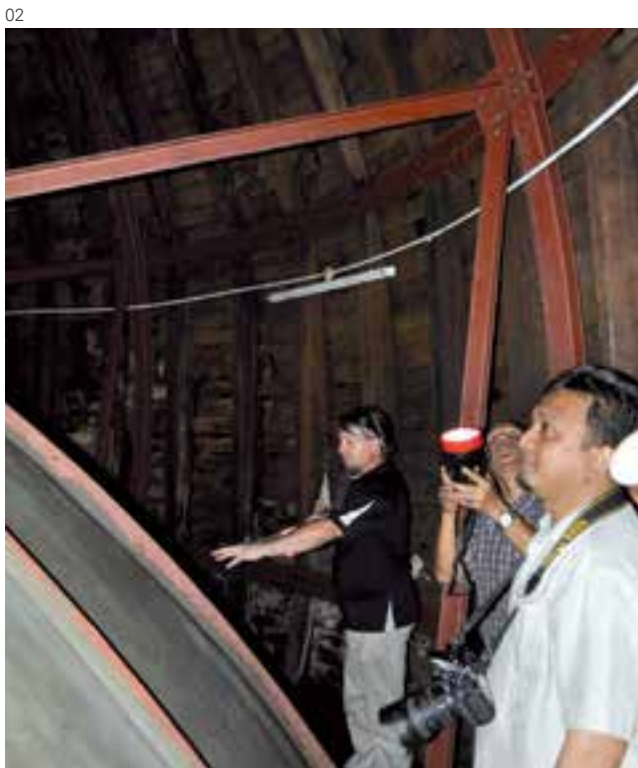
Copper cladding on the dome of the Masjid Kapitan Keling.



Ch'ng Kiah Klean



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02



03

- 01 Firemen spraying water on the dome to identify leaks.
- 02 Inspecting the dome from the inside.
- 03 Carefully patching the holes
- 04 The qariyah regularly organises community events within the mosque's grounds. Here a young volunteer explains the significance and history of traditional Indian Muslim corner shops.
- 05 In 2009, the qariyah contacted Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, then minister in the Prime Minister's Department to appeal for help with the leaking dome, which led to Think City's intervention.



04

“When we did our engagement with the qariyah it wasn’t easy as two other consultants had previously done work and had created more problems. So initially trust towards Think City was very low. We explained to them, look we can restore this dome without replacing the dome, because they were quite keen to change the dome completely. They were fed up with the whole thing and it cost a lot to maintain,” explained Suraya Ismail, Think City’s Grants Programme Director.

“From the beginning we took a long-term view that since we were tasked with fixing the dome we should also enhance the surrounding buildings within the mosque compound to make it more of a focal point for the community. First we had to demonstrate success with the dome.”

The process of engagement between Think City and the qariyah also involved discussions with MAINPP and Jabatan Warisan Negara given MKK’s religious and historical significance. Concurrently, a functional brief for the new buildings was put together by the qariyah to prioritise how space would be utilised. “This was a useful exercise which allowed the mosque community to work out what space was actually needed and what was unnecessary,” Suraya explained.

“After about seven months of discussion, we finally started with the rectification

of the dome, we brought in copper specialists from Australia as we found out that the previous contractors hadn’t understood the material. They had used steel nails to keep the copper cladding together and this exacerbated the problem. There were so many holes in the dome, that when we did a water test it was like it was raining!”

The nine month project hit a wall in the third month, “I would say that motivation was very low because the process didn’t seem to work. We wanted this project to build the capacity of local contractors, with AusHeritage acting as an advisor; however after a few unsuccessful trials the local contractor quietly suggested replacing the dome completely. We just didn’t have copper specialists in Malaysia at that time. This was where Think City played a critical role in being tenacious, taking leadership and driving this project through.”

Successfully staying the course also meant keeping the qariyah informed and onside. “The best way to do this was to involve them in our constant discussions so they knew exactly what we were trying to do. They also became the spokespeople for the project, actually understanding the complexities of the project, which wasn’t easy. But because they knew what was going on there was more give and take, especially then there were delays,” said Suraya.



05

“They had used steel nails to keep the copper cladding together and this exacerbated the problem. There were so many holes in the dome, that when we did a water test it was like it was raining!”



“The mosque’s dome had been leaking for a very long time. Previous repairs were unsuccessful and prayers were disrupted every time it rained heavily. Think City took a very thorough approach to the dome restoration and I’m happy to say it hasn’t leaked since. We’re looking forward to the next phase in our partnership – new buildings in the mosque compound for the congregation to gather.”

Meera Mydin,
Mosque Committee Chairman

"Do as much as is necessary (to ensure a heritage building is kept in good order, well maintained and used) but as little as possible (to intervene with or lose the cultural heritage integrity and fabric of a significant heritage place)."

Bruce Pettman, conservation architect at the New South Wales Public Works Department working through AusHeritage, highlighted some of the technical challenges involved in restoring the MKK's copper dome. "We had to persuade some people that repair was a viable option and a good conservation action rather than making things look as new."

It was necessary to investigate and test the dome's problems using unusual methods including asking the fire department to use their fire hoses to shower the dome with water while we were inside it.

The project also included the installation of proper ladders, platforms and access points for much better access to monitor and repair the roof areas including the dome, so that it could be regularly monitored and problems could be caught early and minor maintenance undertaken.

It was vital that we introduced heritage conservation approaches (heritage conservation philosophy) to old buildings rather than leaving the solution to

contractors who may or may not understand the traditional fabric, design and construction methods of these wonderful structures.

In parallel with the dome, and other conservation works to the mosque building, we also worked with Think City to develop a concept design for new facilities on the site for the mosque community. This required sympathetic new infill development on a restricted and highly significant site in the centre of the World Heritage Listed George Town city core.

The support and enthusiasm of the Think City team, especially the project director Suraya Ismail, is to be highly commended. Our AusHeritage team of three and the local consultant worked for a common positive heritage outcome. I feel there is a strong need for Think City to continue its charter for a few years more to ensure the commitment and informed support to managing change properly, to building local knowledge resources and skills about heritage opportunities and management and to achieve good urban regeneration in George Town and in Penang generally."



▲ Pettman explaining a point to a workshop of local contractors.

"Consultants come and go but the qariyah was left with the burden, so we wanted to make sure that Think City was there for them."

Once the dome was successfully restored, Think City were able to turn their attention to the mosque's new buildings. The design has already been finalised and work will start soon.

"A key outcome of this project was building local capacity, not just in terms of technical capacity. Now the qariyah is organised in such a way to solve problems themselves, there is a focus. This is more than a mosque it is a huge part of history, they understand that it is important not to change the character of the building by simply adding aircons, or ornamental decorations in the gardens. They now understand what it takes to maintain a national monument."

From one dome to another
After the successful restoration of the Masjid Kapitan Keling's copper dome, the main contractor went on to carry out restoration work on Kuala Lumpur's Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad.



CONSERVATION WORKSHOPS

To build local capacity and upgrade the skills of local craftsmen, builders, architects and heritage professionals, Think City ran regular conservation workshops in partnership with local and international experts.



Salvaging a wooden shutter by removing layers of old paint.



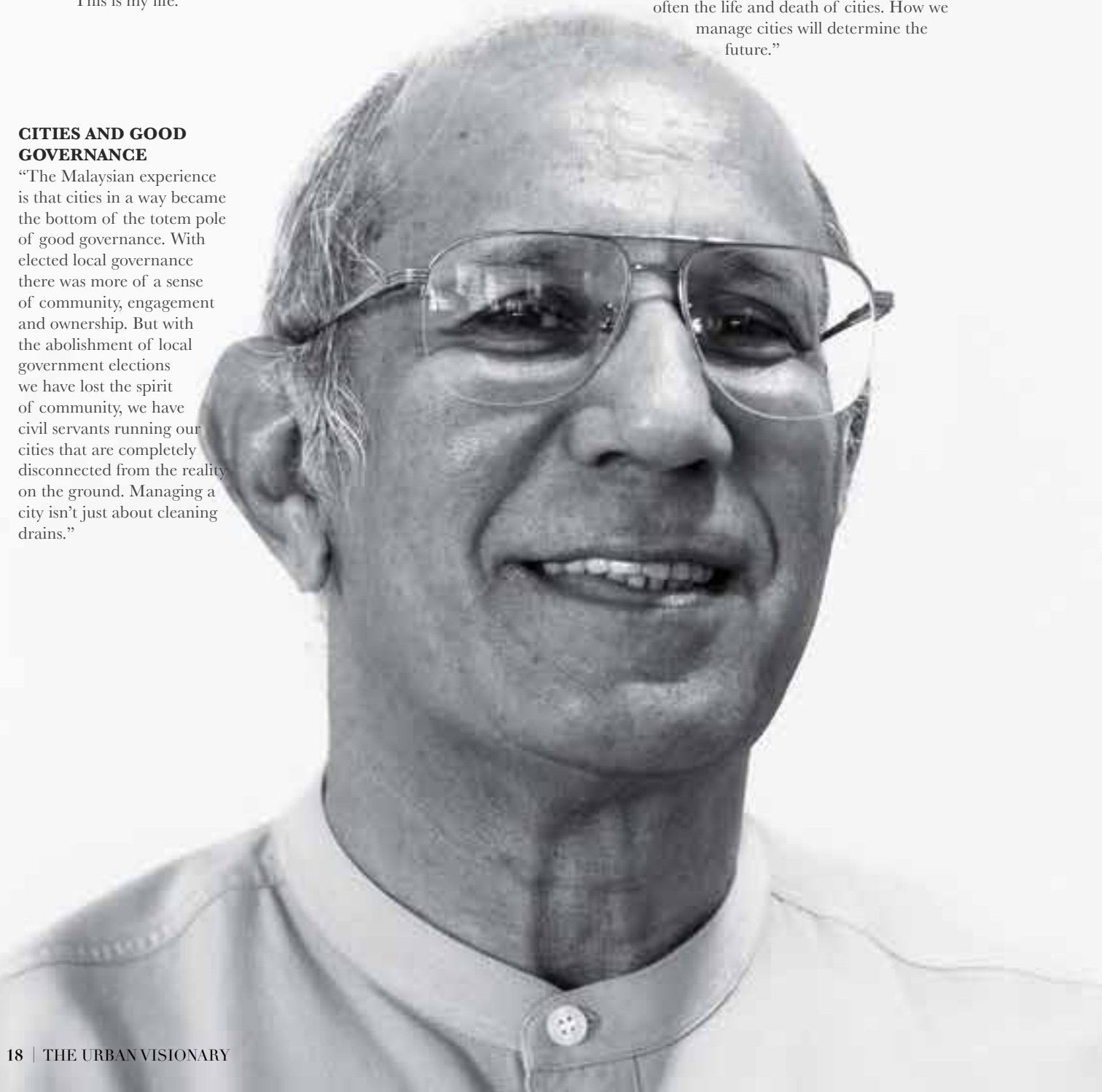
Traditional terracotta clay tiles help keep buildings cool in the tropical heat



An Australian specialist brought in by AusHeritage demonstrates how to work effectively with copper.

There are four main traditional materials used in George Town's heritage buildings – timber, stone, clay and lime. Participants learn how to correctly apply lime plaster to a brick wall.





GROWING UP A CITY PERSON

“Growing up a ‘main street’ person my life has revolved around cities. Having visited over 200 cities, one begins to feel this whole sense of community. I’m particularly interested in cities, which tend to be viewed as concrete structures, but I’ve come from a path where I’ve always viewed cities as a living organism, with different layers and a movement of people. Cities have been a lifelong engagement for me. This is my life.”

SOIL, SOUL AND SOCIETY

“History has two important lessons for humanity. Firstly, every major civilisation was destroyed because it did not make peace with the environment. Secondly, if you want to know where any country’s future is heading, look at their main cities - if they cannot manage their cities, they have little hope in managing their future. A ‘sick city’ is a sign of a sick civilisation.

Early civilisations have all been centred around the city, the life and death of civilisations is very often the life and death of cities. How we manage cities will determine the future.”

CITIES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

“The Malaysian experience is that cities in a way became the bottom of the totem pole of good governance. With elected local governance there was more of a sense of community, engagement and ownership. But with the abolishment of local government elections we have lost the spirit of community, we have civil servants running our cities that are completely disconnected from the reality on the ground. Managing a city isn’t just about cleaning drains.”

THINK CITY’S WORK

“Think City embodies the ideas of *Pancasila* and now we have the challenge of thinking about the city (George Town) proper, much of which has been lost because of the way local government is perceived, as very lowly, disconnected, with very poor leadership.

Think City is offering dynamic, systematic, holistic thinking about cities, that is rooted in the community, but is also visionary at a global level. There is a relevancy about their work; too many organisations don’t see the bigger picture. We don’t just need think tanks but heart tanks and do tanks!”

PANCASILA – FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR HOLISTIC URBAN DEVELOPMENT

“The Asian urban landscape is one of immense contrast - of ostentatious plenty and abject poverty, of great beauty and terrible ugliness, of vast opportunity and yet rampant oppression. 17 of the world’s projected 27 mega-cities will be located in the Asia region.

There is fear that in many of our Asian cities, we are being trapped by ‘bad’ growth. There is a need for a clear vision for our cities, a need for a holistic approach. If we want our cities to be our homes, they have to be developed in ways that are:

**Socially Just
Ecologically Sustainable
Politically Participatory
Economically Productive
Culturally Vibrant**

We need to make Asian villages, towns and cities outstanding examples of this ‘Pancasila’, with the five values central to their vision, the planning and their actions.”

THE SUSTAINABLE PENANG INITIATIVE

This ground breaking initiative kicked off in 1997 to solicit views from a broad cross-section of Penang society on the following themes: ecological sustainability, social justice, economic productivity, cultural vibrancy and popular participation. The principal purpose of the roundtables was to highlight priority issues related to the themes and to identify community indicators for these key issues, to be used for monitoring impacts of development, at the same time it constituted an attempt at innovative, decentralised, participatory governance.

“This was a total stakeholders conference with roundtables on each of the Pancasila’s five points. This was the first time in Asia that a participatory process like this had been carried out. It was a pioneering model of popular participation in making cities more caring and sharing.”

THE URBAN VISIONARY

Dr Anwar Fazal, Chairman of Think City’s board of directors, is a truly global citizen whose contributions in the areas of consumer, environmental and human rights issues have brought him both local and global recognition. He is a recipient of the Right Livelihood Award (popularly called the Alternative Nobel Prize) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global 500 award.

City management, activism and governance are all close to his heart – he was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship to study urban affairs, and embarked on a British Council programme to study new towns. As Senior Regional Advisor with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from 1991 – 2004, he developed his theory of Pancasila which outlines five principles for holistic urban growth.

PLACEMAKING – STRENGTHENING THE OF A COMMUNITY



Placemaking is a key ingredient of urban regeneration as it enhances the soul of a place. Effective placemaking works with existing infrastructure and local communities to create a sense of ownership and civic pride.

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES (PPS)

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has been “placemaking” for over three decades; it is a not for profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Their pioneering placemaking approach helps citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs.

PPS was founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William (Holly) Whyte, the author of *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Since then, PPS has completed projects in over 2,500 communities in 40 countries and all 50 US states. PPS has become an internationally recognised centre for resources, tools and inspiration about placemaking.

Creating economically and socially vibrant public spaces that attract people and businesses is a critical part of urban development and planning. The “build it and they will come” mentality may work with new housing areas, malls and parks, but what happens years down the line when these spaces are no longer the flavour of the month? In time, new developments begin to appear slightly dog-eared as the public loses interest, businesses start to suffer from the slowdown in traffic, litter piles up and the bright lights of the latest hotspot beckon. If not tackled, a downward spiral into neglect is inevitable.

