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THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN MALAY TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENT

Nur ‘Adilah Hassan¹, Nor Zalina Harun² & Alias Abdullah³

*^{1,2} Institute of Malay World and Civilization,
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA*

*³ Department of Urban and Regional Planning,
Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design,
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA*

Abstract

Good practices of traditional settlement’s preservation allow all actors to engage and explore what makes a self-sustaining settlement by the locals. This study aims to identify the values of social capital that have influenced the social capital sustainability in Malay traditional settlement. For this purpose, semi-structured interview and non-participant observation were performed on Pulau Duyong, Terengganu as the selected Malay traditional settlement. The findings from this study revealed that the sustainability of social capital in the study area was achieved through a well-planned development with the involvement of the community, non-governmental organizations and authority as well as the integration and collective actions among the actors. The contribution of this study resides in the capacity to provide a useful guide for future social capital sustainability developments in a place with high heritage values.

Keywords: Sustainability; Social Capital; Heritage; Malay Traditional Settlement

¹ Postgraduate Student at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Email: nuradilahhassan6@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of research has been conducted and produced an impressive body of results confirming the importance of social capital in various domains of development. Coleman (1988) as one of the prominent scholars' in related study defined social capitals as "the component of human capital that allows members of a given society to trust one another and cooperate in the formation of new groups and associations". In the context of this study, social capital is viewed as an essential framework of the social fabrics that emphasizes on the obligations, reciprocity and the depth understanding of a community's social connectedness which resulting to sustainable living and people's well-being.

The concept is not only considered as an essential mechanism in the formation of a social community network in an ordinary settlement but the potential is also appropriate for the preservation of the local identity especially in the Malay traditional settlements. The notion is supported by Murzyn-Kupisz, (2013) and Moayedı & Kheiruddin, (2014) in which both kinds of research addressed the strength of social capital was heavily determined by the quality and density of social fabrics, connectedness, integration and involvement of the communities in a historic settlement. In fact, such propositions have been confirmed by the communities that they would preserve and protect the exclusivity of their local identity. Similarly, the study perceived the local identity reflected in the Malay traditional settlement plays a paramount role in society as it portrays the richness, diversity, cultural balance and living heritage of the community (Jeyaram, 2015). The study, therefore, argues that an attempt to create the globalised culture through modernisation and physical development will destroy the traditional settlement, which then results in the disappearance of the cultural norms and local identity. Therefore, this study aims to identify the values of social capital that have influenced the social capital sustainability in Malay traditional settlement so that Malaysia can achieve the aspirations of the sustainable developments for the traditional settlement in particular.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Among the latest contribution to a quantitative approach on sustainable development with due to social capital, Phillips & Pittman (2015) categorised the level of community social capital in two aspects identified as structural and cognitive. Structurally, the integration among the locals within the community generates a nexus of the social network. The scholar elaborates that this network fosters the community sustainable development by facilitating the flow of knowledge, ideas and services among the locals (Uphoff, 2000). Cognitively, the attachment of the community promotes mutual trust, shared the obligations and increases the norms of reciprocity betwixt the locals (Phillips & Pittman, 2015). Concerning the association between social capital and sustainable development, numbers of studies have finally summarised both constructs into three main

categories which are: 1) bonding social capital, 2) bridging social capital and 3) linking social capital (Murzyn-Kupisz & Dzialek, 2013; Claridge, 2018; Cofre Bravo et al. 2019).

The first, which includes the strong relationship that evolves between individuals in a similar social group (network closure), is defined as a bonding social capital. The bonding social capital is intimately related to networks with a high density of relationships between the community members in traditional settlements (Claridge, 2018). Every member in the community network is closely interconnected as they always interact frequently and they are acquainted amongst each other. Each of the community members shares the values and has the common understandings which enable them to trust and work together. Usually, this type of social capital includes family, friends, and neighbours whom they can provide material as well as emotional support. The *rewang* activities which used to happen in a similar social group of Malay during the wedding ceremony are one of the examples of bonding social capital. The integration between the local communities will develop collective actions between the members and create a sense of willingness to sacrifice for others. As a result, the social capital among the local community becomes stronger, which tends to develop a sense of attachment and belonging.

