

*Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series*

# **THE URBAN VERNACULAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

## **SETTLEMENT AS SERENDIPITY**

Edited by  
Nor Zalina Harun and Shireen Jahn Kassim



# The Urban Vernacular in Southeast Asia

This book constructs a number of discourses, dialectics and analyses across the disciplines of urban form, architecture and urban experience, thus incorporating both conservation and design issues.

It bridges the gap between practice and theory by reconstructing the role of the “village” or “vernacular” in the discourses and trends of the twenty-first century post-Covid-19 environment. Bringing together for the first time the confluences of theory and practice in the “urban vernacular” and the “urban village,” the contributors use vernacular concepts and settings as a common framework serving as cultural bridges, connecting traditional forms, ecologies and habitats to new global ideas, industrial economies and access to developing urban sustainability, design, planning and services in Asia’s rising megacities. The book begins with concerns of urban layout and morphology, aiming to establish discourse, shared principles and terminology around conventional ideas of the “village” or traditional settlements’ apparently organic and disordered nature. It then moves into architectural dimensions, capturing formal cases of how the “vernacular” or traditional “indigenous” local concepts have inspired new ideas in award-winning architecture and hence the importance of re-examining the vernacular in light of the ongoing need to produce a more sustainable and place-conscious fit in modern architecture and urban planning.

The book will be of interest to researchers in the fields of architecture, urban planning and design, urban geography, design studies, landscape architecture, history of architecture/urbanism and Asian Studies, in particular those concerning Southeast Asia.

**Nor Zalina Harun** is Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She previously served as a faculty member at the Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design, International Islamic University Malaysia, where she contributed to the field of urban conservation and cultural landscape.

**Shireen Jahn Kassim** is currently Director and Senior Advisor (Sustainability and Heritage) at EAG Consulting, Malaysia. She was previously Associate Professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia.

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# **The Urban Vernacular in Southeast Asia**

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**Edited by Nor Zalina Harun and  
Shireen Jahn Kassim**

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# Contributors

**Azaidy Abdullah** is a renowned architect specialising in commercial projects, which focus on interpretations in architectural regionalism, and currently is the director of ACES architects, Kuala Lumpur. For many years, he was practicing as an associate at Hijjas Kasturi Associate, focusing on regional interpretations of international masterplans, urban design and building programmes in the Southeast Asia and the Middle Eastern region. He is known as the author and contributor of the *Living Machines* published by PAM, a discourse and collection of modern architecture in Malaysia. He is also teaching in the Architectural programme at UCSI Malaysia.

**Widya Fransiska Anwar** is a lecturer at the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering Sriwijaya University, Indonesia. Known for her morphological research, her doctoral research delved into the morphological characteristics of historic urban riverside settlements and was undertaken at the Faculty of Architecture of UTM, Malaysia.

**Naimatul Aufa** is currently active as a lecturer and researcher in Barito Basin Wetland Architecture at the Department of Architecture at the University of Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia. Some of the architectural objects that are the focus of his study include the Vernacular Architecture of Wetlands, Traditional Banjar Houses and Traditional Banjar Mosques.

**Shamzani Affendy Mohd Din** graduated as a civil engineer and currently, amongst others, teaches building pathology and sustainable heritage management, and he specialised in collection and characterisations of airborne particulates in his PhD. He was director and deputy director of one of IIUM strategic business unit (SBU) for four years and was responsible for active industry and international networking within his university and faculty. As an award-winning academic, he has won multiple bronze and silver awards during the IIUM Research, Invention and Innovation Exhibitions (IRIIE) and is currently an invited speaker for the Creative Arts & Social Science International Conference of 2025 (CASSIC 2025), a discourse of issues relating to creative practices, management, and sustainability of art and design via digitalisation by practitioners, scholars, policy makers and government

agencies. He has also been appointed as Publication Chair for the 4th International Conference on Engineering Management and Information Science (EMIS 2025).

**Mary Rajelyn “Raj” Busmente** is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Architecture, and is presently an Instructor IV at the University of Santo Tomas. Practicing Heritage Architecture and a former UNESCO World Heritage Manager of the Philippine Baroque Churches, she has earned ten years of Restoration experience at the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the Philippines.

**Shalini Amerasinghe Ganendra’s** (DSG) pioneering impact on cultural development reflects in nearly three decades of inter-disciplinary programming and scholarship. Through her commitment to advancing a “culture of encounter,” she has brought focus to distinct and longstanding creative practises of under-explored regions, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka. She is the founder of Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur. Dame Shalini Ganendra is currently Adjunct Professor at UNIMAS, Institute of Borneo Studies, and has held numerous visiting positions at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. She sits on the Advisory Board of Cambridge University's Heong Gallery (Downing College). She read law at Cambridge and has an LLM from Columbia University Law School. She is also a qualified Barrister and New York Attorney, and is a recent Chevening Fellow. She has published extensively, applying novel inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of cultural materials, including the presentation of early colonial photography (see *Veins of Influence, Colonial Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in Early Photographs and Collections*).

**Irwan Yudha Hadinata** is currently active as a lecturer and researcher in the field of Urban Design at the Department of Architecture, the University of Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia. Apart from being an academic, he is currently actively working as a professional architect and as secretary of the Indonesian Association of Architects (IAI Kalsel) in South Kalimantan. Research for the last ten years has focused on the study of waterfront cities, especially in Kalimantan.