“Our role in Penang is to arrest the urban decay through strategic intervention that builds on the cosmopolitan DNA that has shaped the state’s economy. The hardware and software are already here, it’s just a question of getting it to sync and inspire the next wave of growth. Just over 50% of the projects Think City committed to, involved either physical conservation or public spaces projects simply because we could create visible results in a short space of time. The community would see and feel their surroundings improving and this would provide a catalyst for even more positive change. Placemaking was a proven concept that cut across all these projects so we invited the Project for Public Spaces (see text box) to help us influence public policy makers as well as the private sector,” said Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Think City’s Executive Director.



01

GETTING LITTLE INDIA TO WORK

Think City and PPS identified three public spaces in George Town to introduce the concept of ‘placemaking’ – Little India, the new BID (see page XX) and Armenian Park. “Essentially placemaking is about a ‘sense of space’, this is very important as each place is different. So the approach is also different,” explained Suraya Ismail, Think City’s Grants Programme Director. There are certain commonalities as Cynthia Nikitin, PPS’ Senior Vice President believed that the four key factors to create a successful public space are, sociability, access, activities and comfort/image.

“Little India is a culturally vibrant and authentic area, full of traders, hawkers and restaurants. It’s a bustling area that attracts plenty of locals and tourists. Overall, the place works but it needed to

be organised better. Some of the issues that were identified by the Little India community were a lack of cleanliness, drainage problems, illegal building extensions and street traders blocking traffic,” said Suraya.

According to Daniel Lim, Think City’s Programme Executive, the challenge in improving the area boiled down to aligning the different outlooks of the existing stakeholders. “All these groups came from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, they weren’t used to working with each other and were more comfortable working within their own communities. As Think City doesn’t have vested interests in the projects, its easier to bring these different groups to the table.”

To build an atmosphere of trust among the Little India stakeholders before the actual placemaking process could begin,



02

01 An idyllic view of Armenian Park facing the Islamic Museum.
02 A Think City organised workshop with Little India stakeholders, to map out their aspirations for the area.



“Little India has to be one of most diverse, dense, culturally and culinary rich places on earth. The future of Little India needs to be shaped by its present as much as by its past. Its present includes many different actors from a variety of cultural and religious groups and from the private as well as public sector.”

Cynthia Nikitin,
Project for Public Spaces,
Senior Vice President

SELECTED LITTLE INDIA JOINT ACTION COMMITTEE (LIJAC) INITIATIVES



1 Upgrading the facades of 120 shophouses along Queen Street with new paint, lime plastering, period correct windows and removing oversized neon signage to show off more of the original facades. To build and enhance local capacity, contractors who have been trained in restoration processes (thanks to Think City funding) will carry out the work.

2 3 Greening neighbourhood courtyards. A total of four courtyards will be enhanced.

4 Pedestrianising Lebuah Pasar (Market Street) for the convenience of shoppers.

5 A public campaign on cleanliness will also be launched soon.



Daniel Lim, Think City's Programme Executive.

Think City spearheaded and funded a series of smaller cultural events to bring the community closer, including a photo exhibition of Little India and subsequent book launch which was launched by the Indian ambassador to Malaysia. “These cultural projects were like a test run where we worked with the community to test run the components and get a clear idea of how the bigger picture could turn out,” said Lim.

With the community all on board, a series of placemaking workshops run with PPS were held to identify problems as well as areas of opportunity. The Little

India Joint Action Committee (LIJAC) which was formed after the workshops by the various participants, identified a number of initiatives to improve the area especially in terms of cleanliness and safety (see text box) but for Suraya the real indicator that the committee would have an impact came after a presentation to the city authorities. “It was LIJAC members who presented their proposals and it was the first time any of these community leaders had ever done so. This was a ground breaking moment as we realised that any future issues with the space could be dealt with by this group, that it could be a sustainable initiative.”

ENHANCING PUBLIC PARKS

Once Think City had successfully piloted placemaking tools in Little India, the focus was shifted to Armenian Park – an urban park famous for its regular thieves market. “Because of the flea market many families don’t feel comfortable with their kids using the park,” said Lim. “However, the park is a shared space, we (Think City) can’t determine the use of the space, it’s down to the community and the people who use it. We’ve already carried out public engagement and put together a public exhibition, invited the community over and explained the scheme to them in local dialects. From the feedback, a balance was struck between the community, the children and the thieves market. The landscaping will be improved and we’re now moving towards implementation.”

“Often communities are not technical experts so we have to guide them without directing them, this is a challenge and an area we have to be careful with. We need to build the capacity of the community so that they can complement the technical experts,” he explained. “Local communities best understand the strengths and weaknesses of a space as they are the ones who use and own these.”

This bottom-up approach was praised by Nikitin, who also observed that, “Planners, designers and municipal governments often try to impose plans without understanding what the community wants. If public space design doesn’t take into account what the community needs we end up with public spaces without visitors and we wonder why people don’t come.”



Artist's impression of the upgraded Armenian Park.

Cynthia Nikitin, Project for Public Spaces, Senior Vice President discussed PPS’ partnership with Think City and plans for the future.

What is your sense of the 'feeling on the ground' from the participants of the placemaking workshops you’ve conducted in Malaysia?

I think the response to Think City and our joint placemaking initiative has been overwhelmingly positive and opened many eyes and minds in Penang and Putrajaya. It was well received by - found to be unique and a realistic and sustainable city planning strategy by - the Knowledge Team at Khazanah as well. Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP)¹ seems to be totally on board and want to use placemaking to revitalise key potentially catalytic areas of Butterworth.

Placemaking taps the creativity, intellect, wisdom, history, experience of everyone involved in it – the community is the expert – and once they are told that and understand it, their power and importance becomes greater than that of any designer or bureaucrat.

Describe the collaboration between TC and PPS to build capacity in the region.

When you think about a place you do everything differently and Think City is uniquely positioned to bring together

actors from both the public and private sector to work collaboratively to improve a wide range of public spaces across the city.

They cut across jurisdictions, design disciplines, and local self-interest and are able to pull the best resources, talent and expertise from each while being seen as a non-biased convener and implementer.

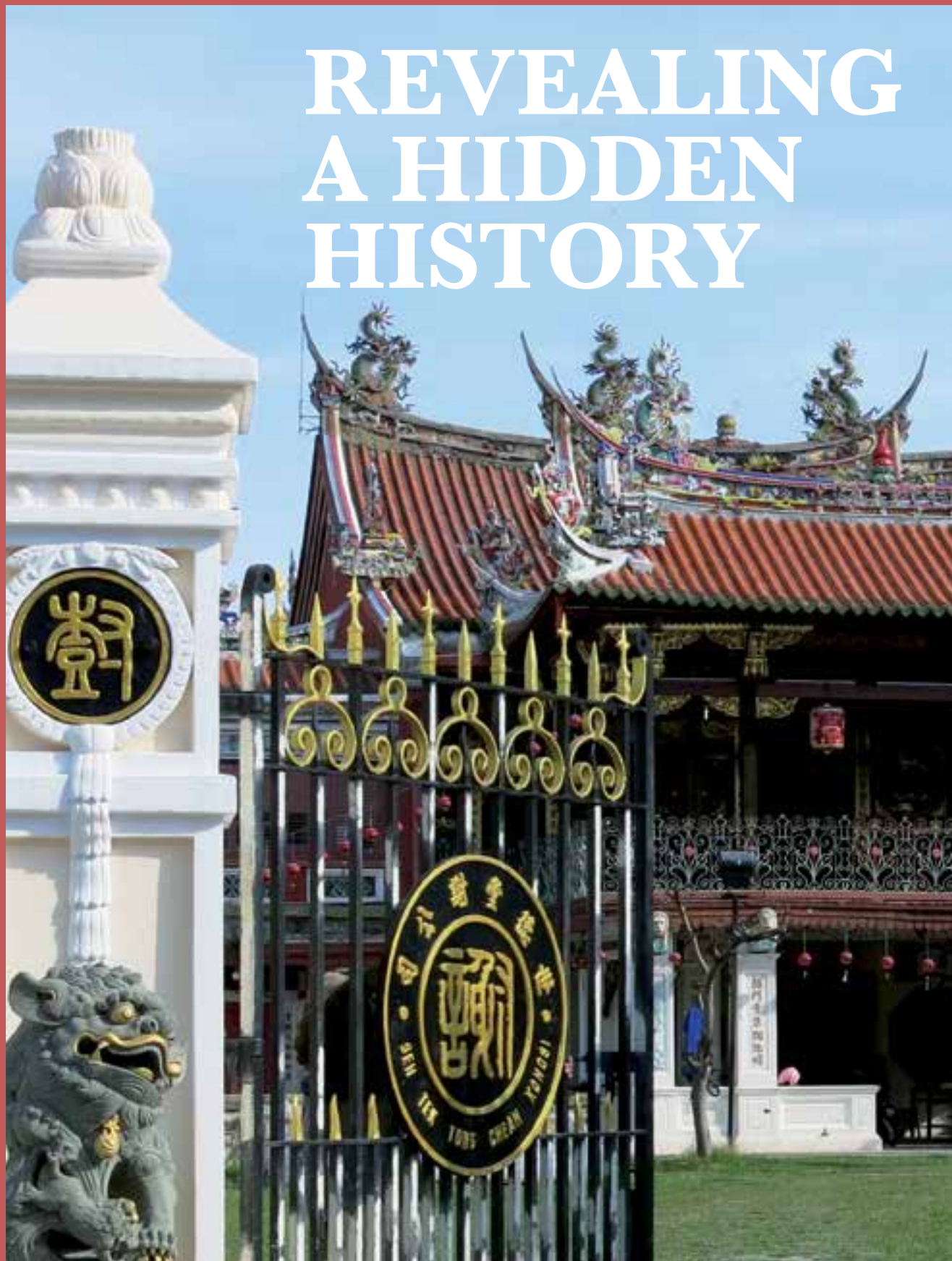
PPS’ next phase of work with Think City will focus on continuing to develop placemaking skills not only of Think City’s staff but of their target institutional and government partners and to “train the trainers” to disseminate the placemaking approach across Malaysia.

We are looking to create a programme that creates a community of practice amongst placemakers in Malaysia, and potentially the region, including planners, designers, community advocates, economic development specialists, cultural actors, historic preservationists, etc.

The programme will help Think City advocate with government at different levels, we could even convene mayors from all over Malaysia to learn how they could create high-quality public space environments that can have a meaningful impact and play a major role in the economic vitality of their urban centres.

¹ Seberang Perai Municipal Council.

REVEALING A HIDDEN HISTORY



01

01 Peter Cheah, chairman of Cheah Kongsì.

02 The Cheah Kongsì hidden behind rubble. After the fire, the Trustees decided not to rebuild the shophouses but to open up the Kongsì to the public eye (see opposite page).



02

Ho Swee Ching

"I first had a vision to make the Cheah Kongsì more open and accessible to the public when I broke open an old safe and discovered a large collection of old documents. The discovery was of great significance as it revealed the social structure of relevant periods of our history - and I felt it important to share this with our visitors both local and foreign.

It is also very important to me and to the Board of Trustees to ensure that the Cheah Kongsì is presented in all its glory, and that the planned interpretation centre will showcase the Kongsì's rich history in a unique and engaging way."

Peter Cheah, Chairman, Board of Trustees Cheah Kongsì

Peter Cheah, the Chairman of the Cheah Kongsì's Board of Trustees is clearly a man on a mission. Since holding office he has introduced modern management and accounting systems to the clan house in order to run it like a 21st century organisation. Bringing in new ideas and change isn't always easy, especially to a kongsì or clan house where tradition and custom are the twin pillars of their existence.

When the Cheah Kongsì was set up in 1810, it was meant to provide welfare support for Chinese migrants primarily from southern China who shared the same surname - in this instance, Cheah. After the new migrants arrived in what was then Malaya, the Kongsì would provide them with lodging, help them to find work etc.

As Cheah explained, "The role of the Kongsì in the 21st century is completely different to what it was in the early days. We still carry out the 'basics'- paying homage to our ancestors, praying to our patron saint as well as providing financial aid and education scholarships for the

clansmen. The big difference now, is that there are no more migrants coming from China."

The role of the clan houses has become largely ceremonial with clan members occasionally gathering for religious celebrations and to worship their ancestors. Most buildings and adjoining temples are also open to curious members of the public and tourists. When George Town was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, Cheah sensed an opportunity for the Kongsì to evolve.

"We felt that the Kongsì was shut off from the rest of society, and our vision was for the Kongsì to play a larger role in the community. One of the ways we could do this was by actively supporting the sustainability of George Town as a World Heritage Site. We thought we'd start with renovating our temple building as a number of features were not period correct," he explained. The trustees also decided to repair the facades of the shophouses in front of the Kongsì. "With George Town's listing as a World Heritage Site, we've become more

selective of our tenants to ensure that businesses promote traditional trades or crafts,” said Cheah.

After Cheah approached Think City for a grant to carry out the major renovation work a new chain of events was triggered...

As the Kongsì was being cleared up so that renovations could begin, Cheah came across stacks of old documents and site plans dating back to the 19th century. “This was an important find,” said Suraya Ismail, Think City’s Grants Programme Director, “As it led to more discussions between Peter and Think City about how we could tie in this discovery with ‘opening’ up the Kongsì to the outside world. Peter was very keen on developing an overall heritage management plan to protect and share the Kongsì’s rich history and that of the early Chinese migrants in Malaysia.”

With additional funding from Think City, Suraya and the team set about linking the Cheah Kongsì with local and international experts to conceptualise a heritage management plan, which included the digital archiving of the old documents and plans for a new interpretation centre which will open in 2014.

“This is all very new to us, and of course it was not very easy convincing the trustees that the Kongsì needed to rethink its role and play a larger role in the community. Apart from the grant, Think City gave me a lot of moral support and the inspiration to think big. Our working relationship is excellent,” said Cheah. “The experience of working with them (Think City) on the Kongsì restoration will probably lead to more projects in the near future.”



- 01 Staff from Living 14, a giftshop specialising in local arts and craft in front of their shop. The building belongs to the Cheah Kongsì who carried out renovations to the façade of the shop assisted by a Think City grant.
- 02 “In Peter Cheah we really found a champion who would liase with the Kongsì committee and drive these new projects forward.”, Suraya Ismail, Think City Grants Programme Director.
- 03 A stone lion at the entrance to the Cheah Kongsì.



HISTORY ALIVE!

When the Penang Story Project was launched over a decade ago, it created a ripple of interest in Penang’s history and heritage that has now taken on a life of its own.



In 2001, this popular cultural mapping exercise brought together historians, scholars and the public to share and interpret their stories of Penang’s built and living heritage. There was a distinct sense of urgency in the air. Inner city communities, traditional trades, heritage buildings were all at risk from encroaching modernisation and development exacerbated by a glaring lack of heritage awareness.

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) which organised the Penang Story, kept heritage in the public eye thanks to its

partnership with The Star – one of Malaysia’s most influential newspapers. For two years, many previously untold stories of people and places made their way onto newsprint. Eventually, the project assembled enough historical materials for the George Town World Heritage site nomination dossier leading to George Town’s eventual inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Think City’s revival of the Penang Story in 2010 was a natural progression, as one of the objectives of the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) was to

The Star Building

The concept for the Star Building is to capture the essence of George Town – past and present through the creation of creative spaces that represent ‘The Penang Story’. Think City will use images and community stories from George Town’s rich and colourful history, captured through technology.

