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THE NOTION OF AUTHENTICITY REVISITED A SEARCH FOR URBAN HERITAGE CONSERVATION APPROACH¹

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Abstract: *During the last five decades urban heritage conservation has evolved significantly as an urban design discipline which is necessary for dealing with older urban areas that were once reduced to being the locus of monuments worthy of architectural conservation. Recent international experiences highlight conflicting interests in term of intention and focus, between archaeologist, who focus on monument restoration, and urban designers, who emphasize the need of conserving the spirit of the past. Nonetheless, a new understanding about urban heritage was materialized from the latest urban conservation praxis involving archaeologists, urban planners, urban designers and architects. The new insight about urban heritage has brought new approaches to urban conservation during recent decades. The latest of these approaches aim at the creation of enjoyable urban experiences that have a historical identity, rather at the simple retention of authentic urban history. In fact, urban heritage conservation is not simply a matter of preserving and creating harmonious constellation between historic fabrics and new infill developments, but rather a continuing project in shaping the environment. Based on several observations, this paper discusses that historic fabrics contribute considerably in place making, in enriching the quality of a place and offer opportunities for cultural appreciation. Thus, creating a sense of place is more than to the exact restoration of urban details. It also argues the importance of the making of interesting and liveable urban quarters that guarantee social, cultural and environmental sustainability.*

Keywords: Urban heritage, authenticity, sense of place and Kota Tua Jakarta

INTRODUCTION

Authenticity and Urban Heritage Conservation

Cultural Heritage is the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture, and therefore, to the whole of mankind ... and is the storehouse of human experience.” (UNESCO, 1989)

Currently, we are witnessing that our built environment has been an accumulation of elusive processes of decision making in which many actors from different backgrounds and disciplines were involved with. Socio-cultural, economic, political and technological forces are also responsible in shaping and re-shaping our built environment. The process of globalization has led to emerging values and lifestyles of contemporary society which are at

¹ This paper is rewritten as an after-thought of the teaching/research activities on Urban Conservation at the graduate programme on Urban Design at the School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development (SAPPD) ITB. The old town Jakarta (*Kota Tua*) has been chosen as a case study for the research activities during the period of 2009-2010. The paper was also partly presented as a keynote speech for the International Seminar “Urban Heritage: Its Contributions to the Present”, Department of Archeology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Gadjahmada, 30 March, 2011, Jogjakarta.

once universal and pluralistic, individualistic and caring, anarchic and innovative. Nowadays, cross-cultural exchanges become increasingly meaningful and mutually beneficial. Howe and Logan (2002) pointed out deliberately that the mixture of the indigenous and the imported, i.e. the traditional and the modern, that makes often Asian cities so vibrant and exciting. It is part of the realities that cultural layering is a common attribute of most Asian cities. All of these layerings are significant, since they reveal stories about stages in spatial production and societies. As a consequence, it may well be true that future conservation policies will be re-conceptualized on the basis of the recognition and acceptance, both the colonial past, and the cross-cultural interactions found in large Asian cities as well.

During the last five decades, urban conservation has evolved significantly as an urban design discipline which is necessary for dealing with older urban areas that were formerly reduced to being the locus of monuments worthy of architectural conservation. After being the realm of archaeologists for a long time, urban conservation is presently an interest for urban designers and city administrators concerned with providing a historical urban identity as much as an authentic urban identity (Ouf, 2001). Recent international experiences in urban conservation point out that there are conflicting interests in term of intention and focus, between archaeologist, who focus physically on monument restoration, and urban designers, who on the other hand emphasize the need of conserving the spirit of the past. As part of current urban conservation praxis, as Ouf (2001) noted too, the focus of attention had merely been on restoring authenticity, with little interest in conserving the urban experience. Regarding such interest, urban designers might have the ability to conserve an urban experience without losing authentic architectural, communal, urban and archaeological features.

Authenticity is a time-honoured concept that came to the field of urban design from archaeology, which was the guardian of historic authenticity for centuries before urban designers were ever involved (Ouf, 2001). Comparing to the myriad aspects and complexities of urban areas, to keep the authenticity in architecture is definitely much easier, since it only covers a small part of one building or an area of a building and is mainly focused on physical architectural details. Nevertheless, the latest practices also reveal that collaboration between archaeologists, urban planners, urban designers and architects has led to a new understanding about urban heritage. The new insight about urban heritage that covers whole city quarters has brought new

professional and theoretical approaches to urban conservation during recent decades. Thus, urban conservation is not simply a matter of preserving and creating harmonious constellation between historic fabrics and new infill developments, but rather a continuing project in shaping the environment.