**Nor Zalina Harun** is present as Associate Professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). She completed Diploma in Architecture and Bachelor’s Degree in Landscape Architecture at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in 2000. In 2011, she acquired a Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture from the same university. From 2001 until 2017, she served as a lecturer and for several years as the Head of the Department, and then Research Director at the Department of Landscape Architecture, Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design, International Islamic University Malaysia. She presently leads a focus group of the UKM Heritage and Civil Society Research Cluster. Apart from heritage conservation, her research focuses on community, settlement morphology studies and urban landscape development. To date, she has led over 15 research projects and consultancies with more than 100 publications that include 80 peer-reviewed papers. Her works are funded by the Selangor Housing and Property Board, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Institute of National Valuation, the Kedah State Museum

Board, the Institute of Darul Ridzuan and Think City. In addition to her profound interest in research and education, she was appointed as the Project Leader for the development of communal space for low-cost strata houses in Selangor, an advisor for the Tok Janggut Community Gallery Development in Tumpat, Kelantan, and has continuously been invited as a speaker and facilitator for government institutions and related NGOs.

**J.C. Heldiansyah** is currently active as a lecturer and researcher in the field of Urban Design and Architectural Preservation at the Department of Architecture, University of Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia. Apart from being an academic, he is currently actively working as a professional architect and is an active member of the South Kalimantan Association of Indonesian Architects (IAI Kalsel). The focus of urban studies relates to the Development of the City of Banjarmasin and the preservation of buildings in the wetlands of South Kalimantan.

**Illyani Ibrahim** is Associate Professor at International Islamic University Malaysia. She is a registered Corporate Member of the Institution of Geospatial and Remote Sensing Society (IGRSM), a member of the Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM) and Associate Member of the Malaysia Institute of Planners (MIP). Her recent research interest focuses on the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing in environmental analysis and cultural conservation of heritage.

**Tengku Anis Qariah Raja Abdul Kadir** is currently a senior lecturer in the Architecture degree programme at the Center of Architecture Studies, UITM (Universiti Teknologi MARA). Currently completing her PhD on the Mapping of Classicism in Malay architecture, she has a Master of Science in Building Services Engineering (2015), International Islamic University Malaysia Bachelor of Architecture (with Hons.), an LAM Part 2 (2008) and an LAM Part 1 (2006). Before her academic career, she was practising as a design architect at one of Malaysia's premier firms, Kumpulan Senireka Malaysia, amongst others she was involved with the facade design of the New National Palace of Malaysia. She is presently doing her Doctorate on the Classification of Aristocratic architecture in the Malay Nusantara region. She has published more than 50 papers and posters.

**Kamariah Kamaruddin** is an architect, a health facility planner and urban development consultant embarking on a soft technological path, a healthy environment and a strategy of sustainable urban policy of cultural and material landscape. Graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture and a Master of Architecture from Auckland University, she has contributed, designed and advised on multiple architectural and commercial projects and masterplan across Klang Valley and Malaysia. She was involved in the shaping of the urban policy framework for the Physical Architectural Design Guidelines for Cyberjaya (2005) incorporating a gradual thematic image and ambience and the Urban Design Guidelines for Pasir Mas, Kelantan (2012) incorporating Malay and Islamic heritage and sustainable

design requirement. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in sustainability and heritage urbanism in the Nusantara at IIUM.

**Shireen Jahn Kassim** is currently the Director of EAG Consulting SDN BHD, a multidisciplinary consulting firm in sustainable design, engineering and heritage services. Formerly an Associate Professor based at the Faculty of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED), International Islamic University Malaysia, she taught subjects in architecture, building technology and the Applied Arts and Design programme. In recent years, she headed the architecture and arts research cluster under the transdisciplinary grant (TRGS), which is aimed at connecting Asian Nusantara heritage resources with urbanism practitioners and policy. She acted as lead advisor to develop sustainable standards (MyCrest) for Malaysian public buildings administered by the Construction Industry Board Malaysia (CIDB) and Jabatan Kerjaraya (JKR). She founded the research cluster “EAVR” at IIUM ([www.eavr.wordpress](http://www.eavr.wordpress)) which sought to combine experts in the fields of computing, sustainability and heritage in Malaysia. She led a series of exhibitions promoting heritage architecture and urbanism. She currently acts as Chief Editor for the journal *Cultural Syndrome* based at Universiti Indrapasta PGRI, Jakarta, focusing on regional Asian-based heritage and the visual arts, and sits on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Sustainable Built Environment* by Elsevier and GORD, Doha, Qatar. She is an editorial member of the *Journal of World Architecture* (Sydney) and the *Journal of Architecture and Design Review* in Singapore. In recent years, she led a series of research-based exhibitions on Malay artisanal traditions, partially funded by Think City (a subsidiary of Khazanah), and “The Resilience of Tradition-from Origin to Contemporary” by MGTf, USM. She annually supports student training and involvement in Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur, an international multicultural marquee to promote local talents and resources in the visual arts in Malaysia. She had published more than 50 papers and several books on architectural critical theory, heritage, green architecture and critical regionalism.

