

by GGN-UNESCO, that is having a management plan that looks into the protection and conservation of its geo, bio and cultural heritage sites, tourism-related infrastructural development and sustainable socio-economic development. One important element to ensure that the geopark concept works for Langkawi is the existence of a common understanding among stakeholders regarding Langkawi's concomitant status as a geopark and tourist destination.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LANGKAWI

Tourism plays an important role for many local economies, particularly in developing countries and small island states. However, there is often a price to pay: uncontrolled tourism development can have major negative impacts on the local environment and society. Thus, conservation of natural resources and the sustainable development of host communities will depend on the way the tourism industry evolves (de Lardereel 2003).

This situation is especially true for Langkawi Islands. Tourism is Langkawi's biggest selling point and the mainstay of Langkawi's progress and development since the 1980s. Langkawi's main tourism attractions are its natural and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, excessive or poorly managed (ICOMOS 2003) tourism related development in Langkawi can threaten the significant characteristics of its nature and culture. Success in both heritage conservation and tourism development can be attained when the stakeholders of both sectors realise they are both dealing with the same asset i.e. natural and cultural heritage. Hence, there is a need for these stakeholders to understand what heritage means and what conservation means, and their interrelated purposes.

Ahmad Sarji, in his keynote speech on Heritage Conservation: From Past to Present (2008), mentioned that the National Heritage Act 2005 is an act to 'provide for the conservation and preservation of National Heritage - encompassing natural heritage, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, underwater cultural heritage, treasure trove and for related matters'. The National Heritage Act defines cultural and natural heritage as follows:

Cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible property, structure or cultural artifacts and can include things, objects, artifacts, dance presentations and performances, songs, traditional music that is significant to the lives of Malaysians, in the past or present, above land or inside the land, or cultural heritage below water but not including natural heritage. Natural heritage includes natural characteristics of any places in Malaysia, and encompassing land formation through geologi or biological forces, or others, geological

features, mountains, rivers, tributaries, rocks, coastal shores or any natural sites that have value from the natural sciences point of view, history and beauty of landscape including flora and fauna (Akta Warisan Negara 2005).

The International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS] through its International Cultural Tourism Charter provides the following definition for heritage (International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS] 2003):

Heritage includes the natural and cultural environments, encompassing landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It records and expresses the long processes of historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. It is a dynamic reference point and positive instrument for growth and change. The particular heritage and collective memory of each locality or community is irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and into the future.

Conservation is in tandem with heritage, as it operates in safeguarding a cultural or natural resource, retaining its heritage values and extending its physical life. It includes all work undertaken to remedy and mitigate deterioration in the condition of cultural or natural resources. In this context conservation includes not only preservation but more interventionist work, such as restoration or adaptation (adapted from New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria 2001).

As mentioned earlier,, tourism and heritage management (be it natural or cultural) are usually seen as two different and disparate sectors. As noted by McKercher and du Cross (2008, xi), ‘... in our journeys around the world over the past number of years, we have been continually amazed that cultural tourism and cultural heritage management (CHM) operate as parallel activities in most places, with remarkably little dialogue between the two. This fact remains even though CHM professionals and the tourism industry have mutual interests in the management, conservation, and presentation of cultural and heritage assets. Instead of working together to produce truly outstanding products, this historic isolation results in cultural tourism that is poorly provided for and executed ...’.

McKercher and du Cross (2008, xi) went on to say that ‘... the result is many lost opportunities to provide quality visitor experiences while managing rare and fragile resources in a socially, environmentally, ethically responsible and sustainable manner

...'. In their book, McKercher and du Cross (2008, xii) aim to bridge the gap between cultural heritage management and tourism, and to show how both can work in partnership to achieve mutual benefits. The challenge posed to tourism, according to McKercher and du Cross (2008, 9), is to find a balance between tourism and cultural [and nature] heritage management – between the consumption of extrinsic values by tourists and conservation of the intrinsic values by cultural [and nature] heritage managers (McKercher and du Cross 2008, 10).