While bridging social capital is defined as a heterogeneous relationship for collaboration and coordination which characterized by larger and looser networks system with weaker ties (Cofré-bravo et al. 2019). The word “weak” should not be elucidated negatively since the strength of bridging social capital is the weakness in the ties (Claridge 2018). This type of social capital literally means to “bridge” people across different social groups such as race, religion or class. The further explanation of bridging social capital according to Pelling and High (2005), is described as an exchange of social relationship between groups of people with the intention to share same interests and goals, however, they differ in social identity (Claridge 2018). The exchange of goals, ideas and innovations could lead in building the consensus among the groups which then representing the diverse interests. Concerning the preservation effort of Malay traditional settlement, the intentions and efforts to preserve tangible heritage would become the starting point for them to cooperate and collaborate through a variety of activities and programs. Through this collaboration, they are allowed to share knowledge and experiences towards their community development in which eventually strengthen the tolerance and acceptance of different kind of social groups.

Lastly, linking social capital is symbolised as a glue that holds the norms of respect and trusting relationship between individuals and institution which has institutionalised power or authority gradients in society (Cofré-bravo et al. 2019). In the context of Malay traditional settlement, it is acknowledged that preservation effort entails diverse sources of knowledge, financial resources,

material as well as mental support. This so-called open-network brings advantages to the actors in term of access to the pool of resources and new knowledge (Claridge 2018; Cofré-bravo et al. 2019) which can accommodate the process of preservation for traditional settlement. Through this social network, the actors are allowed for mutual learning on heritage preservation management and practices, which resulted in promoting tolerance and social cohesion among the actors.

Considering the execution of the social capital sustainability at the local level, the Municipality of Kuala Terengganu has implemented the Sustainability Assessment (SA) in their latest planning practice (refer to Kuala Terengganu Local Plan Report, 2010). Even though formal description and guidelines of sustaining the heritage development in Kuala Terengganu are profoundly found in the report, however, the report does not explicitly mention the action to be taken by the local authority on the preservation of the traditional settlement when dealing with the massive development. Therefore, this study intends to deliver a practical understanding of the roles and range of social capital in preserving the traditional settlement through the identification of the values embedded among the communities and their routines held in Kampung Pulau Duyong, Kuala Terengganu.

METHODS

The study adopted a qualitative method by applying a case study approach to identify the values of social capital that affect social capital sustainability in Malay traditional settlement. The data were gathered from non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews in a traditional settlement named Kampung Pulau Duyong, Kuala Terengganu. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among 24 local participants. The selection of the settlement was made based on three factors; i) the village has existed before or during the British colonial period, ii) the village is classified as an Unfederated Malay State whereby the village did not accept the interference of British in their development process and iii) the local community still exercise their traditional lifestyles and significantly has unique physical and cultural characteristics.

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain responses from several representative members of the local communities to allow the locals to express their personal connections with their settlements (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Only the locals who stay more than 20 years in the traditional settlement to be selected as a participant for this study to associate and explore their sense towards social networks. Thus, the purposive sampling was employed to select the participants from each of the settlements. The questions of the interview were categorized based on five sections. However, the fourth section which is the participation of the locals in the preservation programs is the primary focus where it could serve as the supporting evidence for the observation method. The responses were

recorded in two mediums, which are writing word by word in the interview form and audio recording. Apart from that, the checklist was prepared to guide the non-participant observation method at the selected settlement. The checklists were structured into three parts: the activities, the types of tangible heritage and the types of social capital that local communities being practised which affect the social capital sustainability of the locals. The data collection process was conducted across four-time intervals (morning, afternoon, evening and night) to ensure the types of activities conducted by the locals can be observed accordingly. The field notes, videos and photographs were gathered to support the checklist of the non-participant observation.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis and categorized into two themes, namely: 1) types of activities, 2) types of social capital. Every data gathered from non-participant observation and semi-structured interview were likely to have inaccuracies. Therefore, the triangulation process was used to minimize the inaccuracy level and increase the validity of the results (Salkind, 2010).