**Ira Mentayani** is currently active as a lecturer in the Architecture Study Program at Lambung Mangkurat University, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Aside from being a lecturer, he also serves as Head of the Architecture Studio and Coordinator of the Center for Settlement and Urban Development Studies at the Institute for Research and Community Service, the University of Lambung Mangkurat. Research studies conducted in the last 20 years have focused on the field of Wetland Settlements in South Kalimantan.

**Norwina Mohd Nawawi** is a professional architect, with over 19 years of experience in the Public Works Department Malaysia since 1979, specialising in healthcare facility planning and architecture works prior to joining International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) as an academic staff in 1998. A Fellow of the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) and a member of Badan Warisan Malaysia (The Heritage of Malaysia Trust), she is also a scientific committee on

heritage with ICOMOS on Energy and Sustainability, Cultural Routes, Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage and Places of Religion and Ritual. At International Islamic University Malaysia, Norwina teaches in the professional programme of architecture that includes professional practice, healthcare architecture, and history and theory in architecture, focusing on Islamic architecture and East Asian and Southeast Asian Architecture. As a coordinator for Islamic Architectural Heritage Research Unit (ISArch) at the Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED), IIUM, Norwina facilitated bridging the gap on the different worldviews of history and heritage through the symposium and international conferences. She is also the author and joint author of several books and articles that discuss the remnants and shreds of evidence of the endangered Malay world and Islamic resurgence through diverse perspectives garnered through research, discussions and supervision of theses and heritage studies course in the programme.

**Tran Thai Quoc** is currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Planning – Hanoi University of Civil Engineering. He graduated from an advanced master's program in urban planning and urban planning at the University of Liège, Belgium, in 2016. As a GIS specialist, he has been involved in many research and design projects in Vietnam. His research focuses on landscape identification of urban–rural areas and urban planning to reduce disaster risks. His research results have been published in many prestigious international and national journals. Currently, he continues to develop his research directions while promoting the application of GIS and remote sensing in urban planning and spatial development management.

**Duong Nga Quynh** is a senior lecturer at the Department of Planning in the Hanoi University of Civil Engineering, where she studied at her undergraduate and master's stages, majoring in architecture and planning. In addition to her teaching work, she also conducts research with the main directions on the process of urbanisation, defining the value of the cultural landscape of rural areas and the potential for community-based tourism development and urban planning to reduce disaster risk since 2009. She is a contributor of the textbooks on rural residential area planning, urban history, and a guide to organising green living space – friendly communities for the curriculum of Urban and Regional Planning at the Hanoi University of Civil Engineering. She also participates in practical planning projects to develop green urban models, agroecological tourist areas associated with suburban villages. In the coming time, Ma. Duong Quynh Nga will continue to conduct in-depth research into the aforementioned research directions and promote research to apply technology in urban planning towards disaster risk reduction and agritourism planning.

**Le Chi Quynh** is currently a senior lecturer at the Department of Planning in the Hanoi University of Civil Engineering and a Member of the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Planning Development Association. She spent five years studying Urban Design at the University of Tokyo, where she received her master's degree in 2006 and doctorate in 2009. Returning to Vietnam in early 2010, besides

teaching work, she has conducted a lot of research on heritage urban conservation in Hanoi Capital and Hue City, research on the change of traditional villages in an urban fringe under the impact of globalisation and urbanisation, defining the value of the cultural landscape of rural areas and the potential for community-based tourism development, urban resilient to adapt with climate change. Multinational studies have been published in books such as *The Frontiers of Urban Heritage Conservation in Asian Cities*. The domestic studies have been published into scientific articles published in prestigious professional journals in Vietnam, the model of exploiting the potential of cultural landscapes to develop community-based tourism in rural areas has now been approved by the state and is expected to be piloted nationwide. In the coming time, Dr Le Chi Quynh will continue to conduct in-depth research into the aforementioned research directions, and at the same time promote research to apply technology to urban planning and spatial development management.

**Agung Zainal Muttakin Raden, M.Ds.**, is a lecturer and researcher at the Visual Communication Design Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Indraprasta PGRI University Jakarta. His undergraduate training on Visual Communication Design Study Programme (DKV) was completed at Faculty of Design in Universitas Komputer Indonesia (Unikom) in 2012. He did his Master's at Trisakti University, Master of Product Design completed in 2014, Doctoral at Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta completed in 2023. He began his career as a lecturer in 2013, teaching typography at the Department of Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Language and Art, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta. His expertise and areas of research interest are in Graphics Design, Visual Communication Design, Typography, Visual Culture, Art and Cultures, Vernacular. Areas of interest in the transformation of Nusantara manuscripts into visual works, urban design, typography, art studies, culture and visual communication design.

**Samayro Saif** is a researcher, conservator and heritage conservationist specialising in the intersection of architecture, culture and identity in Southeast Asia and Europe. She holds a Master of Arts in Heritage Conservation and Site Management from the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg and a Bachelor's in Conservation from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Her work includes research and documentation on World Heritage Sites, stakeholder engagement and digital storytelling for platforms like the World Heritage Review and Google Arts & Culture. She has also contributed to curating digital materials and developing websites for Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur, enhancing cultural visibility. Samayro has managed virtual exhibitions and led projects on historical materials, emphasising cultural heritage's relevance in contemporary society. She is currently working on writing projects exploring serendipity in artistic hubs and the post-colonial impact on cultural heritage exploitation.

