

Analyzing Practice of Sustainability From the Perspective of Cultural Landscape: A Case Study of the Masjid Kampung Kling, Malacca, Malaysia

Menganalisis Amalan Lestari dari Perspektif Lanskap Budaya: Satu Kajian Kes Masjid Kampung Kling, Melaka, Malaysia

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to view sustainability practice from the perspective of cultural landscape by looking at Masjid Kampung Kling, Malacca. The mosque is a traditional building gazetted under National Antiquity Act (2005) and is located within the area of UNESCO World Heritage Site. A qualitative case study was conducted to identify past practice of sustainability. The cultural landscape approach was used by searching for the implicit meanings of shapes and patterns of the mosque's features. This method gives a new angle of view to the landscape as an expression of symbols, icons, and metaphors. The concept of sustainability and cultural landscape were analyzed in order to establish connectivity between the two. In order to prove that the practice of sustainability was once present, data was collected from several series of observations and interviews. Masjid Kampung Kling can be viewed as a sub-cosmic of the various cultures found in Malacca. Findings from the study suggested that the mosque portrayed the practice of sustainability both by contextual mean and testimonial proofs. The sustainability practice can be viewed from three significant values of cultural landscape of the mosque namely history, architecture, and archaeology. Current management should recognise the Masjid Kampung Kling and other traditional mosques in general, as having the potential to present sustainability from the cultural landscape perspective. Though the Masjid Kampung Kling is already known as a tourist attraction, conceptual improvement in the context of tourism will definitely add more values especially for academic and learning purpose.

Keywords Sustainability, Cultural Landscape, Masjid Kampung Kling

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai amalan lestari daripada perspektif landskap budaya dengan melihat Masjid Kampung Kling, Melaka. Masjid ini adalah bangunan warisan yang telah diwartakan di bawah Akta Warisan Kebangsaan (2005) dan terletak di dalam lingkungan tapak warisan dunia UNESCO. Kajian kes kualitatif telah dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti amalan lestari yang pernah berlaku. Pendekatan landskap budaya digunakan dalam kajian ini dengan mencari makna tersirat pada bentuk dan corak masjid tradisional ini. Kaedah seumpama ini menyediakan sudut pandang baharu kepada landskap sebagai ekspresi symbol, ikon dan metafora. Konsep lestari dan landskap budaya telah diteliti untuk mewujudkan perkaitan antara keduanya. Manakala untuk membuktikan amalan lestari pernah berlaku, data diperoleh daripada beberapa siri pemerhatian dan temu bual. Masjid Kampung Kling boleh dilihat sebagai sub-kosmik daripada pelbagai budaya di Melaka. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa masjid ini telah merakam amalan lestari melalui maksud konteks dan juga bukti testimoni. Amalan lestari boleh dilihat daripada tiga nilai signifikan landskap budaya masjid iaitu sejarah, arkitektur, dan arkeologi. Pengurusan semasa perlu mengenal pasti Masjid Kampung Kling dan masjid tradisional lain amnya sebagai potensi untuk menonjolkan amalan lestari menurut kaca mata landskap budaya. Walaupun Masjid Kampung Kling sedia dikenali sebagai tarikan pelancong, penambah baikan konsep dalam konteks pelancongan tentu akan menambah nilai terutamanya untuk tujuan akademik dan pembelajaran.

Kata kunci *Lestari, Landskap Budaya, Masjid Kampung Kling*

Introduction

The discourse on sustainability has been going on since its popularization through Bruntland Report in 1987. Ever since, a lot of definitions, concepts, mechanisms, formulas, approaches were proposed, argued or revised yet the so called variations in looking at sustainability is merely an expanding rhetoric that moves along with the global awakening of environmental concern. It is well accepted that development is required to fulfil human necessity. Within the process of development, where natural resources are being exploited, damages to the environment are seemed inevitable. Having acknowledged the situation, conference after conference was convened to find solutions to the problem. Amendments have been made locally and globally and yet there is a growing dismay that sustainability is moving astray from its supposed direction (Gray and Milney, 2002).

This study is carefully guided by the ethical inquiry embedded within sustainability discourse. If sustainability is really possible, perhaps it has occurred during previous development. This study attempts to point out the major obstacle in achieving sustainability, namely the ethics, and that it can be solved by implanting religious touch to it. For that Masjid Kampung Kling is selected in retrospect to previous civilization, to portray practice of sustainability that contains religious attributes through its cultural landscape.