FINDINGS

The Collaboration and Involvement of Actors

According to semi-structured interview and non-participant observation conducted at Pulau Duyong Village, it revealed that the local communities create different social networks for generating and implementing their social capital sustainability's practices. Regarding the preservation efforts, the study found that the local community is always looking for the opportunity to organize and execute the preservation practices in term of community activities that involved all actors. Regardless of the differences of actors, they are interacting and create social ties with each other. The local community develops different types of social capital networks to seek new information, knowledge as well as financial resources which then establish the values of social capital. This study describes the findings in three parts, whereby categorizing accordingly using the types of activities which are daily, seasonal and annual – presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Form of the collaboration of actors in several activities.

Activity	Actors	Types of Social Capital	Form of Collaboration/Involvement
Daily -Brisk walking & sight-seeing at the jetty -Breakfast at stall -Mingling at the compound house & other special spots	Family members and neighbours Friends & Peers	Bonding Social Capital	-Interaction in daily activities among the locals

Seasonal - The Prophet's Birthday - Nuzul Quran - Qurban - Circumcision ceremony	Family members and neighbours Friends & Peers	Bonding Social Capital	-Cooperate and support in the implementation of the activity -Financial support
Annual -Duyong Art Festival -Duyong: Kenangan Lalu Mengusik Jiwa -Poskad ke Duyong -Malam Jatuh di Pulau Duyong	Family members and neighbours Friends & Peers Independent Support Group Individuals Institutions	Bonding Social Capital Bridging Social Capital	-Emotional, motivation and financial support for undertaking new activities -Support in problem solving and adaptation -Cooperate and collaborate in the implementation of new activity -Motivation to create new activities in regards to the preservation of the settlement -Financial support
	Government Agencies	Linking Social Capital	-Support and engage in the implementation of activities. -Financial support

(Source: Author, 2019)

Daily Activity

The data from interview discovered the presence of two groups of actors that being connected through their daily activities. The first group are family members and neighbour, while the second group are friends and peers. The daily activity like having breakfast at the stalls (*warung*) is one of the vital platforms for local to interact with each other. While having their breakfast, they were chit-chat and discussed the important issues related to their settlement. During the interview session, one of the informants, who is 33 years old Malay resident, describes the stall as follows:

"As for me, I would like to describe the stall (warung) as a place of a covenant for the locals. The stall is not only portraying as a place to eat, but it is where we meet others as well as a place for us to have a good discussion and conversation on the current issues".

Another Malay man, who claimed as a regular customer of the stall (*warung*) said that:

"I come to this stall (warung) every morning not only to enjoy my breakfast but also to meet my friends".



Figure 1: The wooden benches at the house compound.
(Source: Author, 2019)

Furthermore, the layout of the houses in the traditional settlement is another factor to explain the social interaction of the locals in their daily lifestyle. The traditional settlement is formed by a clustered number of houses. Each of the houses was built near to each other in which explained the closeness of the local communities. The spaces between the houses such as house compound act as social spaces for the actors to mingle. According to the observation, most of the houses were provided with the wooden benches at the house compound to accommodate their activity. This space was utilized by housewives. They are socially engaged as they would spend their evening to have a chit-chat with their neighbours. The interaction and engagement of the actors through their daily activities develop their social ties which eventually establish the bonding social capital. Apart from that, there is another reason to explain their closeness, whereby the neighbours are their family members. The statement illustrated by one of the informants who are 60-year-old housewife, she said that:
“Most of my neighbours are my family members. This situation makes it easier for me as I could seek their help whenever I need”.