Although McKercher and du Cross wrote for the case of cultural tourism in particular, we can apply their argument regarding the partnership gap between tourism and cultural heritage management to the situation in Langkawi. While Langkawi's biggest selling point is its nature and scenic landscapes, it also has cultural attractions in the form of archeological sites, architectural structures as well as myths and legends. However, the responsibility to ensure that this natural and cultural heritage remain in good condition for present and future generations through conservation is not the sole responsibility of LADA or other government agencies rather it is a shared responsibility of all parties, whether government, private businesses, local communities, NGOs, or visitors. Hence, the formulation of a tourism policy and planning for tourism using 'heritage assets' have to be inclusive and sustainable, grounded in the principles of heritage conservation, environmental protection and community participation.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), in its International Cultural Tourism Charter adopted in 1999, aptly describes the challenging task to encourage co-operation among the diverse stakeholders: ... 'Tourism should bring benefits to host communities and provide an important means and motivation for them to care for and maintain their heritage and cultural practices. The involvement and co-operation of local communities, conservationists, tourism operators, property owners, policy makers, those preparing national development plans and site managers is necessary to achieve a sustainable tourism industry and enhance the protection of heritage resources for future generations' (ICOMOS 2003).

De Larderel (2003), in her Foreword on the role of local authorities in sustainable tourism, notes that the responsibility of tourism development lies more and more with local authorities, as governance structures become more centralised. Many important policies that have an effect on sustainable tourism development such as zoning, environmental regulations, licensing, and economic incentives, are often in the hands of local authorities, acting within the framework of national policies and strategies. The two objectives mentioned by ICOMOS above - 'to achieve a sustainable tourism industry and enhance the protection of heritage resources for future generations' and the role of local authorities in ensuring sustainable tourism development as mentioned by de Larderel above, are the core composition of what this article advocates – a sustainable heritage tourism development policy.

Mohd Shafeea et al. (2007: 91) acknowledge that ‘... conservation and tourism development are two conflicting activities, particularly in rural areas where agriculture and cultural landscapes are predominant. Thus, management plans and policies are necessary to conserve the natural characteristics of the area, and to take into consideration the social, economic and cultural needs of the local communities. Tourism, in general, is a very important element in the propagation of sustainable development in Malaysia, compared with industrial development. This is especially true in Langkawi, in which the main focus of tourism is its scenic beauty and recreational opportunities associated with nature ...’.

It is thus heartening to note that both the Kedah Structure Plan (2002-2020) and the Langkawi District Local Plan (2001-2015), gazetted under the TCPA 1976, place emphasis on the protection and conservation of heritage in Langkawi. Chapter Four of the Kedah Structure Plan, for example, is dedicated to the tourism sector (pgs. 4-79), focusing on the plan to develop Langkawi into an international and domestic tourist destination vis-a-vis the intention to transform Langkawi into a highly reputable geopark in the world. Towards this end, the implementation plan includes conserving and protecting the physical environment and heritage of Langkawi, which are its main tourism products (pgs. 4-80), as well as protecting and safeguarding development in Langkawi Geopark so as to maintain its tourism attractions and natural heritage (pgs. 4-28).

Correspondingly, the tourism sector is also the main focus of the Langkawi District Local Plan (2001-2015). The Draft Executive Plan 2020 is formulated based on the development vision to make Langkawi a tourist destination with international status, environment-friendly and with a local identity, as well as improving the quality of life of the local people. Among the strategies to achieve this vision include: enhancing quality tourism development; implementing development which is in balance with local ecology; emphasising beautification and strengthening local identity image; and protecting and conserving natural resources and environmentally-sensitive areas (pg. 3).

It is also heartening to note that the Langkawi District Local Plan gave equal emphasis on both natural and cultural assets of Langkawi (pgs. 2-12). Langkawi’s image as Isle of Legends will be strengthened through the promotion of its legends and myths, while its ‘99 Magical Islands’ tagline will be sustained and its natural assets of forests, mountains and mangrove swamps will be protected and conserved to ensure that the ecological balance/equilibrium is not threatened. At the same time, the emphasis is also on consumers, i.e. attracting quality tourists who are not only willing to spend and stay longer, but also willing to experience and help protect Langkawi’s cultural and natural heritage.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of the NCER development plan and the emphasis on tourism in the NKEAs, much remains to be seen whether the noble aspirations of both the Kedah Structure Plan and Langkawi District Local Plan will be heeded. Planning for economic development through tourism needs to work with planning for heritage conservation, as both sectors are dependent on the same resource, i.e. 'heritage assets'. There is therefore much potential for research in this area.