Beyond Sustainability Ethics

According to Abraham (2006) the thoughts on sustainability have been randomly spoken through sages, wisdoms, proverbs and others which highlight on the relationship between man and nature. Presently, the theme of sustainability still has not changed. It is still a concern about maintaining both man (needs) and environment (natural resources). The variability of sustainability differs from one field to another and more often than not the concept of sustainability is being twisted and sometimes, manipulated (Abraham, 2006; Gomis *et al.*, 2011; Woods, 2010; Becker, 2012). The most comprehensive definition on sustainability probably could be the one recently stated by Becker (2012) that sustainability is the ability to establish continuance as a means for orienting human actions and life towards the threefold relatedness of human existence to contemporaries, future generations, and nature.

The definition can be understood as putting responsibility on human's action among them and with the environment (Figure 1). Similarly, the responsibility to sustain contemporaries, future and environment is all dependent on every single individual.

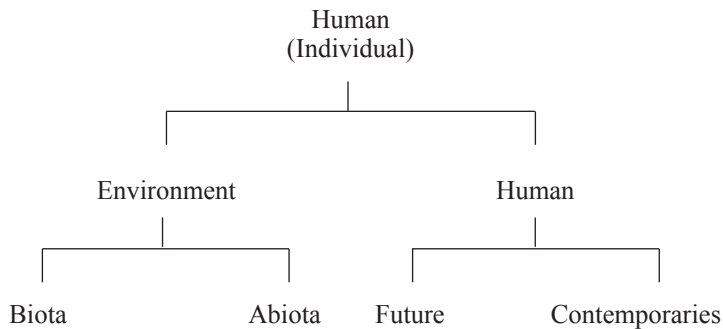


Figure 1 Individual ethical obligation in sustainability framework

To many scholars, ethical concern is the unspoken obstacle that keeps the world from achieving the goal of sustainability (Grundy, 1997; Newton and Freyfogle, 2005; Victor, 2006; Gomis *et al.*, 2011; Keitsch, 2012; Sekerka and Stimel, 2012). Gomis *et al.* (2011) pointed out that ethics is the key by which disputes and conflicts among economic, social and environment can and ought to be resolved. It is accepted that sustainability is normative good that is meant to prolong the harmonious relationship between human and environment, presently and for the future. However, the conflict that besieged the world from coming to a common agreement on sustainability regardless from which discipline we are looking from and actually translate the norm into actions is due to our different perceptions on the 'ability' to sustain. Profoundly, the problematic 'ability' is closely related to ethics. Though laws, policies and rules are made available to guide human use of ecological services in perpetuity without their diminution decision in development process, yet sustainability is only the consequence from obeying them (Vanderheiden, 2008).

All the complexities in practicing sustainability began as humans make decision and take action. To some philosophers, ethics alone is not sufficient to handle the issue of 'human ability' (DesJardins, 2006; Becker, 2012). Becker (2012) added that even environmental ethics could not give a holistic solution to sustainability problems as this type of moral philosophy emerges only when an environmental concern arises. For now what is needed most is a belief system (religious belief) that can satisfy both humanity and environmental sustainability (Izutsu, 2008). Not only it serves as bridging guides between man and environment, it also connects human in the contemporaries with future generation. Islam as a belief system justifies human beings as both servant of Allah ('Abd Allah) and vicegerent of Allah (Khalifat Allah). According to this system of belief, man has the right to practice the vicegerency on earth (i.e. utilizing natural resources to meet living needs) only on the condition that man remains as the servant of Allah (obeying His Will and Law) (Sayyed, 2003). To Mohammad (2003), the closest concept of sustainability in Islam is Al Mizaan (balance). There are two ideas behind this concept namely all entity is stable only in balance their state, and a method to divide human according to their actions (good or bad) (Yang, 2010).

Religious values within cultural landscape

The term cultural landscape has been formally used to refer to properties on the World Heritage List all over the world. In 2008, World Heritage Centre in a report called *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* has defined cultural landscapes as "cultural properties and represent the 'combined works of nature and of man' designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal".