**Supitcha Tovivich** is Associate Professor and Full-Time Academician at the Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University in Thailand. She served as the Head

of the Department of Architecture between 2015 and 2018. Dr Tovivich received her PhD from the Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London, and an MA in Humanitarian and Development Practice from Oxford Brookes University. Her areas of expertise encompass participatory design, community-based development, co-creation of urban rehabilitation projects, community engagement and urban design intervention. She is renowned for her holistic approach that integrates architectural education, community-based design studios and tactical urbanism. Dr Tovivich has worked closely with numerous local communities in Bangkok, including the Khlong Bang Luang community, an old canal-side settlement, the 24-hour Bangkok Flower Market and other communities in the Bangkok Old City area, among others.

**Nguyen Thanh Tu (Tu Nguyen)** is a university lecturer working in the Department of Planning, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, the Hanoi University of Civil Engineering (HUCE), Vietnam. Tu Nguyen has held an Undergraduate degree certificate in Architecture awarded from HUCE (Vietnam) in 2008 and a Master's degree certificate in Urban Planning – awarded from the University of New South Wales (UNSW, Australia) in 2010. After her latest graduation in 2010, Tu spent two years working full-time and many following years part-time in the firm and (then) institute as an urban planning and urban design practitioner. Her practical works and experiences are diverse from heritage conservation to new urban development in different scales, of different planning project types. In HUCE, as a lecturer and scholar, she takes responsibility and puts focus on urban planning and urban design classes, with experience in developing curricula and organising workshops, studios and training activities. Recently, Tu Nguyen is also a PhD candidate at HUCE with a focus on green (and sustainable) urban planning assessment and approaches.

With major concerns and focuses on green urbanism, urban climate resilience and adaptation, disaster risks reduction (DRR), public spaces, and creative and inclusive urban planning, Tu aims to support and put social and environmental sustainability into the heart of her working disciplines and her deliveries.

**Kenneth Yeang** is an architect, ecologist, planner and author from Malaysia, best known for his ecological architecture and ecomasterplans, focusing on the biointegration of the human-made with nature, creating hybrid systems as “constructed ecosystems.” His work adopts bioclimatic design (climate-responsive passive low-energy) as a subset to ecological design, providing for him an underlying armature of design and engenders critical regionalist features where climatic responses provide the links to its locality. He pioneered an ecology-based architecture (since 1971), working on the theory and practice of sustainable design. The *Guardian* newspaper (2008) named him “one of the 50 people who could save the planet.” Yeang's headquarters is in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) as Hamzah & Yeang, and his dissertation at Cambridge University, “A Theoretical Framework for Incorporating Ecological Considerations in the Design and Planning of the Built Environment” earned him a PhD, published as “Designing with Nature” (McGraw-Hill, 1995)[3]

and as “Proyector Con La Naturaleza” (Gustavo Gili, SA, 1999). Academically, he holds the Distinguished Plym Professor chair (University of Illinois, USA, 2005).

**Khalilah Zakariya**, an associate professor and a landscape architect, teaches in the Department of Landscape Architecture, Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED), International Islamic University Malaysia. Over the 14 years of her experience in academia, she has taught various design subjects that include landscape architecture, urban landscape design, landscape resource planning, and landscape heritage and cultural studies. She specialises in landscape planning for tourism. Her research expertise is a cross-discipline between landscape architecture and tourism planning, with an emphasis on PLACE: People, Landscape, Architecture, Culture and Environment. Her research and consultancy projects explore the interrelated areas between the built environment and tourism, which include landscape resources, urban public spaces, streets, public art and cultural heritage. Her current works examine ways which designers and planners can engage with public spaces through the notion of place and place experience among different users. Through national research grants, she has completed research projects on examining public markets as cultural heritage for tourism, exploring Islamic public art and mapping activities in urban squares.

# Preface

The commonly found stereotypical perspective of the “urban vernacular” relates it to physical residuals and forms that are dense, built bottom-up, organic, rhizomic and irregularly related to the particularities of diasporic- and migrant-settlement village forms. This brings forth the conflicts and dichotomies inherent in the discussion of mapping “modern” dimensions of the vernacular. However, this book intends to open up a wider narrative and converge different streams of thought, perspectives and outcomes within the urban context and its contrasts. Linking these to the very definition of “serendipity” which has been described as “discoveries, by accidents and sagacity,” the urban vernacular becomes a framework towards a new urbanism. Cities are naturally serendipity machines, and it is the juxtaposition of the past and future that create spatial crucibles and experiences encompassing multiple sensations. These inherently causes a tumult and disturbances that naturally increase the occurrence of interest and chance – as opposed to homogeneity. These are the chances of the unexpected and the surprising and the dynamic emergence of the social dimension in cities – enabling continuous regeneration, renewal and the revival of unsought connections of the urban network and the populace. As cities are neither machines nor natural ecosystems, but “*social reactors*” (Bettencourt, 2019), the context of such social dynamism occurs in the compressed context of dense social networks together in space and time until they fuse at the edges, producing new ideas and relationships. These are trends that earmark the present century with the rise of AI and artificial networks – out of which has emerged a critical juncture to examine more bottom-up and “organic” forms and patterns, along with the urgency to develop policies, themes and guidelines which differ from the past age of industrialisation.