Seasonal Activity

The result of the interview shows that the local communities were very active in organizing seasonal activities. One of the most significant is the Prophet’s Birthday (*Maulidur Rasul*). This event was held on the month of Rabiul Awal of Islamic lunar calendar every year. The head of the village, which is 61 years old, stated that:
“Every year, this event got a good response from all ages of local communities as most of them give their support and cooperation throughout the event. Some of the generous people would give financial support to cover the entire budget for the whole event”.

The event started early in the morning with the parade. Some of the locals were involved, and they wore traditional attire to make this event merrier. On the other hand, another group were busy preparing the food at the mosque to provide adequate food for everyone. The highlight of the event was the religious talk at the mosque. During this event, all ages of the local community interact and connected among themselves. The interaction during these activities increases and enhances the social connection among the locals.

Annual Activity

Meanwhile, the findings revealed that there are many activities were organized annually by the local community- summarised in Table 1. However, there is one event that gives the massive impact not only to the locals but to all people in Terengganu indirectly. The event is known as the Duyong Art Festival (DAF), whereby it was declared as the most successful event ever organized by the local community. The DAF was started in 2015, which is originally initiated by the local community. This cultural festival was instigated for the purpose to enliven the ambience of the traditional settlement as well as to promote Pulau Duyong Village as the Malay traditional settlement with the high heritage values. The festival lasts for a month with the highlight of the event taking place for three consecutive days. Throughout the festival, there are many cultural and traditional activities were conducted. The most significant activities are music and poem recital, photography competition, the boat decoration competition, shadow puppet show (*wayang kulit*) and sports. The main activities were organized at the central stage, which is known as *Pentas Kemboja* located at the riverside of the settlement. This cultural festival gets a positive response not only from the entire local community but gets huge support from people all around Malaysia. The local communities, including family members, friends and peers give motivation and emotional support throughout this festival (*bonding social capital*). The interview with one of a member of the organizers, who is 33 years old Malay man, reflected the statement as follow:

“Majority, the local communities were very helpful and worked together to prepare the place for the festival. Before the festival being conducted, some of them volunteered to do gotong-royong all around the village including the jetty area to make sure the places are ready for the activities during the festival”.

The festival also collaborates with the independent support group, institutions and individuals who come from all over Malaysia. Collaboration and involvement vary. For instance, the students from University of Sultan Zainal Abidin (*UniSZA*) and University Malaysia Terengganu (*UMT*) volunteered to become the committee for the festival as to help the organizer to run the festival smoothly. Apart from that, government agencies are another organization that involved and support DAF. For example, the Public Works Department (JKR) is

the one that involved in checking the structure of the wooden jetty to make sure the safety of the crowd throughout the festival.

For the past five years of the DAF organization, it creates huge positive impacts not only to the locals but to all people as a whole. The most successful achievements of DAF are: 1) it increases the awareness of the people towards the importance of the preservation of our cultural heritage, and 2) get the financial support from a government agency (*Jabatan Kesenian dan Kebudayaan Negeri Terengganu*). This statement portrays in the respond of the informant as follows: *“The DAF has promoted the awareness of the people all over the places. As for Terengganu, it shows an influx of NGOs in the two districts, namely Kemaman and Dungun. These NGOs function as the advocators that have the same aspirations in promoting the importance of our cultural heritage to the local community...”*

“...for the first two years of its organization, DAF was fully sponsored by the local community, non-governmental organization and individuals. Only in 2017, the DAF got the recognition from the government agency as they give us the financial support to organize this festival. The most interesting part is, the DAF was included in the activities’ calendar of Visit Terengganu.”