Concerning the urban experience above, the sense of one's historical position and place in time is based on historic places, whether they are in form of individual buildings, entire cities, or the countries in which they are located. As Clark in Larkham (1996) explained a civilized man: "*must feel that he belongs somewhere in space and time, so that he consciously looks forward and looks back.*" In the discussion field of environmental psychology, it is strongly believed that this looking back is psychologically very essential, and perhaps becomes a necessity. Following this, Lozano in Larkham (1996) noted that there is a human need for visual stimuli to provide orientation and variety. Thus, the observer's awareness of his or her own location in a given environment is legitimate. At least, such needs are met partly by historical (urban) areas that have survived relatively unchanged, providing symbol of stability. Thus, a fixed reference point of inestimable value, to some extent, is guaranteed by visual confirmation of the past, so Larkham (1996).

Given the above circumstances, historic (urban) environment and cultures of specific places (urban heritages) play an important role, and are required to support each individual who are familiar with these places understand his or her position in space and time. Also, local cultural and natural landmarks can provide similar orientation. As one may argue, such historic environment around us enriches our human existence and makes our knowledge of the past more comprehensible. Therefore, without the presence of the historic environment -the storehouse of long human experiences- our identity as human beings, be that individually and collectively, would be unsatisfactory and less meaningful. This has been illustrated by the case from *Kota Tua* Jakarta.

The case of *KotaTua* Jakarta presents an example of current urban conservation efforts focused on creating a vibrant historic quarters. After the beautification period of 1970s till 1990s one came up to a conclusion that such *stylistic restoration* approach resulted in an unsatisfied result. In line with the revitalization efforts, the implementations of Traffic Calming measures (semi-pedestrian area) in and around Fatahillah Square basically deal with the issue of creating an enjoyable overall urban experience, especially in promoting its sense of place. Convincingly, it has also argued that notions of shared history and identity have fostered improved

human relations by highlighting a common sense of belonging. To sum up, the preservation of our historical patrimony, in term of urban heritage, will demonstrate that without such tangible reminders in terms of buildings, sites and ruins, our life today would neither be as colourful, interesting nor even inspiring.

This paper argues that historic (urban) fabrics contribute considerably in place making, in enriching the quality of a place and in offering opportunities for cultural appreciation as well. The discussion takes the stand that creating a sense of place is more than to the exact restoration of urban details.² As Ouf (2001) proposed, the concept of authenticity in urban design need to be dealt with sensitively, since it involves conserving both physical elements of urban design, such as streets, alleys, building, and intangible aspects of the community, i.e. social practices and community cultural beliefs, spreading over a large urban areas. Thus, due to its complexity and near impracticality to achieve, urban designers need to deal liberally with authenticity in large urban areas. Again, the issue of authenticity in urban conservation requires now meticulous considerations, as this paper argues too.

Having laid out the context in which urban heritage conservation gained prominence on the recent debates on urban development, this paper also highlights conservation approach for urban heritage in the cities, (especially) of the developing world which has so far received less attention in urban development policy. This paper will also raise a question regarding the authenticity and urban heritage: to what extent that the issue of authenticity plays a role in urban heritage conservation?

Understanding the Changing Context Urban Conservation and Development Realities

Nowadays, the attempts of urban conservation have evolved into a more broaden understanding. The concern is neither only on the protection single architectural artefact nor on worship of the past, but the sustainability concerns in relation to the quality of urban space play a significant role. It started in the 1960s (cf. Venice Charter), as shifts in

² This is also in line with Stubbs' contention (2009) that in Asian cultures there has no hierarchical separation, between humankind and nature. Some traditional cultures consider a site's original architectural integrity as secondary to its genius loci-its sense of place. So, the site does really matter. Especially for Asian communities, living traditions are not only kept alive, but are enhanced and enlivened by dynamic physical changes at a heritage site. For them, a site's authenticity relies on genius loci, which may not be affected (physically) by rehabilitating, enlarging or rebuilding a structure or place.

the approach toward conservation took place. The object of attention to ensembles and areas was widened, as opposed to the previous approach, which focused on building or their remnants as monuments.