- The outcomes would be:
- A ‘living archive’ of George Town and Penang,
 - Provision of an incentive for people to visit ‘The Penang Story’ on the first floor,
 - Community workshops for upskilling and capacity building,
 - An innovative, state of the art high-tech attraction that will give people a reason to visit the Penang Story Gallery,
 - A home for the Penang Philharmonic Orchestra and a space for young people interested in local stories.

- 01 The Star Building, home to a new interpretation centre and the Penang Philharmonic.
- 02 Artist’s impression of the interior of the interpretation centre.



promote a broader appreciation of history to strengthen George Town’s unique identity.

For Neil Khor, Think City’s former grants programme director, the project had a special significance, “I had the chance to look at Penang’s history when I worked on the Penang Story Project many years ago. Joining Think City was an opportunity to breakout from being a bystander watching history, to activate communities to document their own history. I realised very long ago that the omniscient writer sitting somewhere writing history was not workable, it is necessary to get multiple perspectives from different people doing different things.”

According to Khor, “To revive the Penang Project we renewed ties with both the PHT and Star Publications, the main partners of the first Penang Story Project. As early as December 2009, both Hamdan (Think City’s executive director) and I presented the GTGP to Star’s senior management, at that time headed by Michael Aeria, who was Group Chief Editor. Khoo Salma who played a key role in organising the first Penang Story had just become PHT president so the prospect of working with her again

was something that I looked forward to. Anwar Fazal (see page **XX**) agreed to be the chairman and we decided that the theme would be ‘Penang in Global History’.”

“The new focus on Penang as a place where people and ideas converged from all over the world was timely. It was a way of asking why Penang should have smaller ambitions now, when we had much larger ambitions before,” noted Hamdan.

Khor and the team working with key stakeholders – PHT, Star Publications, George Town World Heritage Incorporated, the Muslim League, All Clans Association among others – developed key themes: Penang & Nationalism; Penang Muslims in global history; and Penang and the Indian Ocean. “I was able to convince Professor Wang Gungwu to kick-off the Penang Story Lecture Series with a lecture on Sun Yat Sen and Ku Hung Ming (the latter a 19th century Penangite who made his mark in the world as a scholar mandarin in the court of the Empress Dowager),” said Khor.

“The greatest challenge for us was to convince stakeholders including some



“The Penang Story is all about the histories of communities and by natural extension an important feature in the preservation of the site’s OUVs. Without an awareness about people, whether in the past or the present, conservation work becomes less meaningful. The site is not just about architecture but rather what that architectural legacy tells us about where we come from.”

Neil Khor, Think City's former Grants Programme Director

in our own team that cultural mapping was not merely public relations but the cornerstone of why we (Think City) were in George Town in the first place. The Penang Story is all about the histories of communities and by natural extension an important feature in the preservation of the site’s OUVs. Without an awareness about people, whether in the past or the present, conservation work becomes less meaningful. The site is not just about architecture but rather what that architectural legacy tells us about where we come from.”

One major outcome of the Penang Story Project is heritage interpretation which has come in many forms including, publications such as the Biographical Dictionary of Penang Mercantile Personalities to the digitization of 19th century surveys of Penang. The most ambitious, is the adaptive reuse of The Star’s historic Penang office as a permanent interpretation centre.

Khor noted that since the Project began in 2010, Think City began to receive more cultural mapping applications with greater frequency and better quality. “Think City alone, can’t take credit for the many wonderful projects by various communities. The Star has played its part – its Group Chief Editor Wong Chun Wai writes a weekly column called “My Penang, my Story”. The PHT continues to spearhead the study and preservation of intangible heritage and has just completed the George Town WHS Intangible Heritage Inventory,” said Khor. “This project has also spun-off the Perai Story, which tells the necessary stories from mainland Penang. Penangites from the mainland now feel that their stories are as interesting as those from George Town. Basically, we’re convincing Malaysians that their past matters and that it should be told in interesting and critical ways.”

Penang Story Lecture Series

The popular lecture series explored Penang’s unique “place-identity” and examined its role in world history - as a place where different ideas, people and cultures have converged.



All lectures were free and open to the public.



Prof KS Jomo looked back at Penang’s economic history since 1786 and discussed the state’s future options.



Penang hero, Dr Wu Lien-teh, also known as the plague fighter, was honoured for his pioneering scientific methods which combatted the plague in China.



Celebrating Rabindranath Tagore

"My best memory is definitely the Tagore Project, when we were able to get Malaysians of all creeds and colour to celebrate the Indian poet who visited Penang in 1927," said Khor.

This multi-tiered project encouraged inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic cooperation in the Little India enclave through a book, photo exhibition and lecture inspired by Asia’s first Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore’s visit to Penang in 1927.

Think City supported an essay writing competition in Chung Ling High School where Tagore visited in 1927. The High Commissioner of India to Malaysia, HE Mr. Vijay K. Gokhale unveiling a portrait of Tagore which is now in the school library.

At the launch of Tan Sri Lim Phaik Gan’s (PG Lim) autobiography in conjunction with a Penang Story lecture. The late PG Lim was Malaysia’s first woman ambassador and first Cambridge-trained lawyer.



The MALACCA STRAITS DIAGONAL & the NEW SCALE of PLANNING

by Hamdan Abdul Majeed

CONNECTING

the

HUBS

“The Malacca Straits Diagonal will connect about 16 million people, leading to an expansion of markets, a larger reach for products and services and enhancing the ability to achieve economies of agglomeration, leading to increased productivity, innovation and compactness.”

More efficient cities are a prerequisite for the 21st century. Think City looks beyond traditional city boundaries, and shapes new thinking about strategic urban planning to influence the development of Malaysia’s key urban areas.

When Think City opened its office in Penang our work wasn’t confined to just Penang but to examine the state as part of a much larger urban system. If we look at how urbanisation has taken place in peninsular Malaysia, there is a high level of population and economic activities concentrated along the cities of the Straits of Malacca including, Penang, greater Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Singapore.

In the future, these four cities will all be connected by a new high speed rail link, increasing the level of connectivity of people and ideas. We coined the term, the Malacca Straits Diagonal to describe the area. This fits in with ideas on the new scale of planning which is urban planning across larger territorial boundaries, where we are no longer confined by our own cities or states.

There are two examples that come to mind. The first is the Regional Plan Association’s America 2050 plan, which posits the emergence of ten urban mega regions across the US over the coming decades. Second is the European Diagonal, a roughly linear grouping of

POPULATION BY METROPOLITAN AREAS

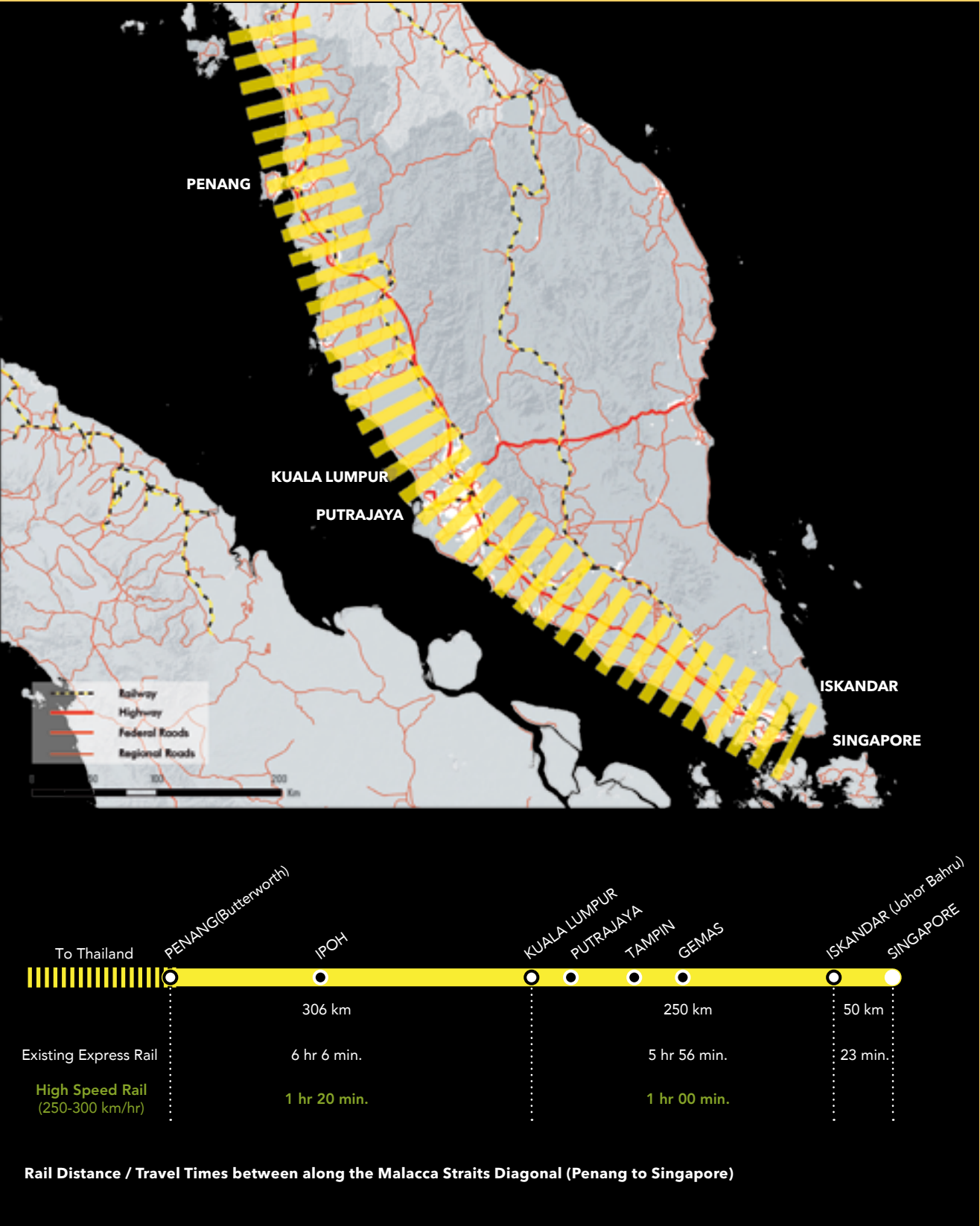


OVER 16 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE MALACCA STRAITS DIAGONAL

“The Prime Ministers agreed to build a High Speed Rail link between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. This is a strategic development in bilateral relations that will dramatically improve the connectivity between Malaysia and Singapore. It will usher in a new era of strong growth, prosperity, and opportunities for both countries. It will facilitate seamless travel between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, enhance business linkages, and bring the peoples of Malaysia and Singapore closer together. Ultimately, this project will give both countries greater stakes in each other’s prosperity and success.”

Joint statement by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Prime Minister Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak
Singapore-Malaysia leaders’ retreat in Singapore on 19 february 2013

RAIL & ROAD NETWORK



cites stretching from Lisbon to Milan which share the cultural roots of the Mediterranean. In both of these two cases, cities within a region will benefit from enhanced connectivity, economic integration, and cross-promotional branding.

This new scale of planning brings efficiency to the use of public resources and at the same time creates economic hubs that optimise growth and development. This ensures that every dollar that the government spends will have a maximised outcome, while at the same time creating synergy and symbiosis across traditional boundaries.

The Malacca Straits Diagonal will connect about 16 million people, leading to an expansion of markets, a larger reach for products and services and enhancing the ability to achieve economies of agglomeration, leading to increased productivity, innovation and compactness.

Think City’s research carried out jointly with Fundacion Metropoli on the Diagonal which was commissioned by PEMANDU and Khazanah¹ focuses on how this network of cities can be strengthened for better economic and social outcomes, and play a larger role within Asia and the world.

AT A GLOBAL CROSSROADS
In a sense, the Malacca Straits Diagonal is simply drawing on its historic role as a global economic hub. The Malay peninsular has always been the bridge that connected the east and west, China and India, the East Indies and the Middle East thanks to ancient sea routes set by the trade winds.

With India and China’s economies rapidly rising, the Malacca Straits Diagonal is well positioned to benefit from this growth. There is a need to prepare ourselves and to optimise this region to be able to ride this emerging growth cycle.

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY
After three years of developing and implementing our urban regeneration project in Penang, we are expanding to Putrajaya. Our mandate is to identify catalyst projects that can enable Putrajaya to leapfrog to the next phase of growth and development, basically building on the existing infrastructure.

Our involvement in Putrajaya really depends on how well we can convince the stakeholders of the importance of the initiatives and how these fit into the larger picture – the Malacca Straits Diagonal. Based on our experience in Penang, we developed catalyst projects, moved these projects towards implementation, provided advisory and technical support and also positioned these projects to attract investment.

This effort represents the desire to bring a new international viability and visibility to Penang, which has great potential to become attractive as an urban laboratory, and as a launch pad for emerging sectors in the global economy.

We are working in parallel with Putrajaya and Iskandar (in Johor) as we have a national mandate, based on our pilot experience in Penang. We’re in the process of scaling up, moving from a project to a programme. True strategic reconfiguration of the Malacca Straits Diagonal will take place with a holistic and coordinated approach at the mega regional scale. This necessarily includes cross-border relations with Malaysia’s immediate neighbours.

The new scale of planning is a participatory approach, yet there is strong leadership from the Federal government which is very cognisant of the need for effective public-private partnerships to achieve sustainable growth. The government’s aim is to model it right to attract the best of the private sector, rather than passing on the problem (to the

private sector) and hoping that a solution will eventually come. When projects are not well developed and are prematurely passed on to the private sector, or public sector participation is not well thought through, this often results in poor outcomes.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR EFFICIENT CITIES
Think City has tried to learn as much as we can about the experiences of other cities around the world, this is also why we are willing to work with diverse, international organisations such as the World Bank, Fundacion Metropoli, Project for Public Spaces, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Getty Conservation Institute among others. The idea is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel when you can learn from others, there are plenty of lessons we can adapt or pick from.

Our partnerships are both to augment our own technical needs and also to bring about global sharing of experiences – we want to steepen our learning curve by tapping into our partners’ expertise. This will allow us to shorten the time required to optimise Malaysia’s urban development model.

Hamdan Abdul Majeed is Executive Director of Think City and Director of Khazanah Nasional Berhad for Research and Investment Strategy. He was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship in 2012, focused on competitive cities and sustainable urbanisation.

¹ The Performance Management & Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) is a unit under the Malaysian Prime Minister’s Department, its main role and objective is to oversee implementation and assess progress of the Economic Transformation Programme and the Government Transformation Programme.

Khazanah Nasional Berhad is the Government of Malaysia’s strategic investment fund.

ADVOCACY

THINK CITY PROACTIVELY SHAPES THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING, BY PRESENTING AND INFLUENCING POLICY, ORGANISING CONFERENCES AND PUBLISHING.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL THINK CITY WORKS WITH CITY MANAGERS, AND WORKS WITH POLICY MAKERS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR AT NATIONAL LEVELS.

THINK CITY'S ADVOCACY WORK IS ABOUT BUILDING CAPACITY, SHOWCASING CHANGE AND THEN SCALING THIS UP.

CHANGE IS IMPORTANT AND IS KEY TO UNLOCKING PROSPERITY.

PRESENTATIONS GIVEN BY THINK CITY.



WORLD CITIES SUMMIT, ABU DHABI

As early as the summer of 2009, some members of the Think City team began engaging with leading experts in the field of urban development. In April 2010, Hamdan Abdul Majeed shared a platform with the Deputy Mayor of Paris and the Senior Vice President of Program for Public Spaces at the Global Cities Summit at Abu Dhabi. The presentation focused on Malaysia's new policies with regards to the rapid urbanisation of the country and public grants as a tool for urban regeneration with George Town as a case study. At that time – six months into the implementation of the GTGP – Think City had some 40 projects in various stages of implementation.