Vernacular patterns and formations of the past are a constant inspiration to conservators, planners and designers alike. Yet these are challenging too, because these models have neither been described with a common or universal nomenclature, nor have they been structured in a framework through which common agreed principles can be discussed. The vernacular is not only tradition, forms and structures, but patterns which may be buried under layers of development and sedimentation or have been destroyed and fractured by past colonial powers, erasing most of the patterns of indigenous urbanism in local regions. The threats and hazards continue in the form of pressure of development and its mindless erasures of the indigenous

formations and its transformation, resonating into hybrid spatial patterns and the urban vernacular' effects at different scales

The book is titled *The Urban Vernacular in Southeast Asia: Settlement as Serendipity* as it posits that a return to the urban vernacular – a form of vernacular which survives or emerges out of limits of urban conditions – is crucial to the reinstating of place identities at the heart of urban policy and framework. Settlement is the origin of all things vernacular, therefore it is settlement that lies at the heart of such frameworks. Thus, they must include conserving residuals and remnants of the past. Asia progresses at a rapid rate, and there is a vortex of change so rapid that the normal evolution of thoughts and policy development from intellectuals and policymakers cannot match the speed of change or catch up with it. In *Asian Ethical Urbanism*, Lim (2005) stated, “*the modernity of each society must evolve within its own cultural environment.*” Each place has different and diverse cultures that can make them localised and globalised at the same time.

To unearth patterns and traits attributable to the locality, one must refocus on the importance of understanding the seemingly disordered, self-organised forms and organic patterns. The urban typological and the urban “morphological,” i.e., the underlying configurations that have survived or changed over time, must be described and understood. Thus, this central theme runs across three major domains: The first one, the city, has its original patterns and regeneration goals of the urban realm, including reinstating the critical role of the village in the city. The second is the architectural field, the past and present use of the vernacular armature in urban types, i.e., how prototypes of tradition have been either termed as the “urban vernacular” or the “critical vernacular” in order to seed new interpretations and innovations. The third, is the urban vernacular as the container or instigator of shared experiences on the ground and in the public domain. In guiding and addressing concerns and dichotomies of the search for modern forms, there is that constant challenge and anxiety of resonating traditional identity – whether architectural, morphological and cultural – yet being modern at the same time against the backdrop and context of rapid development.

Rather than dividing the challenges into the usual architectural, planning and cultural theory categories, the book seeks to integrate all three large topics into a single volume. It begins with a characterisation of the self-organised layout and morphology of surviving villages and more recent urban villages, aiming to establish discourse, shared principles and terminology around conventional tropes of the “village” in the city. In Part 2, we move to architectural dimensions, capturing formal cases of how the “vernacular” and the importance of re-examining the vernacular in light of the ongoing need to produce a more sustainable and place-conscious fit in modern architecture and urban planning. Thus, the vernacular is viewed as a resource for generating new ideas and new forms of architecture and space. The book then moves into Part 3, which highlights the more recent urban formations and urban zones which are essentially layers of experiences and dynamic communities within the residuals of past settlements and which are currently the focus on heritage policies such as the creative city and urban renewal. This includes temporary structures such as markets and events, cultural programmes and museum

environments as ways of delving into what constitutes a city's soul. In each case, the communal and historical physical pattern inscribed onto the urban landscape in terms of tangible elements are referred to. Creative cities and hubs generally include the convergences of old streets and the adaptive reuse of buildings into centres of the "intangible" such as cultural creativity, market activities and leisure experiences (Wong, 2016). Thus, this book aims to construct a number of discourses, dialectics and analyses across the disciplines of urban form, architecture and urban experiences — all under the rubric of urban vernacular. It is meant to bridge the gap between practice and theory by reconstructing discourses and trends in the era where a staggering percentage of the global population is drifting, moving, working and living in cities in an attempt to evoke a constant return to the native, and the "local," whether from an urbanite's emotive and nostalgic perspective or out of concerns over the increasing erasure of local identities.

The book is an edited volume consisting of 19 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to conceptual dimensions and nomenclature, as well as theoretical frameworks which constitute the body of literature, discourse and scholarship in the past. It attempts to sum up past definitions of the urban, including the critical vernacular and the trends of serendipity in the city, while finally converging all these ideas in a series of layers as a framework for structuring these facets of the same principle. Chapter 2 by Nor Zalina Harun, Syahidah Amni Mohammed and Najihah Jaafar begins the discourse on morphological studies of in-city village settlements in an attempt to map common patterns and constitute an argument of how the surviving past settlements adjacent and within the urban fringe of the city contribute to its sustainable form. Using three particular heritage sites case studies, the notion of organic planning and morphologies, and urban conservation, is discussed, particularly in terms of how the conservation of such settlements adds to the sustainable agenda of cities. In Chapter 3, Widya Fransiska brings the reader to the ancient river-based morphologies of Southeast Asia through mapping and analysis of river-side indigenous settlements at Palembang, Indonesia, where morphologies of past river-based communities play a significant role in evoking and preserving the identity and economy of the region. In Chapter 4, Ira et al. continue the broad theories of river-based morphology and vernacular architecture in Borneo. In Chapter 5, Agung Raden draws attention to the surviving yet vibrant urban villages in both the historic cores of Indonesia and Malaysia by comparing Kota Gede and Kampung Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, a remnant of British colonial planning which thrives as a Malay vernacular enclave. Agung compares similar activities and strengths of both villages. Chapters 6 focus on contributions from Hanoi, Vietnam, where the urban village is discussed against its contributions to identity, street life and cultural place-making. Chapter 7 attempts to delineate and define the public realm as combining the present historic core and public pathways as a continuum linking the spatial experience of historic core and urban pathways and historic streetscapes. Chapter 8 discusses a theoretical framework by Nor Zalina Harun, in which walkability is seen as an index that arises from the vernacular settlement patterns but can be extended to ensure the sustainability of cities by measuring the attributes of

in-city villages as a matrix of both the vernacular and the sustainable – within a combined matrix of assessing any development.