DISCUSSIONS

The results revealed that all categories in social capitals were featured in almost all types of interaction based on daily to seasonal events whereby crowds are found to cooperate and work hand in hand in ensuring the success of every activity and events. In addition, after analysing and comparing each activity based on different categories of social capital discovered, it can be suggested that the local communities have excellent practices in developing and establishing different social connection within various actors such as NGOs, government bodies and tourists. Not only that, but the youth is also seen as more explicit as an active participant with social interaction with the elderly is noticeably high. Such interaction shows strong community bonding and it is from this kind of social relationship that eventually produced the social capital values in Kampung Pulau Duyong. Clearly, Kampung Pulau Duyong carries distinctive roles as glue that bond all group of people in daily basis where the interaction from all walk of life can be found at the different spot of social spaces in the village. Public spaces such as a coffee shop, jetty, house compound, recreational field and mosque are the spaces that offer various social, ritual and recreational affordances. The social affordances gathered from such spaces were manifested in basic facilities like strategic location, variety of local products, excellent services by familiar faces and flexible operating hours. The social spaces, for instance, have vital function in sustaining social capital as these spaces plays a daily role in facilitating various activities for the actors to enhance and improve their social networks (Ujang et al. 2018). Evidently, it was based on these factors, bonding social capital was formulated. At the same time, the findings also reveal that bonding social capital are overloaded with good values perceived as cooperation, tolerance,

understanding, reciprocity, trust, respect, committed and enthusiastic. Such values reveal prominent principles that seem to fit McKnight and Block (2012) that good social capital development and sustainability can only be achieved in the surrounding of a well-connected community.

Although most residents experienced and felt the loss of qualities/attributes that make their settlement a unique and special place, however, the majority of the resident still can accept and live within the change. In accordance to study on place disruption by Steele (1981) and Inalhan and Finch (2004) who elicited that place attachment develops slowly but can be disrupted quickly and create the need for a long-term phase of dealing with the loss and repairing or recreating attachments to people and places. Therefore, this study found that fundamental to resident's experience and sadness due to sea reclamation projects was the point that leads to a growing awareness of how much their history and culture are both embedded in and enfolded with a strong sense of belongings toward their settlement and its original setting. Clearly, it is starting from this awareness that has further developed an essential attitude toward strong movement in cultural and heritage preservation. Consistent with these, this study shows how the bridging social capital grows through the formation of Duyong Art Gallery and actors' participation and collaboration during the Duyong Art Festival. The aspirations and efforts to preserve the cultural heritage become the determinant for the actors to share their knowledge, understanding and instil awareness among each other. This social connection was developed based on the values of social capital like understanding, tolerance, sharing and cooperation. The research suggests that the presence of these values would further enhance the social ties among the actors which resulted in the establishment of social capital sustainability in Malay traditional settlement.

The success of the biannual events organised by Duyong Art Gallery members perhaps can be the strong evidence in portraying linking social capital in the study area. The study has shown among the actors associated with linking social capital are mainly coming from a group of international tourist, artisans and government agencies that provide the pool of technical resources and funding for the Duyong Art Festival. Obviously, the linking social capital, in this case, play an important role to the communities as it can increase the resources (Claridge 2018; Cofré-bravo et al. 2019) which made the event reality. Apparently, this kind of social network brings advantages for both local communities as well as the government agency. Through this collaboration, the actors have developed the trust and transparency of any information in the social structure which resulted in promoting tolerance and social cohesion among the actors. It is the practices of these social capital values that shaped the social capital sustainability among actors. Therefore, it can be concluded that Kampung Pulau Duyong can be one of the examples set for sustainable settlement in Kuala Terengganu.

CONCLUSION

Principal findings of this study are that the local communities compose and generate various support network configurations for specific goals depending on their purposes. Each of the bonding, bridging and linking social capital emerged to have differed functions in contribution to the preservation effort for the Malay traditional settlement. The participation of all actors through a variety of activities is based on the establishment of social capital values. Thus, it is essential to emphasize the paramount importance of recognition for social capital values as it would generate broader participation and involvement of all actors in the preservation process of Malay traditional settlement. The study concludes that the success and sustainability of programs carried out by the community depend mainly on cooperation and awareness of the importance of the physical and cultural heritage around them. Finally, close cooperation and collaboration between the villagers and NGOs such as Duyong Art Gallery is a model of social capital development cooperation that can be referred to as best practice by many.

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