Khor presenting at the Emerging Cities Conference, Vientiane.

EMERGING CITIES CONFERENCE, VIENTIANE

The presentation in June 2011 was focused upon stakeholder management with particular emphasis on community engagement to build a greater sense of ownership for urban regeneration work in George Town. The presentation by Neil Khor, who was Programme Director at that time, focused upon how the UNESCO WHS status is enhancing Penang's economy, attracting visitors and creating new opportunities for heritage-inspired economic activities. Most importantly, were efforts by Think City to build local resilience and understanding about heritage through conservation and cultural mapping. There was also the Business Improvement District Scheme, the first in Asia, that Think City introduced to catalyze the regeneration of the inner city. The presentation also gave an opportunity for participants to understand heritage matters in a SE Asian context and in a living city whilst many other presentations were from the perspective of monuments and archaeology.

TOWARDS A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR YANGON IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In June 2012, Think City was invited to Yangon to assist with the formation of the Yangon Heritage Trust and present on the GTGP. The example of Penang was important as decision-makers in the Myanmar government were familiar with the state. Think City's Senior Fellow Dr Neil Khor described the shared heritage between Yangon and George Town - as trading port cities with a shared architectural and community legacies, both cities also share a common heritage in urban planning, legal and educational institutions. At the people-to-people level, there was also a very strong connection as demonstrated in the various street signage in Penang featuring Myanmar-related street names.



More importantly, the presentation focused upon the role of civil society as a catalyst for UNESCO's recognition of this shared multi-cultural and multi-religious legacy as Outstanding Universal Values making George Town a WHS. Other than the creation of a public grants programme, Think City also assists and strengthens George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI), the area manager as well as the various communities, NGOs and private property owners in an effort to regenerate the city.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, TBILISI

In May 2012, Think City was invited by Tbilisi City Hall to present the GTGP, Neil Khor, who represented Think City as its Senior Fellow, explained the George Town Transformation Programme (GTTP) and that the GTGP was part of that wider values-based transformation programme for Penang. The process began with an attempt to align historical development with economic and urban planning requirements. Think City worked with Fundacion Metropoli on the Penang Project to identify acupuncture projects that will catalyse Penang's future growth. The presentation complimented FM's Aaron Kelly's presentation on the territorial intelligence approach whereby urban planning can be aligned with economic policy and national needs becoming an important decision-making tool for policy makers. The GTGP, which by then had over 100 projects on the ground, was a good example of how a "bottom up" approach can work in an Asian context.



Hamdan at the 6th Urban Research and Knowledge Symposium, Barcelona.

WORLD BANK PRESENTATION, WASHINGTON DC

In August 2011, Hamdan Abdul Majeed, who was then on the Eisenhower Fellowship in the US, presented how the GTGP was catalysing a more knowledge-centric Penang. He linked the presentation to the joint World Bank and Khazanah publication – *Cities, People and the Economy* (2010). Hamdan's presentation focused on how urban planning needed to take into account communities and heritage; providing a holistic approach to urban regeneration. Working within the limitations and special requirements of a UNESCO WHS, conservation and planning needed to focus on the protection of George Town's Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs). The GTGP has proven that public grants can be an effective tool to bring communities, governmental stakeholders and civil society together. This builds resilience and sustainability into the various projects that is transforming Penang into a more knowledge-centric economy.

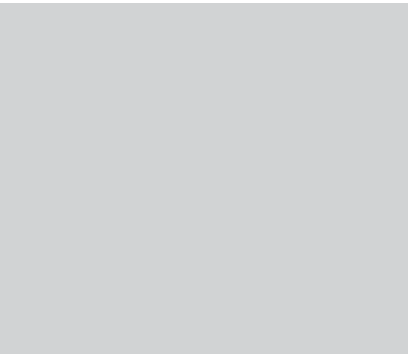


UN HABITAT SYMPOSIUM

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Hamdan in Edinburgh after a meeting with Scottish government officials.



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EPU ECOCITY SEMINAR
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EVENTS ORGANISED BY THINK CITY.



URBAN PLANNING FOR HISTORIC CITIES WORKSHOP
In May 2010, Think City and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) jointly organised the Urban Planning for Historic Cities workshop which was attended by all governmental and civil society stakeholders especially those involved in drafting the Special Area Plan. The AKTC also conducted a workshop for Muslim stakeholders in the site and helped identify some key intervention areas to regenerate Waqf (inalienable religious endowment in Islamic law) properties in the World Heritage Site.



Placemaking seminar underway.

PLACEMAKING TRAINING SEMINAR
Think City and Project For Public Spaces (PPS) conducted a Placemaking Training seminar in Penang in February 2013, to introduce participants to PPS’ unique, place-based approach to the planning, design, and management of public spaces. Participants were encouraged to think about public spaces and public institutions in a new light and introduced practical tools and techniques that they can use in their own work.

Participants spent two days exploring the principles of making places through walking tours, presentations, case studies, Place Performance Evaluation exercises, group discussions and the close examination of selected George Town public spaces.

To highlight the potential of Phase 5 KOMTAR as a community park, Think City together with Program for Public Spaces (PPS) conducted a place-making event at the old Sia Boey Market by Prangin Canal, highlighting the findings and recommendations from the seminar.



Conservation planning: in the lecture hall and on-site.



COMMUNITY HOUSING WORKSHOPS
Think City ran a series of workshops together with the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR) to work with a community of tenants and the building owner in conserving 10 shop houses along historic Lebuhr Armenian.

The pilot programme resulted in a Community Housing Fund (CDF) where Think City would channel funds to the owner for the conservation of the building exterior, whereas ACHR would provide funds in terms of loans to the tenants, for the renovation of the interior - allowing both owner and tenants to contribute to the funding of restoration work.

Think City’s criterion to the property owner was that the tenants who intended to stay were not evicted, whereas ACHR stated that the fund would only be extended when tenants received proper tenancy agreement. Tenants participating in the pilot programme have been promised a ten-year tenancy agreement.

URBAN CONSERVATION PLANNING IN MALAYSIA WORKSHOPS
The two-week workshop in May 2012 organised by the Getty Conservation Institute, Badan Warisan and Think City provided training in urban conservation planning methodologies for planners and encourage them to incorporate these in their professional work.



Participants at the community housing workshop.

GREENING URBAN GROWTH SYMPOSIUM, PENANG
The two-day symposium organised by Think City in February 2012, proposed solutions to the green growth conundrum of how to sustain economic growth and improve the people's quality of life while dealing with the pressures of inexorable urbanisation.

The forum provided a platform for a wide range of distinguished opinion leaders, including economists, mayors, researchers, management strategists, policy analysts, urban planners and green business executives to provide inputs towards some of the most pressing issues facing cities today.



Mary Jane Ortega,
secretary-general
of CITYNET and
former Mayor,
San Fernando,
La Union
(Philippines).

Azman Mokhtar,
Managing
Director,
Khazanah
Nasional.





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03

BETTING ON BIDS

Asia's first Business Improvement District

How a run-down business district on the cusp of a World Heritage Site benefitted from Think City's intervention to bring the private sector together for the common good.



Donald Hyslop speaking at a BID workshop in Penang, jointly organised by Think City and the British Council.

- 01 Prangin Mall with KOMTAR tower in the background.
- 02 Penang Times Square, a mix of commercial and residential units.
- 03 GAMA – one of the city's oldest department stores.

Komplex Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) is an iconic building in Malaysia and at one time Asia's tallest skyscraper. It forms part of the larger KOMTAR project based on the idea of creating a city within a city; a modern urban living space comprising government offices, affordable housing, shopping arcade and a transport hub.

The ambitious KOMTAR project that began in 1974 has yet to be completed, and the final part of the jigsaw – Phase 5 – is due to be transformed into an urban park. The area is dilapidated, congested, lacks pedestrian links, is run-down, dirty and commercial lots suffer from low occupancy rates.

Think City felt that an intervention in the area was necessary as KOMTAR is the gateway to George Town's World Heritage Site (WHS), and as a mature commercial area (that includes five malls, commercial property and a hotel), it would stand to gain enormously from regenerative efforts.

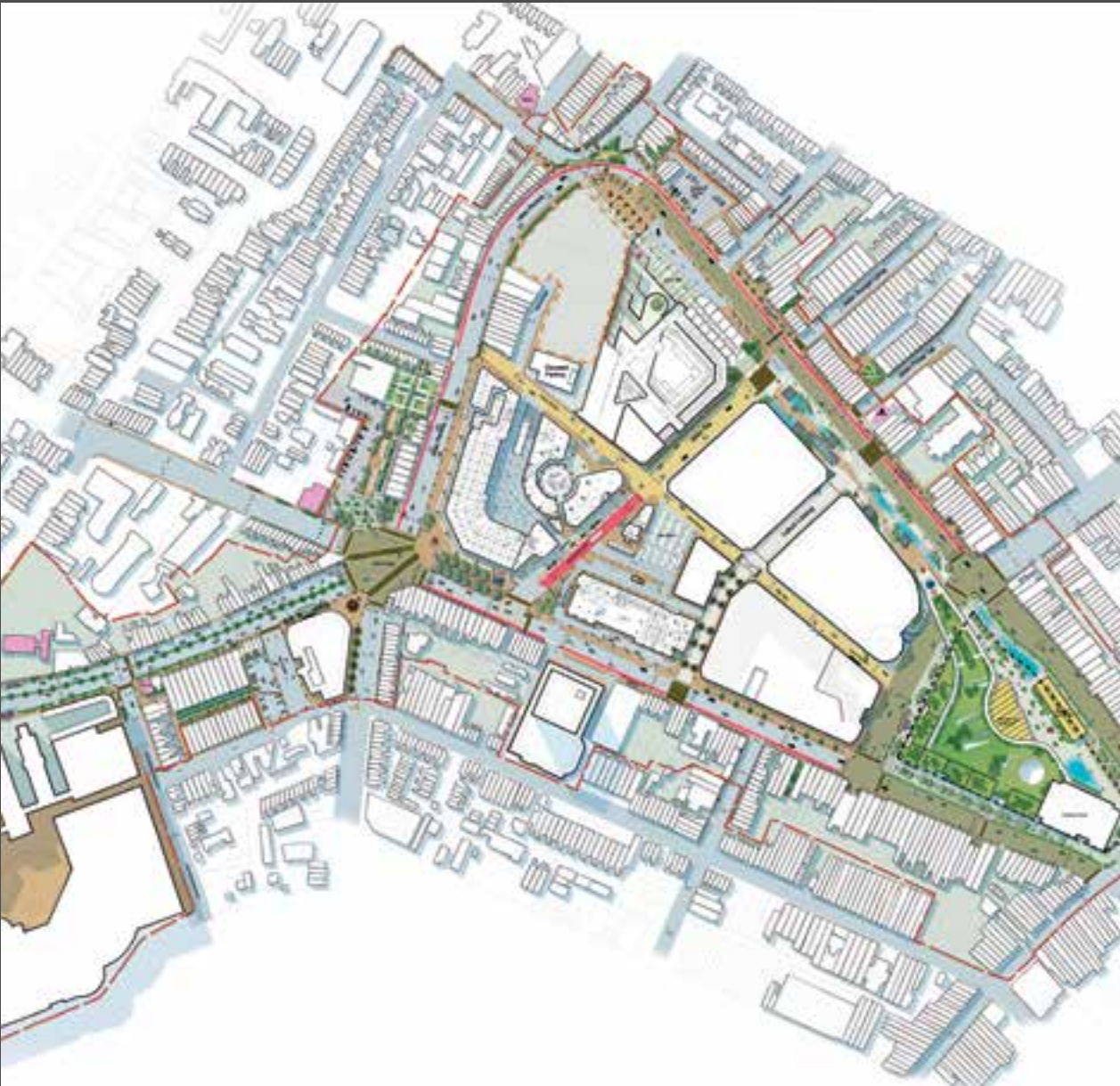
"Through the British Council, we linked up with Donald Hyslop who was chairman of a successful BIDS in the UK called Better Bankside. He came to Penang and we examined the KOMTAR area together," said Agnes James, Think City's former Senior Grants Programme Manager.

"After identifying all the major stakeholders in the area we called for a meeting. They knew that the area wasn't working and something needed to be done, but what exactly no one knew. They were very open to ideas though."

Think City sat down with all the major stakeholders to document their individual development strategies which would eventually be transformed into a BIDS Area Plan. According to James, "Initially businesses were very reluctant to share plans and ideas, because essentially they were all competitors. It took a lot of work to get the stakeholders to come to our office with their files and reveal their plans to the consultant!" Eventually all the

GEORGE TOWN BIDS

A concept plan for the George Town BIDS was drawn up, involving 85.23 acres enclosing Jalan Dato’ Keramat, Jalan Penang, Jalan Magazine and Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong.



The GT BIDS company includes seven organisations with Think City acting as the secretariat.

Five projects are in the pipeline for 2013:

- Decorative lighting,
- Wayfinding system,
- Pavement improvement, to allow pedestrians to walk around the BIDS area,
- Park,
- An official launch to promote the GT BIDS to the wider public.



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDS) AT A GLANCE

A BID is a precisely defined geographical area within which businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment.

These were first introduced in Canada and the US in the 1970s and there are now over 1,000 BIDs in both nations with less than 1% failing to renew their commitment to the programme.

BIDs were first introduced in the UK in 2004 there are now in 88 BIDs in that country.

The GT BIDS, is Asia’s first BID.

stakeholders moved forward as the BIDS was a viable way of creating a sustainable platform for urban regeneration, and most importantly it would help to generate more revenue.

The Area Plan proposed the creation of a formal BIDS company (the George Town Business Improvement District) run by a fulltime manager, each stakeholder would contribute an annual fee which would go towards improving connectivity, cleanliness and security within the area. Think City also included from the beginning, the participation of the city council (MPPP) to ensure that physical upgrading work in public spaces could be carried out efficiently.

Convincing businesses to get involved in the George Town BIDS was the first step, Think City also set about reaching out to the community who lived in the area, who were crucial to the project’s long-term success.



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“We sent out roving teams who distributed flyers and brochures to all the residents,” explained James. “We also held an exhibition on-site which acted as an outreach programme and received plenty of positive feedback. Basically, the community agreed that some form of regeneration programme was needed in the area to make it cleaner, safer, less congested, friendlier to activities and more inclusive.”

With the GT BIDS company established and a full-time manager in charge, James had time to reflect, “Getting the company started was a real challenge when you consider that each member of the initial BIDS committee had their own board of directors to report to and convince that this was a good idea. It meant constant negotiating and communication. We had to keep lobbying for the project, our role was to keep herding the BIDS stakeholders in one direction!”

- 01 An on-site exhibition was held which acted as an outreach programme and it received plenty of positive feedback from members of the public.
- 02 KOMTAR once a bustling hub, now a shell of its former self.



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GT BID good for business?

"We have a number of properties in the area, whenever we bring in investors the first thing they ask is 'Are you sure you want to develop here?' I haven't been getting very good feedback from most of the investors."

When we start talking about the possibility of transformation in the area then it adds more confidence to the negotiations. When I mention BIDS they are more receptive, but of course they need to see action first."

Working with Think City.

"Think City definitely had an impact in motivating the stakeholders. Without Think City, I don't think we would have started the project or reached this far. They conducted the first round of stakeholder buy-in which was crucial to get everyone on board. They also provided much needed seed funding and helped members to network with the local authorities."

If I'm stuck with something I call the Think City team, we'll brainstorm and find a solution. They are very responsive and have a good network, it's more like colleagues working together."

Hopes for the GT BID.

"The short term plans are to implement the five initiatives (see **Table xx**), these are quick wins that can be implemented in 2013."