According to Lowenthal (1985) the outcome of cultural landscape is shaped by general mental template that the society uses to understand the ways in which the world works as well as through people's actions and various physical and natural processes that shape the world. Therefore, apart from seen monuments and artefacts, there are unseen values embedded in the portrayal of cultural landscape. Such values are crucial in giving ideas on how meticulously man interacted to and utilized the environment. The values could be rooted from mystically sound ideas or righteously guided by certain religious teaching. Religion, for instance is one of cultural landscape attributes in Japan and Korea (Zonneveld 1995) through Feng Shui theory (Nakagoshi and Hong 2001).

As in the case of Malaysia, Saiful (2011) suggests that factors such as geography, climate, cultural and socio-economic background, and religion might affect the characteristics and features of its cultural landscape. The relationship between religion and culture (human) is important since religious belief must be justified into the face of cultural values (Hill *et al.*, 2000). Therefore religious influence in all human activities within social structures and interaction with nature is obvious. Moreover as cultural landscape often reflects specific techniques of sustainable practice i.e. land use management, built environment etc., the sustainable techniques might as well be considered as having religious touch.

Overlaying sustainability with cultural landscape

There are needs to contextually examine sustainability and cultural landscape as both sharesome common similarities. Contextual overlay of both sustainability and cultural landscape is simplified as shown in Figure 2.

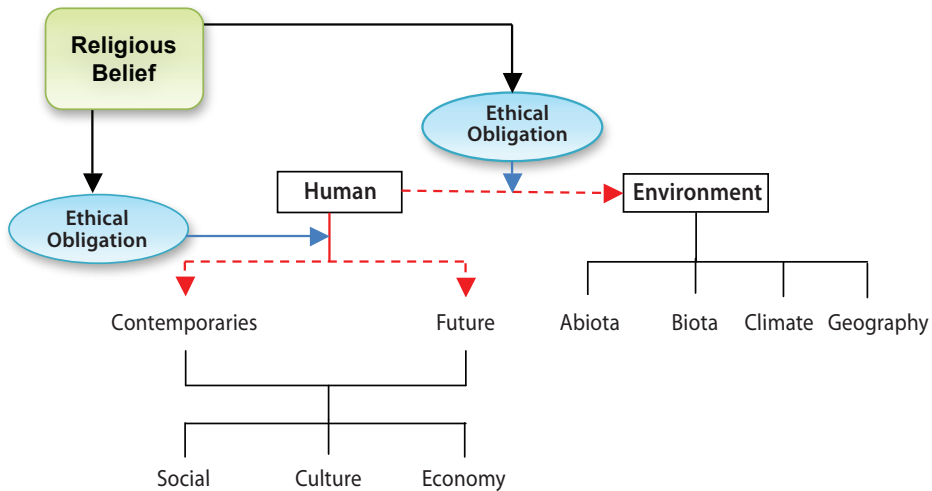


Figure 2 Overlaying sustainability and cultural landscape concepts

Further elaboration on the overlaying context of sustainability and cultural landscape are listed as follows:

- i. Sustainability concerns with present and future development taking into account relationship between man (contemporaries and future) and environment. Cultural landscape is living heritage that captures past harmonious interaction between man and environment taking into account particular conditions that might occur at that time.
- ii. The major problem with doing sustainability lies mostly on individual, organizational and institutional ethical obligations. On the other hand, cultural landscape embedded unseen values i.e. religion, within previous sustainability practice.
- iii. Man is the only element that decides on the pattern of relationship among them and between environments. The ability to think and decide is only granted to human, not the environment. If man acts wisely, sustainability can be achieved.
- iv. As for the environment, its system has been predetermined. It will keep performing the cycles and process regardless with or without human interference. Having acknowledged that human needs natural resources from the environment to live, the consumption needs to have some limits. And the limits are supposedly drawn by godly command, which is the reason why religion is needed.

- v. To sum up, the present problem of ethical obligations could probably be solved with religious belief. Sustainability has occurred in previous civilizations and repeating it is possible, if religious implementation is taken into consideration.
- vii. Religious belief shall be the root to all ethical obligations. Therefore religion must not come from human wisdom but rather from The Creator of both man and environment.

Methodology

The Study Area

The Masjid Kampung Kling was built near to Masjid Kampung Hulu in 1748. In 1872, the structure of the mosque was upgraded with briquette. In 1908, the roof was raised to the same level as Masjid Kampung Hulu. All the fundings for the construction of the mosque came from the money box and donations. The design of the mosque is influenced by Sumatera's mosques architecture with Hindu-like design. Nevertheless, the Chinese design can also be seen at the mosque's minaret. The ornaments and interior decoration are observed to be of Malay influence.