As geo-bio-cultural heritage tourism is based on the concept of utilisation without destruction, there is no conflict between this tripartite heritage conservation and management with tourism promotion based on these heritage assets. The promotion of geo-bio-cultural heritage tourism which includes geotourism through Langkawi's status as a tourist destination and also as a geopark will help to develop and promote knowledge-based tourists who will come to share similar values of the geological and cultural heritage of the places they visit (Ong & Sharina 2009), as well as culturally-informed local residents who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility towards caring for their own heritage.

It is hoped that the NCER and the NKEAs will see the need for the promotion of a particular brand of tourism in Langkawi, that is, 'sustainable heritage tourism', which entails (i) visits to geo, bio and cultural sites; (ii) 'edutourism' of geo, bio and cultural diversity; and (iii) understanding the symbiotic relationship or synergy between the geo and bio landscapes with the culture of the local people.

For the above to happen, a strong partnership between tourism planners and managers of heritage conservation has to be developed and sustained.

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PLACEMAKING, PLACE NAMES, AND LOCAL MYTHS AND LEGENDS

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Abstract

Place names can reveal a great deal about the history and cultural heritage of any populated area, besides unlocking a valuable store of information. Place name is also an important element in placemaking. It employs imagination, experiences etc which are then narrated and shared. These place names contribute towards creating a sense of place and identity and when they are erased or changed would lead to a loss of valuable heritage. As such, when engaging in placemaking of built environment or changing place names planners should build upon origin of place names, which form part of cultural heritage. Focusing on the origin of some place names found on the Langkawi island such as 'Kuah' ('gravy'), 'Belanga Pecah' ('broken pot'), and 'Air Hangat' ('hot water'), this article recommends that planning and placemaking in Langkawi Geopark be built upon these names, thus enhancing the sense of place as well as the sense of history of the local population.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, placemaking, place names, local legends, Langkawi Geopark

INTRODUCTION

Placemaking as a concept is generally regarded as the product of interaction between people and planning, management and use of the built and natural environment around

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them. It refers to the social practices of constructing a place and inscribing collective memories (Rubertone 2008:13). A place, on the other hand, is a physical geographical entity with a definable location or can be referred to as a 'portion of space in which people dwell together' (Agnew & Duncan 1989:1). However, what is remembered about a particular place is triggered, guided and constrained largely by visual 'landmarks', verbal accounts and other sensory stimuli (Tilley 1994, Bender 2001). As such places are both real and imagined, encompassing not only physical shape and character, but also mental associations. Harvey (1993) had said, that a place is both a physical reality and a social construct. Bird (2002) suggests that there are places (such as particular buildings, landscapes etc) that invite stories. The stories came to because there is something about the place that requires explanation. In this process of the making of place people are active participants. Within the context of their times, they construct places by investing them with human meanings. Leach (1984:358) wrote ... "it is not just that "places" serve to remind us of stories associated with them; in certain respects, the places only exist (in the sense that they can be identified by name) *because* they have stories associated with them..."

Place names are created by people and as such can reveal a great deal about the fascinating history and unique cultural heritage of any populated area. It can unlock a valuable store of information, and even reflect the culture and heritage of the inhabitants. Cultural heritage can be broadly considered to include both the tangible and intangible aspects of human lives. Intangible heritage generally encompasses the general norms, values, beliefs and worldviews of a community and enshrines a community's character and identity. Through meanings, associations, values and ways of life, people individually and collectively create meaningful relationship with a place.

Place names also provide added attraction to particular destinations as they would provide certain captivating allure and appeal to potential visitors and tourists, especially to those who are interested in tracing the origins of place names. Sometimes the origin of place names is a mystery. Some can only be guessed, while other names are beyond imagination on how they had come about. Some of the narrations behind place names are grounded in myths and legends as much as in historical facts. Thus, place names form a rich heritage that makes up a large part of the popular and traditional culture. As such, when engaging in placemaking of built environment or changing place names planners should build upon the existing cultural heritage. Such is the case with the Langkawi island of Malaysia, an island known for its unique geological formation of more than 500 million years old, rich in history and culture as well as abound with myths, legends and folklores. This article is about the origin of some place names found on the Langkawi islands such as 'Kuah' ('gravy'), 'Belanga Pecah' ('broken pot'), and 'Air Hangat' ('hot water') within the context of placemaking. The qualitative approach employed in the research on which this article is based included document analysis (both

printed and narratives) of specific geographical locations, semi-structured interviews and observations. Document analysis of relevant articles, brochures and websites was used to uncover primary themes regarding place names. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were also conducted with key informants drawn from among tour operators, tour guides, local historical and cultural experts as well as local residents. To ensure data integrity, interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes.