In the mid term we are looking to get a few more stakeholders aligned to make more of a contribution to the neighbourhood. We're looking to introduce new supplemental services in coordination with the city council. There will be more marketing activities and hopefully these will increase property values and sales."

The long term plan is to get as many property owners to participate and to establish a funding/collection system to ensure there are funds available to maintain, develop and promote the area. At the end of the day, the idea is to make the GT BID vibrant and better able to complement nearby retail and business centres."

Janice Yeap,
COO of the Heng Lee Group
Director George Town BIDS

"We pioneered the business improvement district scheme (BIDS) in the US, where businesses first came together to improve security and cleanliness, but developed programmes and activities because public spaces that work well increase profit and real estate value."

Sometimes, governments think that once a plaza has been built, it will attract people naturally. This is definitely not true. In fact, continuous and creative programmes are what keep places attractive. BIDS is not only about sharing resources; it's about reversing a negative image. More importantly, by working together, programmes and activities can be sustainable."

I would say that 80% of the success or failure of a place can be attributed to its management. If places are not well maintained, they will develop a negative image that takes an entire district on a downward spiral."

Cynthia Nikitin,
Project for Public Spaces,
Senior Vice President

GETTING THE JOB DONE

From setting up George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) to becoming mayor of Malaysia's largest municipal area, Maimunah Mohd Sharif talks about the importance of leadership in bringing about urban transformation.



Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Seberang Perai's energetic mayor.



The GTWHI building became a learning centre for good conservation practices. Every time major renovation work was carried out, local architects and contractors were invited to observe and learn."

When George Town and Melaka were jointly inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2008, you were tasked with setting up George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) from scratch. Tell us about the process.

"When the CM¹ initially told me to take up the position of general manager of what would eventually become GTWHI I was reluctant. It was a heavy responsibility on my shoulders, as my entire working experience had always been in the public sector. I had no idea how to establish a company much less one that would provide heritage leadership in a WHS; there was no model in Malaysia for me to follow. In fact Melaka was waiting for us to start before setting up their own heritage office!"

However, I had been involved with the dossier for George Town's listing since 1986 and had visited plenty of other world heritage sites – Paris, Luang Prabang, Macau. Each site is obviously very different, and the various heritage offices were set-up differently and had very different systems."

After deciding to take up the challenge I had to work quick. We didn't have a management plan to guide the new company and the priorities fell into three key areas:

1. The big picture was to create a Conservation Management Plan and Special Area Plan that would provide direction for the George Town WHS, without this we would be managing the site 'blind'.
2. Before we could even get started I had to build a work flow for GTWHI from scratch, which meant hiring a team, working out terms of reference, you name it. It's very different walking into an established organisation which has systems already in place to creating all the systems yourself; it was a very steep learning curve, five months actually.
3. On a micro level, once the state government identified a heritage building for us to use as our office we had serious work to do to the office. It had a leaking roof, termites, no telephone or broadband cables, it was totally unsuitable but we had to fix it up and get on with it. This was the scale of the job!

To familiarise myself better with George Town I'd walk the streets every day for at least an hour before the day began, from 0730 – 0830. I'd meet people, talk to them, study the buildings, architecture, learn what was happening along each street."



- 01 Busy intersection in the George Town BIDS. Improving access and connectivity for pedestrians is a priority for the new BIDS company.
- 02 George Town BIDS new wayfinding system.

¹ Chief Minister of Penang, Lim Guan Eng.

What about the challenges?

Getting things done meant building a dedicated team. As a civil servant I've seen jobseekers apply because they can't find jobs in the private sector. I didn't want that, although realistically I knew it would be hard to recruit people with a high level of technical skills (in conservation and heritage). To compensate I looked for passion, for interest in heritage and George Town.

Janet Pillai from Arts-Ed (see pXXX) helped me to interview potential recruits, we would send them off on assignments in the WHS and then assess them. I wanted people who could be hands-on and go down to the ground and interact with the community. Leadership is also about working with people as we have to realise that we can't do everything ourselves."

I think that having the right mindset was crucial to getting the GTWHI office operational and the Draft Special Area Plan ready in such short time. My old office (planning department of the local council) was on the 16th floor, in those days my attitude was different perhaps because I was physically cut off from the stakeholders. I used to be very inflexible in drafting planning guidelines (laughs).

Then when I was setting up GTWHI and was more hands-on dealing with conservation experts and architects I realised that not all the guidelines we drafted actually worked on the ground. It really made me realise that as a leader I had to listen and couldn't assume that I knew best all the time"



New trees planted along Jalan Carnarvon by the GTWHI office.

What do you consider your achievements as GM of GTWHI?

A number of things, but I think I really have to stress the time frame. I was appointed GM in November 2009, by April 2010 I had established the actual GTWHI office and put together a team. In March 2011 we were finally installed in our renovated office with a visitor centre. Three days after completing the move, I was asked to take up the office of Seberang Perai mayor, I didn't even have time to unpack my boxes!

In those 16 months as GM I'd overseen the completion of two major reports – the Conservation Management Plan and Special Area Plan and George Town Draft Special Area Plan. Both reports were submitted to UNESCO and in a way have set the benchmark for future Malaysian heritage sites - the Lenggong Valley² team looked to GTWHI's experience to assist them with their own listing and I was also a part of the committee.

I'm also proud of the Greening of George Town Plan. I was so impressed by streets in Paris and Seville and asked myself 'Why can't we plant trees in the city, here?' The street in front of the GTWHI office seemed the best place to start! It was a project that faced plenty of initial objections from the public who were worried that the trees would affect the feng shui, telephone lines, you name it. In the end after many rounds of public engagement, the community even offered to water the trees!

I'm also proud of the Greening of George Town Plan. I was so impressed by streets in Paris and Seville and asked myself 'Why can't we plant trees in the city, here?' The street in front of the GTWHI office seemed the best place to start!

² The Lenggong valley in Ulu Perak is one of Malaysia's most important archaeology sites and excavations have revealed many traces of Malaysia's prehistory. It is the site of the oldest known place of human activity in peninsular Malaysia. The Lenggong Valley was successfully inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site on 30 June 2012.

Finally, I'd have to say I'm very proud of the work we did in getting the George Town Festival (see page XX) up and running. The CM really wanted the Festival to be a month-long celebration and only gave us six weeks to come up with a programme, invite artistes, find sponsorship, create publicity, a logo, everything. The team and I slept a lot in the office during that time. Yet we pulled it off, we all worked together, ate together it was hard work but a lot of fun working with Joe Sidek (the George Town Festival director)."

What was your working relationship with Think City like?

"I have very fond memories, they are a young, energetic yet experienced team. We used to get a lot of work done after office hours over a meal together. They would tell me, 'Ok GM we work like this, there's no such thing as a free lunch!'

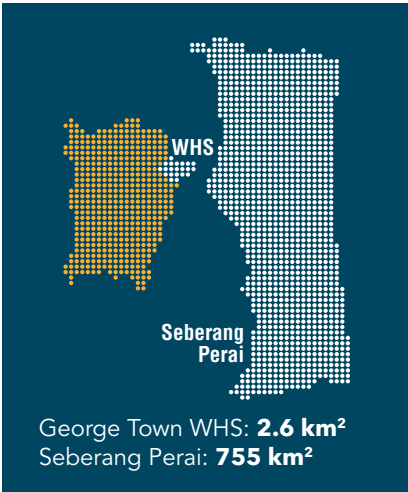
Even though I'm now stationed on the mainland, our relationship has continued with two important projects. The Butterworth Transformation Programme, which will upgrade the town's physical and economic well-being. The second is the Perai Story modelled on the Penang Story (see pXXX).

How different or similar is your leadership style as current mayor of Seberang Perai?

"At GTWHI I was able to build my own team, while as mayor of Seberang Perai I have come into a long-established organisation with over 3,000 staff. I would say that my attitude is very similar although the approach is tailored for different circumstances.

I believe in engagement – with the community and my staff – as well as having a clearly defined vision or focus. My time at GTWHI really taught me the power of community engagement and this is useful in Seberang Perai which is a very mixed area from urban centres, villages, industrial estates to agricultural land. To fix the issues, we need to go to the ground to understand the problems.

Having a clear vision is also very important and a new initiative I put into place in 2012 was to work with the management team to come up with a special focus above and beyond



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- 01 From managing a heritage area measuring only 2.6 km², Maimunah's new post has taken her to much larger district.
- 02 MPSP's annual Fokus publication outlines specific targets that the management team have set for themselves.

our day-to-day work. For instance in 2012 we looked at ways to create an eco-community, increase community participation in fiscal management and enhance our human capital. We're transparent and put this online so that our progress can also be monitored by the public.

2012 was a trial year for us, in 2013 I asked the staff if they wanted to continue with this and they said 'Yes!'. This year's focus is on enhancing the environment, flood mitigation measures and better enforcement among others. Both roles at GTWHI and MPSP have taught me perseverance, that nothing is impossible. It's just how much you want to do something."



Lim Chooi Ping, general manager of George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) described the working relationship with Think City.

"We work with Think City on a number of projects in the WHS. I consider Think City a close partner. Our partnership is in many forms and many areas as long as it is related to the WHS.

Think City acts as a major funder of our projects because we are constrained by our budget; we offer our assistance in terms of organising and coordinating meetings between all the local government, state agencies and NGOs involved (for specific projects).

GTWHI is more localised and we have to solve the problems and issues on the ground, Think City don't have these duties so they are able to look at a much bigger picture. They have great international contacts and help us to source for experts and consultants. We complement each other well."



Photo by M. Hijas Sahari for Cultural Mapping Project, USM 2010.

HOUSING THE COMMUNITY

As George Town’s listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site sped up urban gentrification, Think City looked at social innovations in Thailand and other parts of SE Asia to keep the city’s delicate social fabric from unravelling further.

Over two hundred years of migrants ebbing and flowing into the port city of George Town has created a vibrant, cosmopolitan city that in many respects has managed to cling on to its colourful traditions and heritage.

As new migrants arrived in George Town, informal systems of community housing began to develop. For the Chinese community, the Kongsì or clan house provided an important first place of call for the new migrants. These clan houses were meant for men who shared the same surname, and provided a temporary shelter and place for new immigrants to network and gather information about their new home.

The Hock Teik which dates back to the mid-nineteenth century has a

colourful history and began as a secret society. After the British outlawed the organisation in the aftermath of the Penang Riots of 1867, the association reinvented itself as a benevolent society, providing housing for its poorer members. Till today, the Hock Teik manages and rents out 10 houses along Armenian Street.

THE SHIFTING URBAN LANDSCAPE

With the inscription of George Town as UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2008, one of the issues that raised concerns was housing security for existing inner city tenants. George Town had already lost a large chunk of its community during the repeal of the Rent Control Act which took place between 1997-2000.

Now, gentrification is threatening lower income tenants and with the hike in property values and rental incomes, many property owners are looking to restore their buildings to increase their value. It is estimated that since 2008, property prices in George Town have seen an average increase of 70%.

Under such circumstances, many existing tenants who have lived in the inner city for generations have been forced to move out, either due to the lack of tenancy security or the inability to bear the increment in rentals. These tenants lack a community platform where they could seek advice or funding resources to deal with the circumstances.

“From Think City’s point of view, we were naturally concerned as the city’s OUVs¹ are not simply related to its built heritage but most importantly the intangible heritage, the skills and the traditions of the people who live here. If these people are forced to leave the city, this will have an impact on its social fabric,” explained Suraya Ismail, Think City’s Grants Programme Director. “The people are the lifeblood of the city.”

When the trustees of the Hock Teik applied to Think City for a grant to improve the façade of their houses, it provided Think City with an opportunity for engagement to pilot a model for affordable housing in the World Heritage Site. If this went ahead, it would be Malaysia’s first public-private sector affordable housing scheme.

PILOTING AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME

After exploratory discussions between Think City and the Hock Teik trustees it was agreed that a grant would be given for restoration as long as the tenants would not be displaced. “Many of the tenants have lived in the houses for generations, and couldn’t afford to carry out renovation works. They were also concerned that they may have to leave the buildings if the Hock Teik decided to rent these out at a higher price after the renovations. In a sense their fears were justified as neighbouring tenants have had to leave their homes as rental prices increased,” explained Veronica Liew, Think City’s former Grants Programme Manager.

“If these people are forced to leave the city, this will have an impact on its social fabric. The people are the lifeblood of the city.”

To encourage the Hock Teik to freeze rents for a ten year period (well below the current market rate), Think City decided to pioneer a community development fund (CDF) that would pool funding from Think City, the Hock Teik as well as the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR).

¹UNESCO assessed three outstanding universal values (OUVs) which highlights to the world a rare example of ‘multiculturalism’, forged from the unique ‘meeting’ of various cultures at the historic port city of George Town.

The built and living environment in George Town is testimony of the meeting and layering of various sub-cultures from India, China, the Malay Archipelago and Europe.

a) OUV 1 – Multicultural Trading Towns forged from exchanges of Cultures Melaka and George Town represent exceptional examples of trading towns in Southeast Asia, forged from the mercantile, religious and cultural exchanges’ of several civilizations (Malay, Chinese, Indian and European), with each culture having left its imprint on the built and living environment.

(b) OUV 2 – Testimony to Multicultural Tangible and Intangible Heritage Melaka and George Town are living testimony to the multi cultural tangible and intangible heritage and tradition of Asia and Europe’s colonial power....expressed in the living environment with its great variety of religious and cultural practices, many languages, festivals, art and music, food and lifestyles.

(c) OUV 3 – Melting pot of Multicultural Architecture and Townscape Melaka and George Town display a mixture of influences which has created a unique architecture, culture and townscape..... with an exceptional range of eclectic shophouses and townhouses, religious buildings of different faiths, public buildings with colonial influence.



HOW A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF) WILL WORK



Residents and project consultant, Ng Hooi Seam inspecting a home.

According to Ng Hooi Seam, project consultant, “We adapted the ACHR model for Penang – of course there was some trial and error involved but that’s how pilot projects work.”

Reassuring the tenants that they would not be priced out of their childhood homes and opening communication channels between the landlord and tenants was key. “In a sense we were very lucky that we had a champion in one of the trustees - Mr Khoo Kay Heah - he genuinely wanted the tenants to stay. It was also important to organise people to talk,” explained Suraya, “Previously there was plenty of suspicion; the tenants and the landlords wouldn’t even talk to each other never mind sit down together to share a meal.”

Getting the tenants to take the initiative and take an active role in planning and managing the renovations as a group was a lengthy process. “When we first met, all the tenants felt that their improvements should be a priority. However, when they made a point of visiting each others homes and saw their neighbours living conditions, they were able to prioritise the loan to help the most affected,” said Ng.

With the renovations currently underway, the Think City team drop in occasionally to check on the progress. As Suraya explained, “If we have to be there all the time it means we haven’t been successful. We shouldn’t be at one project for too long, it is important that the community carries on its work in a sustainable, organised manner.”

Ng believed that the pilot scheme will have important repercussions, “The fact that Think City have followed through from the beginning until now is amazing because how many government institutions (in Malaysia) have done this? None. Being so open-minded and trying out something so different is a big risk for them. If one landlord from another clan association or temple could act as Mr Khoo did, working with Think City to influence the other trustees, we could see more affordable housing schemes in George Town.”



“If one landlord from another clan association or temple could act as Mr Khoo (Khoo Kay Heah, trustee of the Hock Teik Cheng Sin) did, working with Think City to influence the other trustees, we could see more affordable housing schemes in George Town”

Ng Hooi Seam, project consultant.



TOP LEFT The Hock Teik's houses (before renovation work), in a traditional working class part of the city.