The mosque was gazetted according to the National Antiquity Act 2005 as historical building by Department of Museums and Antiquity in 1999 and it was later placed under the management of Perbadanan Muzium Melaka (PERZIM). The Masjid Kampung Kling (Photo 1) is located within the area of UNESCO World Heritage Site, more exactly at *Jalan Tukang Emas*, adjacent to the Sri Payyatha Viyanagar Moorthi temple and the Cheng Moon temple (Figure 3). The road at which the mosque is located is known as *Jalan Harmoni* (Harmony Road) where it holds religious the buildings of Islam (mosque), Hindu and Buddhist (temples).

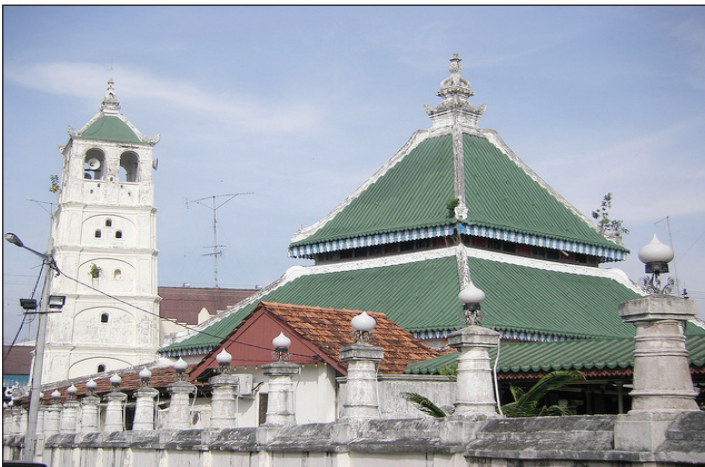


Photo 1 Masjid Kampung Kling, Malacca

Heritage tourism

The Masjid Kampung Kling, as like other traditional mosques in Malacca can be classified as a historical vernacular landscape and is advantageous to the heritage tourism because it has added values. Heritage tourism (under sub-class of cultural tourism) has been identified and highlighted in the new Tourism Policy by the Ministry of Tourism as one of the new niche products to be developed extensively for the next ten years (Badaruddin and Rahmat, 2005). In tandem with the growing interest in heritage tourism and the global influx of the alternative tourists, arrival of tourists in Malaysian historical sites, especially Penang and Malacca, have increased over the years.

Religious-ecological knowledge

A mosque must be interpreted from the aspect of its functions and special characteristics of its form. According to Omer (2010), the form of a mosque is a product of people's interpretation from their surrounding and is influenced by existing environmental factors such as the climate, topography and season. Even though people can interact with the environment as they wish, their interpretations are still bound by the gist of Islamic pillar that they must not associate Allah, as the only God, with anything or by any mean. In a similar study Rosta *et al.* (2011) explained that despite the uniqueness of traditional mosque architecture in Malacca, none of the ecological knowledge retrieved from the mosques contradict Islamic teachings. The Masjid Kampung Kling specifically has recorded a unique portrayal of practice of sustainability in addition to religious touch.

Educational tourism to promote sustainability

Though the Masjid Kampung Kling is yet to be listed as one of the cultural landscape properties by World Heritage Convention, the potential of this traditional mosque to promote the practice of sustainability from Malaysia's point of view should not be underestimated. In order widen this heritage asset, local people especially the youth need to be engaged in educational tourism. Much of traditional knowledge and values from traditional mosques of this kind have been lost through the generations and it is about time this treasure is brought back to use.

One of the measures to encourage educational tourism is to promote the practice of sustainability in traditional mosques. Attention should be brought to tourists that environment is a concern with the social requirements of past generations. Related tourism agencies venturing with academic and research organisations should try to incorporate educational attributes such as conservation approach, and religious guideline into tourism experience. Examples of activities that can be offered are *i'tikaaf* (temporary solitary confinement) in the mosque, camping and volunteer projects.

Conclusion

Current management of the mosque should recognise that the Masjid Kampung Kling and other traditional mosques in general, as having the potential to present the concept of sustainability from cultural landscape perspective. Although the Masjid Kampung Kling is already a known tourist attraction, improvement in the promotion of its concept of practice of sustainability with respect to the tourism industry will definitely add more values, especially for academic and learning purposes.

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