Part 2 of the book opens with Chapter 9, in which The urban vernacular begins to explore its dimensions in evolving the armature of urban design and architecture where the extensions of the verandah is again brought to focus by Ken Yeang with a refreshing perspective. He posits visions of the tropical city, interpreted as permutations and articulations of the “verandah.” By reframing his treatises in the tropical verandah city, he refreshes a much-needed vision of the tropical city. Chapter 10 continues the mapping and enriching the discussion of the urban village in Vietnam in terms of vibrant urban villages as crucibles that transform and germinate, linking the idea of the pattern and the vernacular to an experiential format of urban serendipity. In Chapter 11, Khalilah Zakariyya and Nor Zalina Harun argue that despite its disorderly form, it is the market – be it permanent, temporary, or street-based – that adds vibrancy to the city. These assemblage types generally have different and diverse cultures, among them localised and globalised identities at the same time. They are a convergence of vernacular and serendipity: standardised designs and forms may make the market appear to be more “proper” visually, yet it is their organic and spontaneous character that is crucial. Among the qualities of temporary market stalls are mobility, adjustability, light weight – since they are mobile – climatic suitability in rain or shine, durable material, robustness, visual access to the products and activities of the vendors, modest scale, efficient and optimum use of space: the authors look afresh at what makes a market vernacular. In chapter 12, Samayro Saif and Shamzani Affendy again revisit the cities where the urban-renewal zones become the hubs of creativity and highlight the link with urban regeneration, vernacular heritage and structures. In Chapter 13, the urban vernacular is examined in the form of temporary event programming, such as the Gallery Weekend, which epitomises creativity as a hub in Kuala Lumpur. This includes a “virtual trail” of arts events within urban renewal zones as discussed by Shalini Ganendra, a renowned cultural connoisseur in Southeast Asian artistic programming. She crucially highlights how the Malaysian GWKL (Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur) programming creates a virtual experience of the urban vernacular, integrating social-media methods of dissemination and the public responses to it rather than physical structures. Her chapter also discusses how the village craft is infused within the experience of an annual gallery trail and how the experience of the vernacular is weaved within the city-based trail. In Chapter 14, Supitcha Vitrivich highlights the conflation between urban vernacular and participatory place-making that puts Thailand under the microscope, as the article examines the practical application of urban vernacular phenomena as a form of serendipity. The discussion is based on a series of participatory place-making projects conducted in the city of Bangkok by the author. By utilising these projects as case studies, the author aims to explore the role of urban vernacular in promoting unplanned, spontaneous interactions that enrich the urban environment.

In Part 3, the focus shifts to architectural dimensions and interpretations. In Chapter 15, Tengku Anis Qariah and Raj Busmentav reflect upon and anatomise an architectural archetype of the urban vernacular in Malaysia, Indonesia and the

Philippines, including its morphological and climatic credentials, and, amongst other outcomes, present a mapping of the varied but universal identities of the refined style of aristocratic architecture. As a cauldron of the classical yet urbanising vernacular, it is rich and vibrant both architecturally and spatially. In Chapter 16, Azaidy Abdullah, a professional architect and urban designer, continues the debate on critical regionalism and what this entails in terms of form and detail, the thread of merging theory and practice, in reverting and using the vernacular as consistent tropes for urban architecture and public design, shared from his past projects including flows and thought processes in the designs. In Chapter 17, Shireen Jahn Kassim delves into the multiple interpretations in form and architectural morphology of the high-rise typology, which is linked to the clash of climate and culture in an oscillation and tension between the two poles of design. Under the microscope, the variations and “oscillations” of form are related to tensions in its context. The designs of Ken Yeang throughout his 40-year career began with the critical vernacular and peaked with the ecological high-rise. Yeang has been a champion of ecologising the high-rise form within the trope of climate and culture, having evolved his ideas into ecology and sustainability. The author highlights the notion of oscillations and tensions in his design processes and what factors drove the design and synthesised it, where the tensions are at their highest, which gives rise to award-winning designs. In Chapter 18, Norwina et al. bring the focus back on how the trope of the Nusantara Masjid archetype is used as a trope in the design of the modern mosque.

Blending conceptual chapters with theoretically directed case studies from all over the world, this book includes issues such as localised and site-specific development strategies. The cultural knowledge embedded in the “urban vernacular” or “urban heritage” offers culturally specific approaches that can promote urban participation, facilitate wealth creation and deliver specific urban rights to urbanising populations. For the first time, morphological, critical-theory and educational dimensions and perspectives will be brought together in one book. The trope of the urban vernacular highlights that there are underlying patterns that create an additive model and experience of the city, combining elements that may be small-scale and localised tropes and practices. However, they create a continuum with the potential to transform the city and urban life into a highly sustainable entity that combines nature and development, reconciling man and nature and highlighting the critical role of heritage cities in the quest and agenda for future sustainability.