TOP RIGHT Veronica Liew, Think City's former Grants Programme Manager.

LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT Discussions with the residents. Before renovation work could start, a long process of engagement led by Think City had to begin.

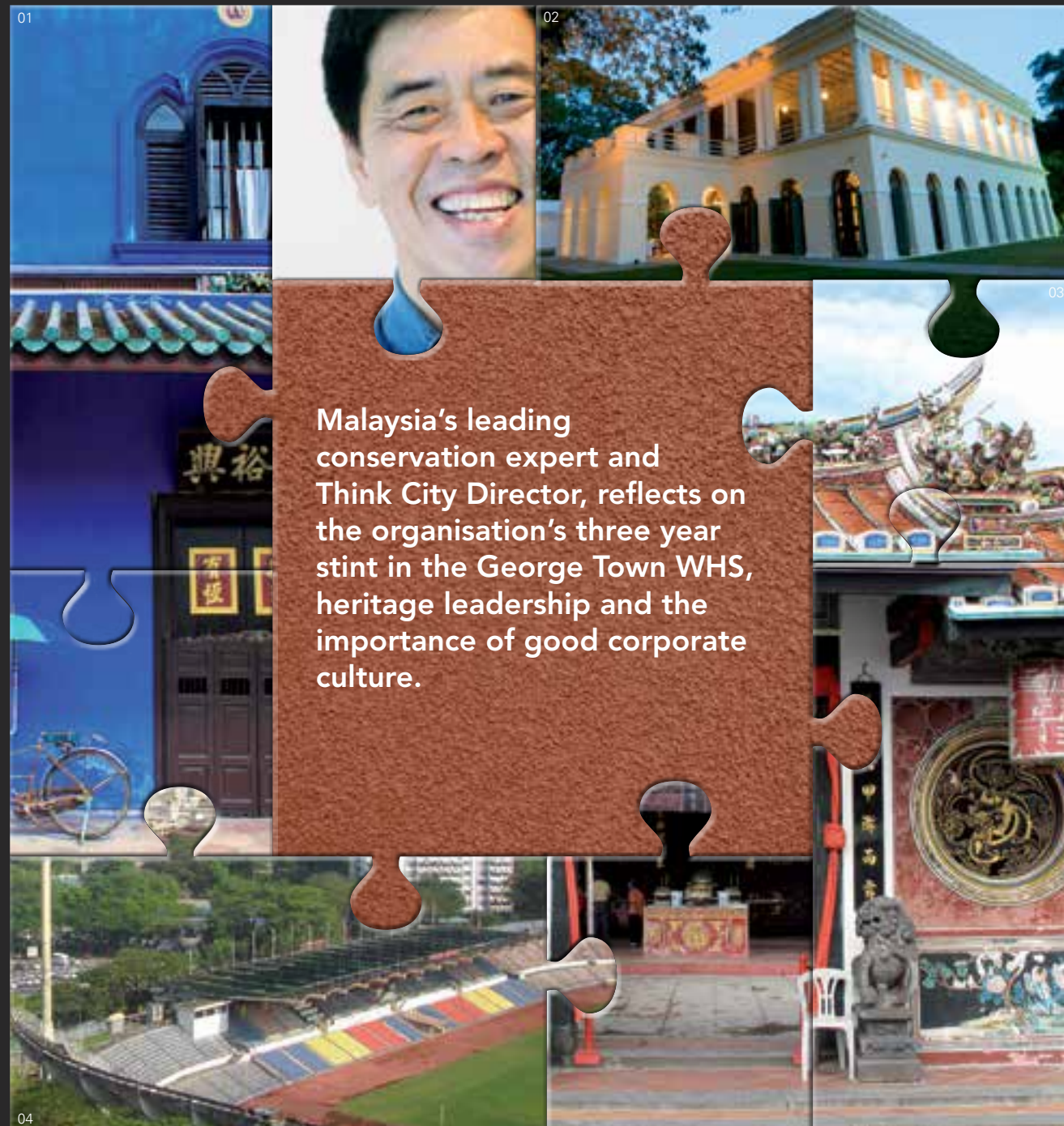


“It was difficult to start discussions with the tenants before the renovations even took place, everyone’s working times clashed. But we kept talking and grouped together. “Overall I’m happy with the interior renovations as the houses were very run-down before. The tenants will benefit.”

Chee Leong is an interior designer who has lived in a historic shophouse owned by the Hock Teik for the past 3 years.



Blazing the Heritage Trail



Malaysia's leading conservation expert and Think City Director, reflects on the organisation's three year stint in the George Town WHS, heritage leadership and the importance of good corporate culture.

- Loh's four conservation projects that have won UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards:
- 01 Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Penang, Malaysia.
 - 02 Suffolk House, Penang, Malaysia.
 - 03 Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, Melaka, Malaysia.
 - 04 Stadium Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"Conservation is about building communities, building consensus, getting people to take ownership of their heritage."

When the topic of heritage conservation crops up in Malaysia, one man's name is invariably mentioned. This is little surprise given how Laurence Loh has played a leading role in four out of the six Malaysian conservation projects to have been conferred the prestigious UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award.

The architect's best known project is probably his restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion in Penang, recognised worldwide simply as "The Blue Mansion." The mansion which took six years to lovingly restore set a new benchmark in conservation practices and opened the public's eyes to the dangers of allowing George Town's built heritage to slowly crumble away. Loh's subsequent efforts with other experts and NGOs to prepare the dossier for George Town's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site eventually paid off in 2008; he then set the course for the city's revival with the development of the WHS' heritage management plan.

Today, Loh remains just as energetic and passionate about heritage issues and is deputy-president of Badan Warisan Malaysia (the Heritage Trust of Malaysia), an active member of the influential Penang Heritage Trust, in addition to his role as Director of Think City. His heritage activist experience offered Think City another perspective and was also, "An opportunity to make things happen, to give some guidance wherever I could, especially in the areas of conservation and the WHS which was then a very new thing," he explained.

Reflecting on Think City's three-year intervention in George Town he pointed out that, "The George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) demonstrated that it is possible to make a big difference with a small amount of money. The grants definitely created momentum. Although a grants organisation is never supposed to be hands-on, in the case of Think City they drove projects and objectives. In more refined circumstances, they would not have been required to do so."

The early days of the GTGP brought its own set of challenges; Loh recollected that there was some initial distrust and concerns over how the funds would be allocated. "Over time, the management team built up their credibility and convinced the various stakeholders that we weren't there to intervene and put a political stamp on the town. Think City wanted to grow the wealth of Penang in a certain way by creating change. I think that after three years everybody is very clear that Think City was never a threat and there was no hidden agenda."

From the start, the GTGP was engineered to encourage George Town's residents to improve their physical surroundings to trigger off a wave of civic pride. The application process was kept simple and transparent, with funds disbursed rapidly once objectives had been reached. "Conservation is about building communities, building consensus, getting people to take ownership of their heritage," stressed Loh. "Think City tried to be the glue in the WHS, they set the

baseline and pushed the ante up as much as they could. The keyword is catalytic and they demonstrated this with their projects."

"Think City was always aware that it would be a bigger challenge to encourage intangible heritage projects, than physical conservation projects. But, if they could demonstrate success with the physical conservation projects, and people could see results, the intangible heritage work could then follow."

As an ICOMOS site evaluator for World Heritage Sites, Loh is well-positioned to objectively appraise Think City's efforts to influence heritage conservation in Penang as part of the organisation's larger mandate to bring about urban regeneration. "They have been consistent and have met objectives. I have 18 files of 18 meetings, these take up the biggest space in my office! There is transparency in the entire process and good corporate practices...far better than the local authorities. Everybody is always on the same page when we are working. As a result I think that the results will be more embedded."

"Looking at it as an agency of change it is doing a good job, not because I'm a director, but because the team is driven. The corporate culture that has been set up drives it, because they've hired the best. Not many organisations in Malaysia can attract the talent that they have, in that sense Think City has definitely walked the talk, by attracting talent to Penang"

INTERPRETING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

Think City is currently undertaking an ambitious project to create a wide-ranging network of interpretation centres within the George Town World Heritage Site to ensure that the city's rich tapestry can be savoured and shared.



Agnes James, Think City's former Senior Grants Programme Manager.

George Town's rich, multi-textured history was one of the factors that led to the city's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This history is still very much evident throughout the city in terms of its built heritage and cultural traditions. However, with the exception of a few monuments, museums and buildings, George Town as a whole has struggled to communicate its past effectively for visitors and the younger generation of Malaysians. What George Town lacked, was an integrated wayfinding system within the World Heritage Site, as well as a concerted strategy to tell its colourful stories.

As Agnes James, Think City's former Senior Grants Programme Manager explained, "The city had come to a point (since its inception as a UNESCO WHS in 2008) where people wanted to tell their stories. It's taken some time, but people living in George Town are slowly responding to what it means to be a WHS."

Seeding the idea to create a network of interpretation centres was in essence a ripple effect of the work Think City was already carrying out including, physical conservation projects and building

"As we looked at our projects and the city as a whole we realised that there was a need to map the entire World Heritage Site properly so that we're not telling the same story over and over again."

capacity in heritage and the arts. It was strongly felt that encouraging local communities to research and interpret their own histories would augment Think City's on-going projects to reinforce the city's World Heritage Status.

"As we looked at our projects and the city as a whole we realised that there was a need to map the entire World Heritage Site properly so that we're not telling the same story over and over again," explained James. "We're encouraging histories from different perspectives and will leave the story line to each community to interpret."

With a detailed interpretation plan already in the pipeline, Think City have identified 12 centres (see opposite page) to be developed over the next few years. It's a large undertaking as James admitted, "Time is a major challenge as is local capacity, of which there is a lack of. We've engaged an international expert to build local capacity and train the staff at each centre. Training is crucial to the success of this project. We also have to remember that not all the institutions are clear about their own histories, so we have to be patient when going through the process."

Think City is developing an interpretation policy, and also working with experts to build local capacity to help with the growth of the interpretation sector. Other deliverables include spatial planning, identifying key themes and stories for the World Heritage Site, identifying how the sites can link together and planning routes for visitors, identifying sites where interpretation and programming can be activated, and also identifying opportunities for social enterprises linked to interpretation.



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- 01 Mesjid Kapitan Keling
- 02 Toi Shan
- 03 Kuan Yin Temple
- 04 Hock Teik
- 05 Anglican Church
- 06 Chung San – translation of existing material into English/ Malay
- 07 Sri Mahamariamman Temple
- 08 Mesjid Lebuh Aceh
- 09 Islamic Museum
- Muslim League
- All Clans Research at some Clan Houses (Panels)
- Mosques and Keramats research at some Mosques (Panels)



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- 01 Interpretation gallery at the E&O Hotel. After providing technical advice and research guidance, Think City felt that more was needed than ad hoc galleries around the WHS which led to the network of interpretation centres project.
- 02 Think City published a heritage interpretation guide book to share best practices and ideas for business owners and other interested parties.
- 03 Think City supported the Marking George Town Project competition to demarcate the historic city in an engaging and imaginative manner that generates public interest in the city's heritage and history. The winning concept was a series of wall sculptures (constructed of powder coated mild steel) that depicted historical scenes of the WHS in a contemporary, fun approach.
- 04 A standardised wayfinding system was developed together with Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP), Penang Global Tourism (PGT) and the George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) to include directional signage and site-specific signage, to create greater awareness of the George Town World Heritage Site.

NOTES ON A SMALL ISLAND

“Currently there is no coordinated interpretation in George Town. Several walking trails are positioned throughout the town but there was no coordinated wayfinding or interpretive signage strategy prior to Think City's involvement. Interpretation has taken place in some places, but this is ad hoc and not the result of any strategic planning.

A fortunate aspect of this is that the city is largely unspoilt by tourism infrastructure – this is actually an enormous advantage to George Town. The city has bypassed the boom in interpretation in the last several decades, which saw significant tourism and interpretive infrastructure being developed in similar World Heritage Sites. In contrast, George Town has an authentic and genuine feel, visitors wandering through can be part of daily life without the experience appearing contrived.

For instance, during my visit in 2012, I was invited to be part of the Hungry Ghost festival just because I wandered into a temple. This was a wonderful moment for me and also reflects the fact that George Town at this stage is not driven by paid ‘visitor experiences.’

Think City is working towards achieving world's best practice in interpretation by building capacity and respecting the intangible nature of heritage in the city, including living practises and cultural traditions. Under Think City's stewardship, interpretation will at first instance be tailored towards local residents. This is ‘triple bottom line’ interpretation aimed at producing lasting effects by skilling community members and residents to be custodians of their built heritage, cultural traditions and ways of life. It will revitalise the city by providing economic, social and environmental sustainability.”

**Sue Hodges, Managing Director,
Sue Hodges Productions**



Hungry Ghost Festival
Devotees burn paper offerings by the road side – in one of the many religious festivals still celebrated along George Town's streets.

“Overall there is not enough (interpretation). In some of our museums, we show artefacts, but we're not teaching or educating the public, or giving them the big picture. I think that there is a dire need for interpretation centres, so that visitors and locals get to feel and understand more. Currently, a lot of what we do have is just icing and is beautiful, but we don't know what the cake is made of.”

**Joe Sidek,
Festival Director,
George Town Festival**



Richard Haughton

Vertical Road by the Akram Khan Company, performed during the George Town Festival 2011.

THE LITTLE FESTIVAL THAT COULD

When the inaugural George Town Festival was held as a one-day event in 2009 to celebrate the city's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, few would have imagined its successful metamorphosis into an internationally-acclaimed month long cultural extravaganza. Festival Director Joe Sidek discussed his ambition for the Festival and Think City's involvement.



A FESTIVAL FOR THE COMMUNITY

After the inaugural George Town Festival 2009 celebrations, George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) planned a month long programme. According to GTWHI's previous General Manager, Maimunah Mohd Sharif the rationale was simple, "There were just too many events to pack into a one-day celebration. It made much more sense to spread our celebrations out over the entire month of July and to include existing festivals and happenings as part of the programme. It may have seemed like an ambitious jump, but if we don't start then, when were we going to?"

Maimunah was confident that the George Town Festival would help to add more vibrancy to the inner city, not just for the benefit of visitors but also for the inhabitants. "A one-day heritage festival would attract tens of thousands of people, but what are the lasting effects of this? I wanted the planning for the Festival to actively engage the people living in the World Heritage Site (WHS) and to be a catalyst for creating a sustainable and livable city. I believe that the more we connect with the actual inhabitants the more they will want to become involved and actually own the programme."

Joe laughed when recalling his previous conversations with Hamdan (Think City's executive director) "I remember joking with him, 'You always say you'll support the Festival but you don't even buy tickets!' But of course Think City have always been in the background supporting the local artistic community and giving them grants to perform in those first two years."

For the 2013 Festival, Think City gave the Festival its first grant, which according to Joe will go some way to ensuring its continued growth trajectory, "Basically, the grant enabled us to put together a paper on how to set up a company and how to sustain the Festival. We were also able to add more, qualified staff to the team, helping us to build capacity for our own little workforce. This adds a different dimension to the Festival as in previous years we've relied on interns and fresh graduates."

Building a competent, professional team has been central to the Festival's growth as Joe explained, "For the first three years I was just trying to brand the Festival, there was no real effort to properly curate or structure it. I was just too busy begging for money, to get the Festival off the ground within a tight time frame. This is the first year that we are really steering the Festival to become a platform for ASEAN's endangered art forms. We want to bring in traditional art forms in a contemporary presentation presented to a contemporary audience. I think this is a natural progression, after all George Town was recognised as a World Heritage Site because of its outstanding universal values (OUVs), so we want to look at other OUVs in a broader ASEAN context."