PLACEMAKING AND PLACE NAMES

Since the dawn of time humans have always wanted to know their place in the universe. Attempts are made to discern meaning and order of the surrounding environment, that are then communicated via stories, rituals, layout of homes, sacred objects etc. Naming a place is a pre-eminent act of placemaking (Rubertone 2008). A place needs to be given a name in order to situate it within a knowable universe. It is also an attempt to make familiar what might otherwise be foreign, unfamiliar or even threatening and to a certain extent assert a form of possession. Through narratives or stories spatial features are turned into something that have meanings. This is because the environment is inseparable from human culture and place names are a reflection of the interplay between man and nature.

Environment in general – natural or built – are shaped or traversed in accordance with the needs, practices and desires of particular societies. Culture is that which enable people to survive in a particular environment – to express themselves in relations to it – although there is no guarantee that they will operate in harmony with it. People are always looking for narratives to make sense of themselves, consciously or unconsciously. This is as Somers had said (1997:83) it comes from the effort “... to make sense of the social world and through which we constitute our social identities...” By giving a place a name would also contribute towards creating a sense of place, identity and history. Sense of place involves the human experience in an environment, the local knowledge and the folklore. Sense of place grows from identifying oneself in relation to a particular area. Thus “... what begins as an undifferentiated space, become place as we get to know it better and endow it with value...” (Tuan 1977:6) and as Frake (1996: 235) suggested “... places come into being out of spaces by being named...”

Entwined in historical narratives and personal experience, a place can evoke memories and thus be remembered. Landscapes could also play an important role in how a place or location is remembered. Majority of place names have arisen as expressions describing certain properties of the locality that has been given the name. The names then could provide information about the natural and cultural circumstances at the time the names were given in the areas to which they belong. The place names provide some information about the locality of which they are named. Stories - folktales, myths or legends - are frequently recalled as people are passing by a specific geographical feature or the exact

place where a story takes place (Silko 1992:252). This is because once a place has acquired the story-based existence the landscape itself acquires the power of 'telling a story' (Leach 1984:358). Through stories about a place spatial boundaries are also drawn around a particular place. The boundaries may extend over a whole town, an area or just a particular space depending on where the story is situated.

In the process of naming a place in placemaking, in order to distinguish one place from another, imaginations, experiences, events, interactions with particular landscapes are employed. Explanations are then narrated and shared. In this article imaginary is understood in a broad sense. It refers to the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social (and physical) surroundings and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories and legends. It is shared by a large group of people if not the whole society (Taylor 2002:106). Imaginary also refers to how people perceive or imagine things to be, that is "... to see a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is..." (Castoriadis 1987:127).

Thus, imaginaries are not necessarily based on facts or correspond to acknowledged facts or criteria. It does not necessarily constitute an established reality although it can be understood as a social construct. Rather, it could be a manifestation of how the ordinary people think or imagine their surroundings to be that are then shared by certain groups of people. Anderson, in his work on the *'Imagined Communities'* (1991) uses the term 'imagined' because "... the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ..." (Anderson 1991:6). This is the same with place names. Inhabitants of a particular place for example have a shared understanding/ knowledge of the origin of the name of their place of residence.

PLANNING, PLACEMAKING AND PLACE NAMES

Generally planners deploy site-specific placemaking as an economic development and tourism strategy, while cultural institutions and community-based organisations operate through activities that reflect the specificity of place, culture, history and community. Planners often employ the most visible aspects of placemaking to promote tourism for instance and external recognition at the expense of the locals. At the same time the locals may seek to derail those efforts if planners fail to align with the local definitions of a place and thus give rise to community concerns. Thus, oftentimes there exist tensions between these place marketing and community building that tend to obscure or defeat common goals and interests. As such, there is a need to ease the tension through consensual strategies for change in order to preserve an important and valuable site or heritage - be it cultural, physical or geological.