*Nor Zalina Harun and  
Shireen Jahn Kassim*

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# 1 The Urban Vernacular of Southeast Asia

## Reviewing Morphological and Typological Dimensions

*Shireen Jahn Kassim and Nor Zalina Harun*

### 1.1 Introduction

The “urban vernacular” has been subject to a diversity of definitions, dimensions and frameworks in contemporary discourses, ranging from “self-built settlements,” to “informal forms” in rapidly growing cities, to “specific built forms arising from” everyday urban life, ultimately affecting place-based identities shaped by varied everyday practices, collective experiences and forces.” In the context of Asia in general, and South East Asia, in particular, this term has been linked to broad concepts and subjects to multifaceted discourses revolving around the “urban village,” the “heritage enclave”; and other forms within the framework of informal urban phenomena and practice. The term “urban vernacular,” revolving around the general meaning of the “unplanned” or the “anti-archetype” generally refers to built forms and urban patterns that have developed organically in urban environments over time, and generally which have “collage-like architecture attributes and intimate spaces, emblematic of informal settlements. Mottelson and Prahm (2021) have observed the rise of this phenomenon as an indispensable characteristic of developments and cities in Africa, Asia and the Global South. Sajib (2016) aptly observes that, in the particular context of urban Asia, it can be normally nuanced as a form of “*shifting architecture*” or widely defined as “*a highly fluid situation of change*” which can be morphologically described as “*an organic growth acting as the realm of the marginal,*” which is “*capable of spontaneously generating order, and actively organising itself.*” It implies self-organisation patterns and has been described as “*a new self-defining and self-forming phenomenon*” arising from frameworks and particularities related to moving from the additive to the formative, from cells to a larger whole. Narrated as a worldwide phenomenon, the urban vernacular was generally linked to a bottom-up phenomenon rather than forms being imposed from the top-down. Askarov (2014) defines this pattern more specifically, observing the “urban vernacular” as “*modest cells weaving the unique urban fabric, the main container of the urban vernacular.*”

Departing from these multi-dimensional yet broad notions of the urban vernacular, one can articulate the fields of theory and practice through which this term can be brought into focus. Roy (1988) attempted to weave these theories of the “urban vernacular” by ruminating on its significance within the urban landscape, i.e., that universally, and broadly, it represents a value proposition: “*the notion of fit between locale and urban-building form.*” Additionally, he proposed how, initially,

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and first and foremost, “the urban vernacular” must be conceptualised principally and predicated upon, the universal notion of a “shared sensibility” arising from the innate knowledge and abilities of the local populace. Thus, in observing that, *“In the search of this elusive and somewhat nebulous sensibility, a redefinition of the word ‘vernacular’ has been broached and developed as the pivotal theoretical construct,”* he voiced perennial challenges faced in the aftermath of Covid. Roy further wrote that *“Consequently, the conception of a contemporary urban vernacular has formed a daunting preoccupation, and this has been further expanded to include the delineation of urban ‘types’ which evolve, mature, and differentiate, influenced greatly by the processes of control and change.”*

Forms shape cityscapes, and these are essentially either top-down or bottom-up and thus flow from both planned and unplanned constructs and conceptions. Those that grow from the bottom-up seem to stand in opposition and resistance to those that reflect “top-down” patterns which have, to some extent, been inscribed onto the natural landscape and which are in opposition to the “top-down” approaches which generally have been responsible for effacing traces of the region’s history. The imposition of form and function in the top-down approach seems to have been unrelated to topography and culture of the place. Southeast Asian urban centres which had begun with the seeds of village settlements which undergo unification and combinations and, as they evolve, the production of cultural and urban forms absorb and mutate rhizomic influences that meld and metamorphise these forms into a more syncretic blend of old and new, of internal and “external” cultures, into a constructed entity and self-organising vortex of alterations, reconstitution and reconstruction, seem to have been altered beyond recognition as the forces of development encroach onto the existing landscape. Looking at this more closely, each city that embodies its successive histories in terms of present and residual forms has evolved in opposition to the existing geographies in which the local populations live. In a nutshell, the region embodies a collective representative of the forces and cultures that fall layer upon layer and the successive cultures and politics further building upon it, and the tidal rise of globalisation, spatially, physically, typologically and constantly effaces the traces of the native, the indigenous and the “other.” The urban vernacular is thus an entity and phenomenon that is critical in playing and affecting the role of embodying, inscribing and sustaining the heterogeneous history of a place. As Galan et al. (2020) summates: the vernacular becomes a way of action, collaborative governance and a method of place-making.