The Festival's balanced mix of local and international performers, across a range of performing and visual arts has attracted plenty of local and regional



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- 01 Theatre of Ships by Joko Dwi Avianto. A unique bamboo installation called designed for the George Town Festival 2013.
- 02 River Meets Light – modern dance sponsored by Think City.
- 03 The Suffolk Story – a projection mapping showcase on the walls of Suffolk House, Penang.

“Basically, the grant enabled us to put together a paper on how to set up a company and how to sustain the Festival. We were also able to add more, qualified staff to the team, helping us to build capacity for our own little workforce. This adds a different dimension to the Festival as in previous years we’ve relied on interns and fresh graduates.”



Joe Sidek, George Town Festival Director.

interest. It has helped to put George Town and Penang on the region’s cultural map and Joe sees the Festival as a piece in a larger jigsaw when it comes to reviving Penang.

“There’s currently a lot of collective energy that is changing George Town (and Penang). Previously we didn’t have enough inspiration and we really needed government or semi-government agencies to show us the way. Think City is current and relevant when you look at the things they have done – encouraging restoration, supporting the arts – this has inspired a lot of people and this helps George Town, Joe stressed.

“I think that Think City has been one of the most important players, I told Hamdan, you have really engaged us and have been so helpful, while it’s sad that the GTGP is coming to an end I also feel that this is just the beginning of our relationship!”

How would you describe the position of artisans/craftsmen in modern Malaysian society?

Artisans and craftsmen are generally acknowledged as important links to and manifestations of our rich and diverse traditions and culture, but they are under valued and under appreciated. We need more diverse platforms to showcase and develop our artisans in new, different ways.

Survival is the key word. Our crafts won't survive if they can't sustain commercially and are not supported by creating new designs, applications in order to keep their appeal. For instance in Malaysia, I think the interpretation of pua has done relatively well and has won awards. When I was at Yayasan Tuanku Nur Zahirah, our team of weavers headed by June Ngo also produced an award winning interpretation of songket at a competition in Thailand. These are one off examples though. There are no major breakthroughs which have survived as yet.

What’s the link between creativity, the arts and urban regeneration? How has this manifested in George Town and how has Think City enabled this?

The arts and the creativity that is generated from it is what gives rise to ideas, activities and it brings communities and people together; it also attracts people and organisations who are ideas driven. Events both commercial and non-commercial proliferate – and this translates into a vibrant and lively local economy. Communities become instantly galvanised and networked through the arts. A city without creativity or arts is as good as dead, as it is an effective glue that connects people and ideas together, as well as attracting the outside world to a particular place. It is one of the tools for urban rejuvenation.

TC has enabled this by bringing a lot of creative people together and supporting them through funding as well as ideas, networking and connecting them with the right people to turn ideas into reality. We have supported arts festivals, the documentation of heritage and the arts and community practices, making locations conducive physically for creative activities through heritage restoration as well as curatorial projects and placemaking.

Our on going project, which involves creating a network of interpretation centres (see page XX) through the mining of stories from communities in George Town has produced a heritage interpretation guide book - this will in turn facilitate the creation of better curated and more meaningful galleries, museums and interpretation centres which will be more interactive, engaging and aesthetically pleasing for the local community and international visitors.

How would you evaluate Think City's efforts over the past three years to stimulate the arts/creativity?

I think our approach to funding many small projects which were community driven worked to catalyse or seed the creativity and arts activities that you see now. The interpretation project will add another dimension to place making.

We can always do more and bigger! I wish we could have done one or two "iconic" very visual projects, to create a modern visual identity for George Town that I think would be a refreshing and rejuvenating factor, especially for young people – something like the Pompidou effect or the glass pyramid at the Louvre in Paris.



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- 01 Snapshot of the HIP project.
- 02 The Arts-ED office.
- 03 Chen Yoke Pin and heritage mascot.
- 04 HIP project participants describe Penang.
- 05 Brainstorming session gets under way.



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Arts-Ed is very much a pioneer organisation in SE Asia for work in performing arts and children. We have close links to UNESCO's education section and work with them to make school lessons more interesting through an appreciation of heritage.

Although many of our projects touch on heritage this is just a component of what we do, liveability is a larger theme. For Arts-Ed, arts needs to serve a function."

HIP PROJECT

"George Town's OUVs are very much based on people and the city's intangible heritage. The arts excites kids, it goes beyond the language boundaries especially as they don't want to read thick textbooks. Our challenge is how to make the old uncle who makes joss sticks sexy to them! Built heritage is static but people are dynamic.

There isn't a lack of experts in George Town but a lack of facilitators to bring people together to talk. Think City has definitely created an opportunity to do this. Their grants programme has also had an obvious impact on George Town, physical conservation is the most obvious.

Think City have supported three of our projects, whereas our own workshops tend to be quite small (30-40 participants), Think City have wanted to reach out to much larger numbers. The HIP (Heritage In Penang) campaign running on Facebook is an example of this. It's also a pilot for us, and if it works it'll be easier to open it up to other parts of Penang."

THE CONTEXT AND MOTIVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ASIAN CITIES * by Shahid Yusuf

In 2011 more than 1.9 billion Asians 45% of the total population, were living in urban areas; by the middle of the century, their numbers are projected to rise to 3.3 billion or over 64% of the population in 2050.¹ The increase in absolute numbers is enormous – an addition of 1.4 billion, which is more than the entire population of China today. The structural change to date has contributed significantly to Asia's economic performance and the continuing transfer will remain a growth driver. A sectoral decomposition of the sources of growth indicates that urban industry and services (formal and informal) have contributed the lion's share and this is likely to increase to 80% or more, with a few major and strategic urban regions responsible for a disproportionate segment of the GDP of most Asian countries.

If recent trends persist, Asia's coastal cities will be the biggest gainers. Historically, cities located in coastal areas or along a major waterway have been favored because of ease of access to water borne transport, a milder climate, and in many cases, the readier availability of freshwater.² Although the declining cost of other transport modes has lessened some of the drawbacks of inland

locations, coastal cities have nevertheless largely maintained their attractiveness. In a warming world, urbanization and in particular the urbanization of coastal regions, has important implications first because the livelihood of an increasing share of the population will depend upon the economy of cities, affecting lifestyles, raising energy and resource consumption per capita and leading to localized climatic changes.

Second, it will concentrate an increasing share of the Asian population, productive assets and infrastructure in areas that will be susceptible to rising sea levels and more exposed to extreme weather events. Urbanization strategies that channel migrant flows to inland cities could partially contain the growth of coastal cities but effectively implementing such strategies through a coordinated multi-level mix of policies is probably beyond the capacity of most Asian governments. Absent a strategy to manage the spatial distribution of urban centers, the alternative is to control the energy and resource intensity of urbanization and to build or partially rebuild cities that can function in a harsher, less predictable environment. In other words, Asia's burgeoning coastal urban centers need to be made sustainable.

* This article is an extract from a white paper which eventually led to the establishment of Think City.

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/world-urbanization-prospects-the-2011-revision.html>

² Rappaport and Sachs (2003) estimate that over one half of the U.S. population lives within 50 km of a coastline.

³ Urban resilience has been attracting considerable attention of late. See for instance Newman, Beatley and Boyer (2009) and World Bank (2009).

⁴ This assumes that the experience of India, China, and the Southeast Asian tiger economies is replicated more broadly by late starters.

⁵ Singapore is already marketing its demonstrated expertise in urban design, transport and services provision ("Singapore Germinates" 2010).

⁶ From the perspective of efficiency, compactness and livability, it is usually Singapore which is the most frequently cited exemplar among East Asian cities. With a population of 4.7 million, the city state is larger than most secondary cities and a special case which would be fairly difficult to replicate although it is a rich source of lessons for others.

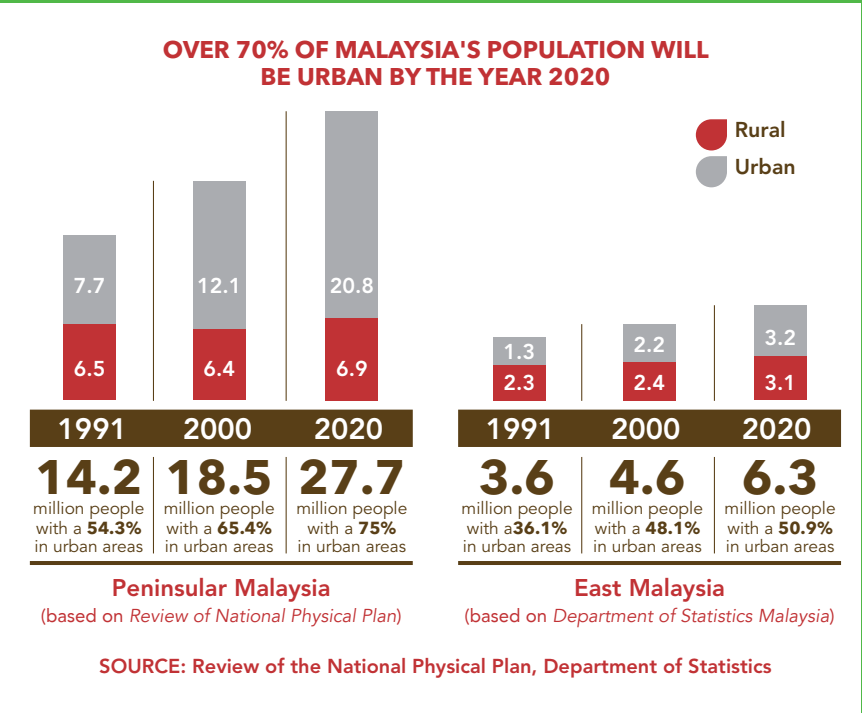
Sustainability can be variously interpreted, however for the purpose of this paper, it has three meanings:

- Eco friendliness achieved by minimizing the per capita production of greenhouse gases and the consumption of land, water and other nonrenewable resources;
- Robustness in the face of deteriorating environmental conditions through the coordinated marshaling of urban design features, technologies and institutions;
- Economic viability over the long term and the capacity to recover rapidly from shocks whether economic or environmental.³

Coastal urbanization in South and East Asia has proceeded without much thought given to long-term sustainability. This will change as awareness of the consequences of global warming mounts. From across the region there will be a demand for technical assistance on eco-friendly urban design, on strategies for low carbon development, and on institutions as well as technologies that contribute to the resilience of cities. As urgency takes hold, urban development for a warming world will attract a large volume of investment as cities gradually adapt land use, infrastructure and industry in the interests of sustainability and tailor their development plans to factor in the changing parameters associated with warming.

Asia and the world, is on the threshold of a new urbanization far reaching in scope and in scale. South and East Asia will be at the epicenter of this process because: (i) Asian economies are likely to set the pace in terms of GDP growth; (ii) Asian coastal cities will be absorbing the largest number of people; (iii) the Asian population will bear the brunt of global warming; (iv) rapidly growing Asian economies with high rates of saving⁴ are more likely to invest in urban sustainability once nations and municipalities realize that current approaches to urban development are obsolete.

Fresh thinking about urban development is in the air but it is fragmented, and lacks functioning and potentially replicable urban models. Moreover, it has yet to win grassroots acceptance and the political backing needed to initiate major changes



in the way cities are designed, how people live and the kinds of economic activities they engage in. No institution (or country) has taken the lead in defining a compelling vision for Asian coastal cities and showing how this could be realized through multidisciplinary approaches which capitalize on impressive scientific advances over the past few decades. However, practical ideas and techniques of execution are materializing with first mover opportunities for countries willing to take the lead in pursuing green urban growth.⁵

To put it differently, Asia’s coastal cities will need to embrace variants of a sustainable growth strategy. A few have already begun to experiment with the elements of a strategy, however, the key components of a core strategy relevant for individual cities still need to be identified and fused into a coherent whole; the supporting technologies developed and elaborated; and differentiated region-wide approaches put to the test. The knowledge is accumulating and will continue to evolve and at this stage what Asia needs most urgently are one or a few centers that can lead the efforts at defining a multidisciplinary approach appropriate

for the region and identifying as well as promoting some of the technologies that will help make sustainable development a reality.

THE CASE FOR SECONDARY CITIES
All too often, urban development in Asia is viewed from the perspective of the largest cities such as Shanghai or Tokyo or Mumbai or Jakarta.⁶ Rarely, is it seen through the lens provided by the medium-sized cities in the under 2 million category. The importance given by recent empirical research on the significance of agglomeration economies for productivity and innovation may have reinforced this bias in favor of largeness (World Bank 2009a; Yusuf and Nabeshima 2010; Glaeser and Gottlieb 2009; Glaeser 2010; Carlino, Chatterjee and Hunt 2007; and Carlino and Hunt 2009). Undoubtedly mega cities play a major role but it is a mistake to neglect the contribution of medium sized cities to urbanization and to urban development.

The majority of the urban population in virtually all Asian countries lives in medium-sized and smaller cities which as a group are the fastest growing segment of

Table 1: Mercer Quality of Living Global City Rankings, 2009

CITY	RANK	INDEX
Vienna, Austria	1	108.6
Zurich, Switzerland	2	108
Geneva, Switzerland	3	107.9
Vancouver, Canada	4	107.4
Munich, Germany	7	107
Frankfurt, Germany	8	106.8
Bern, Switzerland	9	106.5
Sydney, Australia	10	106.3
Copenhagen, Denmark	11	106.2
Amsterdam, Netherlands	13	105.7
Brussels, Belgium	14	105.4
Toronto, Canada	15	105.3

SOURCE: Mercer LLC (2009), *Index base city: New York, US (100)

Table 2: Creative Cities Ranked by Arts Employees per Capita, 2008

CITY	RANK	ARTS EMPLOYEES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS	POPULATION
Atlanta, GA	1	47.7	537,958
San Francisco, CA	2	39.7	808,976
Seattle, WA	3	36.1	598,541
Washington, DC	4	34.4	591,833
Minneapolis, MN	5	33.5	382,605
Boston, MA	6	32.7	609,023
Los Angeles, CA	7	31.4	3,833,995
New York, NY	8	28.0	8,363,710
Portland, OR	9	27.5	557,706
Philadelphia, PA	10	27.4	1,447,395

SOURCE: Americans for the Arts (2008) *Population: US Census Bureau (2009)

the urban system and frequently the foci of manufacturing industry which tend to migrate to the peri-urban fringes of the metro region or to smaller centers within an urban region. Medium-sized industrial cities can benefit from *localization economies* which can promote the formation of vibrant industrial clusters. And because they tend to be less congested, medium-sized cities can appeal to younger age groups concerned about the cost of living and environmental quality⁷ as well as to members of the creative class who place a high premium on the quality of life (see **Table 1 and Table 2**). Of course only a subset of mid-sized cities are potential winners but those that exploit their location and strategically develop the assets that contribute to long-term prosperity, can equal or exceed the productivity advantages of the most dynamic large cities.

One factor increasingly favoring medium-sized cities is the increasing access to *virtual agglomeration economies* made possible by the decline in transport costs and a

multiplication of nearby urban centers. What this means is that even the mid-sized cities can more easily reap scale economies and exploit technological spillovers, which privilege the very largest metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the falling cost of travel, great advances in telecommunications, and the penetration of the Internet is inducing a degree of social networking, rapid diffusion of ideas, and collaboration at many different levels⁸ that is comparable in certain respects to the *urbanization economies* enjoyed by megacities. Thus the more advantageously located medium-sized cities can not only derive advantages from the ease of face-to- face (F2F) communication and social capital accumulation facilitated by compactness and smaller size⁹ but also with the help of modern communications technology, integrate with the regional and global urban systems.