### **1.2 The Expanded Frameworks: The Urban Vernacular as the Urban Village**

Widening the framework of the “urban vernacular,” the term itself is first and foremost primarily linked and generally expanded into the realm of urban theory and practice by linking to the rising phenomena of rural to urban migration, diasporic settlements and residual of communities ensconced within rapid development, giving rise to the phenomena of the urban village. It is thus universally used in conjunction with patterns of urban residential typologies that embody the notion of the “resistive” and the “localised.” The urban vernacular is, in another perspective, the underlying

resistive force within the forces of economic determinism, capitalistic development and modernisation, represented by the underlying village-like communities championing of the “local” and the “localised,” here defined as a perspective or positioning from an urbanite’s viewpoint, which arises from the need to resist and to react. The characteristics of the village and its quaint and indigenous forms have been linked to the urban vernacular in terms of forms which are transposed to the urban context and which have become ensconced in the dense grain of the rapid development of cities and towns. The vernacular becomes a root and a framework that is a resistance and a stabilising frame against the velocity and ferocity of urban change. Thus, the roots of such resistive forces and concepts have become underscored with the roots of traditions and working families as they resist the encroaching, and thus these become intertwined with the converging definitions of serendipity, i.e., the experience of serendipity that is of pleasant and unexpected urban experiences within the concretisation of the city. This refers to the outcome of such urbanism – the “pleasant” surprises and encounters necessary to survive the austere, routine-driven and concrete bareness of urban environment, urban working and living.

Scott Hawken (2017) has rightly used the same term in the study of the phenomenon of the urban village in Asia. Miao (2016) used the “vernacular urban” to characterise resultant “urban villages,” representing “unplanned” phenomena which present a stark contrast with the orderly and heavily designed urban fabric. Wang (2020) observed uncovers of “at least three different interpretations of urban village exist in the literature: ethnic enclaves in American metropolises, new models of community development in the Anglosphere, and informal settlements within the rapidly expanding metropolises in the Global South.” Elaine Kwong (2020), in her Harvard Master’s thesis, terms the urban village in China as the new “urban vernacular,” using the term “Village Autonomy” to highlight the:

*Intricate layers that exist historically, socially, economically, and spatially which can only be unveiled if one maps a social geography built incrementally over time.*

It is, as she points out, a “collective form focusing on the evolution of the vernacular building types and their part-to-part relationships that respond to elements of interconnection in everyday life” and so:

*Urban villages are in a constant transitory state, continuously regenerating by addition and revision of parts in an open-ended collective entity.*

Elaine Kwong (2020) points out:

*Collective form focuses on the evolution of the vernacular building types and their part-to-part relationships that respond to elements of interconnection in everyday life [and so,] [u]rban villages are in a constant transitory state, continuously regenerating by addition and revision of parts in an open-ended collective entity.*

Kwong (2020) similarly relates the urban vernacular to “social geography that is built incrementally over time and sustained through the autonomy of kinship

*dynamics.*” Drawing on urban theory and highly specific local fieldwork, she nuances the reading of this collective form, focusing on the evolution of the vernacular building types and their part-to-part relationships that respond to the interconnection of everyday life. Urban villages are described as constantly “*being in a transitory state, continuously regenerating by addition and revision of parts to form a truly evolving and open-ended collective entity.*” Thus, such urban villages are under constant threat of demolition and redevelopment, particularly in coalition with developers, resulting in projects rooted only in a financial rationale. The varied notions of the “urban vernacular” further encompass multiple dimensions in terms of typologies, encompassing the survival of rural enclaves amidst the pressure of urban expansions, to the notions of “*kampung*” as urban villages surviving within a burgeoning metropolis. Achmadi and Jossey (2020) expand a new dimension to the term “*kampung*” in urban Indonesia: “*Kampung is a historical form of vernacular urbanism in Indonesia ... it plays a crucial role in absorbing rural – urban migration*” and “*theorises it as a form of subaltern cosmopolitanism ... a bottom-up urbanism with subnational and transnational professional design networks on the fringe of Indonesia’s urbanity.*”

### 1.3 **The Urban Vernacular: The Public Realm**

The public realm, encompassing public spaces, streets and in-between spaces, is the antithesis of the private. The narrative of the urban vernacular has encompassed the “indigenous” in that it conflates the theories of public spaces with local histories and in terms of linking both history and the urban landscape with the local development of public spaces in the urban context (Didehban et al., 2021) in the term has been used consistently to describe indigenous layers of the growing city in Asia, in relation to the historic core, while Halder (2020) term this as “vernacular urbanism,” where the public realm – which has become a challenge in developing cities – seek to create meaningful public places by understanding the roles of vernacular architecture in present urban life – combining the aspects of the urban fabric, public perception and specific architectural style. In this respect, the framework of the “urban vernacular” as discussed in the context of Hong Kong involved, among others, a typology which Christ and Tieben (2020) have investigated in terms of its value in placemaking is the interstitial space of the laneways and alleyways in cities, i.e., the old alley and lane/laneway spaces. According to them, the conservation of such urban vernacular type forms will allow residents to reclaim their fundamental and democratic right – and resist these from being erased and destroyed. They state “*these hold in common ‘to make and remake [their] cities and [them]selves’*” (Harvey, 2008, p. 23). Heide Imai and Marie Gibert-Flutre similarly expressed and explored the transformation of what they call “*vernacular urban alleyways,*” arguing for changing urban forms to be approached through spatial, social and cultural dimensions, and through the nuances and sequences that unfold between marginalisation, reappropriation and reinvention processes. They also attempted to show the relevance of understanding place as a social construct shaped by everyday practices and by “inside” and “outside” (global) forces, pointing out how the lack of a thorough articulation of this notion, and its theoretical