Recent research on the urban economy has tended to exaggerate the gains from agglomeration.¹⁰ Very likely, megacities derive some productivity benefits from the

⁷ Depending on the type of industry and environmental regulations, mid-sized cities can be more or less polluted.

⁸ See Wheeler, Aoyama and Warf (2000); Gaspar and Glaeser (1998); and Komninos (2008).

⁹ Research is showing that electronic communication is a great asset for collecting information but F2F social networking is vital to release the creative juices and germinate ideas.

¹⁰ The executable policies that can be derived from the research on agglomeration, are also uncertain.

scale of metropolitan markets and from the opportunities presented by industrial diversity. However, the heterogeneity of the empirical findings and the difficulty of directly relating them to specific attributes of urban centers, raises questions.

A meta-study that attempts to arrive at a synthetic estimate of productivity advantages arising from size, pegs these at a fairly modest 3% on average (Melo, Graham and Noland 2009). These are not trivial but also by no means overwhelming. Arguably they reflect a pattern of past industrialization emphasizing large scale manufacturing rather than the knowledge based activities that are responsible for the economic performance of innovative and productive medium-sized cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, San Diego, Munich, Freiburg, Helsinki, Geneva, Cambridge UK, and Toulouse. San Francisco with a population of under 900,000 and Cambridge, UK with a population of 600,000 are two of the world’s most economically dynamic cities.

Even Silicon Valley, which hosts the most famous industrial cluster, had just 2.5 million people in 2008 (Evans and Garnsey 2009). Size need not be a handicap so long as a city can leverage its location, build strategic assets, harness the potential of a new technological wave and integrate (virtually) with a prospering wider hinterland without sacrificing the advantages of smaller size.

PUBLICATIONS

THINK CITY'S PUBLICATIONS ARE UNDERPINNED BY COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS INCLUDING THE WORLD BANK, KHAZANAH AND THE GROWTH DIALOGUE.

THINK CITY PUBLICATIONS

GEORGE TOWN CONURBATION STUDY

The Study provides an alternative approach to planning in order for Penang to transform into a more efficient and liveable space. The Study examines the main cities and towns within a three-hour flight radius of Penang and places special emphasis on George Town's link with the port town of Butterworth across the Penang channel.

The study makes clear the economic, transport and people networks within the Conurbation. Based on this new set of knowledge plus the recommendations from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)-Think City workshop on Urban Planning for Historic Cities and the findings of the George Town Transformation Programme (GTTP), Think City was better able to draw up a strategic action plan including four main work tracks: Cultural Mapping; Physical Conservation; Shared Spaces; and Technical Assistance.



THE GEORGE TOWN TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (GTTP)

George Town Transformation Programme (GTTP) is an urban regeneration strategy focusing on making George Town a more liveable and sustainable city and therefore attractive to talent and investments. The George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) is the first phase of that wider urban regeneration programme focusing on addressing the key challenges facing George Town including an ageing population, declining public amenities, lack of investments and all other problems associated with a city that is hollowing out.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE PENANG & THE INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE 2011

Organised as part of the Penang Story which examines Penang's place in global history, the two-day conference brought together local and international scholars in Penang. The PIO Conference was jointly organised by Think City, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), academics from the University of Cambridge and London University, and Penang Heritage Trust.



HERITAGE INTERPRETATION MASTER PLAN

Think City developed a 'best-practise' interpretation that also fulfils its social, environmental and economic aims, and positions George Town as a world leader in interpretation.

The Master Plan provides a key premise to guide interpretation in the World Heritage site and its buffer, to balance the needs of the visitor with the social, cultural and economic values/outcomes of the local people. The overarching premise is for the site to retain its authentic and vibrant spirit and not be 'commodified' as a tourist site.

BIDS REPORT

This report provides an overview of the processes involved in the formation of the George Town Business Improvement District Scheme (GT BIDS) initiated by Think City. The experience has shown that it is possible to bring rival stakeholders together in support of an area regeneration programme. Implementation, which is slow owing to a lack of experience and resources, have yielded positive outcomes including a formula for cost-sharing, commitment to improve common areas; and most importantly, a working partnership with the Local Council.

URBAN MARKETS REPORT

The Penang Island Municipal Council approached Think City for technical expertise and support in their plans to upgrade and revitalise George Town's urban markets – Prangin Canal, Campbell Street and Chowrasta Market. All of these markets have strong historical significance and are at different stages of use ranging from derelict (Prangin Canal) to mixed-use (Chowrasta).

These markets are crucial in the provision of fresh food and produce that sustains Penang's famed culinary heritage particularly its hawker fare. The Urban Markets project involved a holistic approach beginning with a cultural mapping process and a social survey (the latter was carried out using of art as a method of data collection and creating greater awareness about the cultural significance of Chowrasta Market). Together with a dilapidation survey, a Master Plan is currently being developed to identify the most suitable intervention that will help revitalise both these markets.



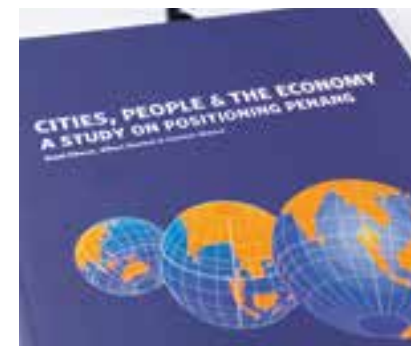
GREENING GEORGE TOWN PLAN

The plan has identified 12 areas in George Town to be 'greened' – through pocket parks, tree-lined main roads – to create a conducive environment and safe, secure area within the inner city for people to gather and linger – promoting greater social interaction. These green areas will also help to reduce the 'island heat' effect in the city area. The plan also outlined specific plant and tree species suitable for each area based on a variety of factors.

GEORGE TOWN BASELINE STUDY REPORT

The Baseline Study Report was used to formulate a Special Area Plan for George Town for the long-term management and development of the George Town World Heritage Site and provides crucial information for decision-makers particularly governmental stakeholders involved in urban planning and urban design.

JOINT PUBLICATIONS

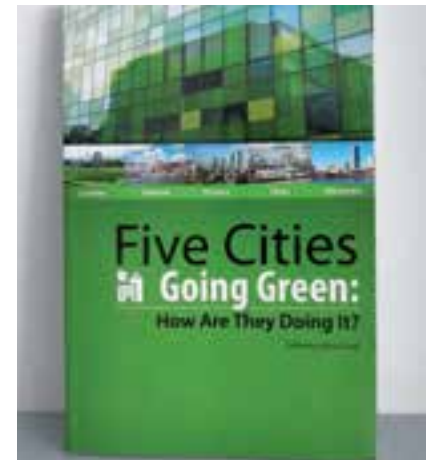


CITIES, PEOPLE AND THE ECONOMY — A Study On Positioning Penang

A research collaboration between Khazanah Nasional Berhad and the World Bank which was an input document for the Tenth Malaysia Plan.

The report examined Penang's evolution into one of the largest global electronics manufacturing hubs and how its further development is being constrained by structural impediments.

For Penang to break out of this the state must retain its core export firms and develop them as clusters linked with support services. To achieve excellence and to avoid "blind diversification", six focus areas have been identified as drivers of Penang's economy – technology-based manufacturing, biotechnology/ life sciences, business-process outsourcing (BPO), logistics, tourism (with niches in medical tourism and meetings, international conventions and exhibitions or MICE) and agribusiness.



FIVE CITIES GOING GREEN — How Are They Doing It?

A joint publication between The Growth Dialogue and Think City.

The greening of urban development is finally receiving increased attention. If the demands on the biosphere's resources are not to exceed the limits of sustainability, major changes are needed in the design and growth of cities. Urban industrialization, transport, and energy use, and urban lifestyles more broadly, will need to change markedly and rapidly. The sustainable city of the future must be green. What such greening entails is becoming clearer from the initiatives of a few pioneers that have successfully begun to deal with green growth challenges. This publication captures the stories of five such cities – Curitiba, Helsinki, Penang, Ulsan and Yokohama.

"Continuing urbanization creates the necessity of reducing both local pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from cities. As yet there is no clear route to achieving this, but a number of cities are developing innovative strategies for green development. This monograph succinctly distills the experience of five such cities. Their experiences are insightful, and the monograph will be of great value to social scientists and to policy makers seeking to learn about about how to make this crucial transition."

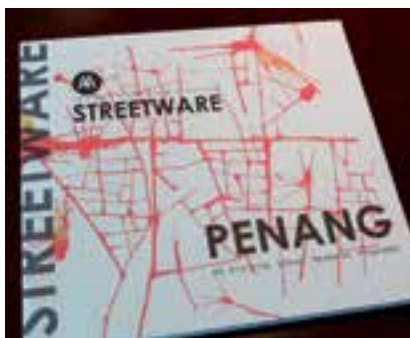
Tony Venables
Oxford University



THE PENANG PROJECT

A territorial study and spatial analysis jointly undertaken by Think City and Fundacion Metropoli.

The report identified strategic transformative interventions in Penang and built upon Khazanah's other initiatives in Malaysia's northern region, leveraging on the networks created as well as the knowledge base generated over the past four years by the George Town Transformation Programme (GTTP), the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP), "Cities People and the Economy" and the Expert Panel Review Workshop.



STREETWARE PENANG

Published by the Architectural Association with support from Think City.

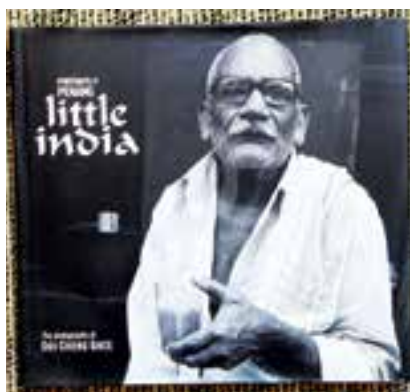
Streetware discovers dialogues between tangible and intangible elements that compose the dynamic and diverse network of streets of George Town. The shophouse and the block; the block and the neighbourhood; create the main set of relationships that define the street's character.

THINK CITY HAS ALSO FUNDED THE PUBLICATION OF NEW BOOKS DOCUMENTING PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH.



HERITAGE TREES OF PENANG

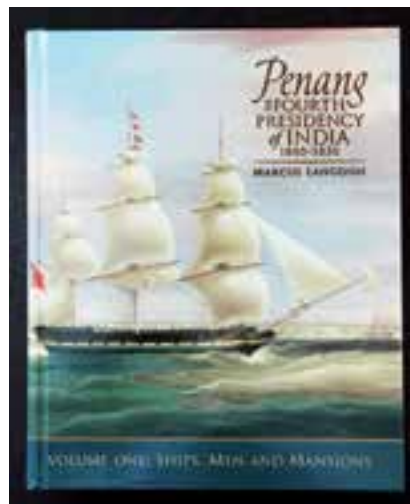
A celebration of 200 trees which form an integral part of the natural, cultural and urban heritage of Penang. With 72 original watercolours and over 1,200 photographs, this invaluable guide is a beautiful and authoritative companion to Penang's botanical inheritance.



PORTRAITS OF PENANG - LITTLE INDIA

Dr. Ooi Cheng Ghee's photographs were taken in 1979, and reflect a time after Penang's free port status had been lost and the Little India enclave was undergoing a difficult transition.

An exhibition of Ooi's photos accompanied the launch of the book, officiated by the High Commissioner of India to Malaysia, HE Mr Vijay K. Gokhale in May 2011.



PENANG - THE FOURTH PRESIDENCY OF INDIA 1805-1830, Vol. 1

A little over two centuries ago, Penang became the fourth most important settlement – a presidency – of the British East India Company's Indian territories. The fateful decision changed Penang's future forever, reshaping it into a key player in the international trade network linking Europe with India and China.

The first of a three-volume series, the title presents an in-depth and compelling narrative of this fascinating period in history, focusing specifically on the role shipbuilding played, the leading political personalities, and two historic buildings that highlight the struggles, successes and failures of the early settlement.



FEASTS OF PENANG — Muslim Culinary Heritage

This comprehensive cookbook by Wazir Jahan documents the culinary heritage of Straits Muslims from the north-west of Peninsular Malaysia, mainly Penang.

THE ADVISORY BOARD

THE ADVISORY BOARD IS MADE UP OF INTERNATIONAL URBANISATION THOUGHT LEADERS AND PROVIDES COUNSEL ON CURRENT BEST PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS.

DR AMIN JAFFER, formerly Head of the Asian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, he is a World Monuments Fund Board Member.

ELIZABETH CARDOSA, General Manager of Badan Warisan Malaysia.

PROFESSOR (RTD) DR CHEAH BOON KHENG, an expert of Malaysian history; Council Member of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and former professor at University Sains Malaysia.

PROFESSOR MARCIAL ECHENIQUE, Professor of Land Transport at the University of Cambridge and headed the Cambridge Futures Project.

PROF. EMERITUS EZRIN ARBI (UM), formerly Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malaya.

DR. RICHARD ENGELHARDT, formerly UNESCO's representative for Southeast Asia and helped in drawing up George Town's dossier for world heritage status.

PROF DR. GHAFAR AHMAD, Deputy Commissioner, Malaysian Heritage Commission and has led several conservation projects in Penang including Fort Cornwallis and the Acheen Street Mosque.

DATO' DR GOH BAN LEE, an expert on urban studies in Malaysia and was a former George Town municipal councillor.

DONALD HYSLOP, Director at the Tate Modern Museum in London and Chairman of Better Bankside, a business improvement district in South London.

DR HOMI KHARAS is a senior fellow and deputy director for the Global Economy and Development program

at The Brookings Institution. He also works with the Development Assistance and Governance Initiative. Formerly a chief economist in the East Asia and Pacific Region of the World Bank, Kharas currently leads a research project on aid agency effectiveness, and also has expertise on East Asia development and global economic trends.

CHARLES LANDRY, Director of Comedia and author of Creative Cities. He works closely with decision makers and local leaders, and helps find original solutions to urban dilemmas so cities can transform for the better.

DR STEPHEN LEONG was formerly a historian at the University of Malaya. He is Assistant Director-General of the Institute of Strategic & International Studies (ISIS).

PROF (RTD) DR LOH WEI LENG is a historian and Fellow at the Centre for South & Southeast Asia, University of Malaya. Formerly at the History Department at UM, she is now researching on the history of trade in Penang and its region.

DR RAZAK ABDUL-AZIZ, Music Department, School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

DR SHAHID YUSUF was the team leader for the World Bank-Japan project on East Asia's Future Economy from 2000-2009. Prior to that, he was Economic Adviser to the Senior Vice President and Chief Economist (1997-1998), Lead Economist for the East Africa Department (1995-1997) and Lead Economist for the China and Mongolia Department (1989-1993).

DATO' DR. TOH KIN WOON, senior research fellow at the Penang Institute and former state executive councillor.

DR ALFONSO VEGERA is the founder and president of the Fundación Metròpoli as well as a fellow and trustee of the Eisenhower Foundation. He has been appointed as advisor to the Government of Singapore for the One North Project; and appointed as advisor to the cities of Curitiba, Dublin, Bilbao, Casablanca and Sydney.

PROF (RTD) DR WAZIR J. KARIM is an anthropologist and Life Fellow at Clare Hall, University of Cambridge. She founded the Academy of Socio-Economic Research & Analysis (ASERA).

DR YAHAYA AHMAD is Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Built Environment, University of Malaya. He was formerly Deputy Heritage Commissioner at the National Heritage Department (JWN).

OUR PARTNERS

TO EFFECTIVELY FACILITATE GEORGE TOWN'S REJUVENATION, THINK CITY BUILDS PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS, TO ENCOURAGE 'OWNERSHIP' OF INITIATIVES. THINK CITY WORKS WITH:

LOCAL PARTNERS



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



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