Perhaps the most essential development in the heritage conservation movements is that it has expanded its area of interests into dimensions where environmental concerns are more dominant than the historical associations of a place, i.e. natural or cultural landscape, topography, social and cultural traditions, and other environmental objects (for further discussion on the cultural heritage cf. UNESCO Convention of 1972)³. Following this, the presence of an overall architectural quality or historical association would define an area, often denoting a significant historical and social relationship to the rest of the urban quarters (Nasser, 2003). In other words, it does not merely worship shrines to the past, but more than ever, the idea tries currently to make it more relevant to the community needs. (Martokusumo, 2010b; Pantachai, 2011). On the contrary, to some cases, conservation has already been a major tool to influence the (urban) environment, and this, somehow, refers also to manipulation of conservation for ideological and political ends which has been driven by the domination of national government of large-scale urban development.

Nowadays, as expressed elsewhere, conservation is even ruled more by than a sense of history. It is ruled by a sense of (functional) use, including the community need and even ecological concerns. In a world of rapid value and technological changes, and great uncertainties, architecture is ever-changing, multi directional, investigative and unrestrained. In the age of uncertainty and plurality, it is unity in diversity and an acceptance of the (urban) reality that will influence the production of (urban) space. In analogy with human life and architecture, Kurokawa (1994) shared his view as follows: plurality and diversity are socially, culturally and spatially reflected in urban realm, and they con-

³ The classification on the cultural heritage has been ratified in the UNESCO convention of 1972 as follows: 1. *monuments*: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value (OUV) from the point of view of history, art or science; 2. *groups of buildings*: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value (OUV) from the point of view of history, art or science; and 3. *sites*: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value (OUV) from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

tribute significantly to the distinctiveness of certain urban areas.

In the post-war Indonesian urbanism the question of identity (place making) is still relevant due to globalization. The significant character of a place will not only contribute a strong uniqueness to city, but also offer experiences in urban realm (diversity), and furthermore enrich the quality of urban life (plurality). It is then the plurality and the diversity that guarantee the quality of our future cultural environment. In this sense protecting the diversity of life through (urban) conservation means also protecting the diversity of (urban) culture, and supporting that (urban) diversity itself. (Desai, 2010)

Along with the above circumstances, there has been growing governmental interest in cultural heritage conservation since about the last decade of the twentieth century.⁴ Two striking issues on contemporary urban development in Asia, including Indonesia, are already identified (Logan, 2002; Martokusumo, 2002). *Firstly*, it deals with the *discovery* of old inner-city districts and historical sites in urban areas. There has been a gradual shift of interest in terms of its historical potentials, i.e. the urban heritage. The renaissance of history by means of conservation praxis does not stand alone; it has been in conjunction with increasing thoughts on social sensitivity and ecological concerns. From the view of sustainability, it is argued that urban heritage conservation is now seen as a fundamental component of environmental sustainability policies. In this sense, conservation will have to ensure that existing built-up areas are used and reused to their best advantage, and recognizes that both the longevity and adaptability of historic buildings, sites and ruins. Therefore, the terminology conservation should be understood as keeping the place vital and alive, and not merely just preserving its historical significance nor architectural merits. *Secondly*, the discussion of image of the city has also been a leading subject in urban design and future urban development ever since. This, nonetheless, is not merely related with the economic potentials, but it is based upon another important issue i.e. the *identity making*. In the late of 1990s there was a marked shift in the attitude of international agencies, such as World Bank, which recognized that cultural heritage protection and urban development can go hand-in-hand. These two aspects can bring about more effective programmes to improve standards of living in develop-

ing countries, and lead cities towards a more sustainable future. (Logan, 2002)

Meanwhile, as part of the realities, conserving the legacy of the past may seem a strange objective for a developing country. Different national and city governments have adopted different priorities between economic development and heritage protection. Cultural heritage conservation, at least in the sense of historic buildings and sites, may take lower priority than other social needs, such as poverty alleviation and the provision of new housing, transport and other infrastructure works. Another dilemmatic situation, as elsewhere argued, historic urban centres are often former colonial centres, and may contain a number of architectural and spatial reference points, as symbol of the domination of that period. In fact, there has been a range of governmental attitudes towards recognizing colonial artefacts as part of national heritage. In recent years, though, the loss of cultural heritage as a result of uncontrolled redevelopment of the urban fabric is critical to various developing countries' cities in term of urban development (Logan, 2002, Stubbs, 2009 and Martokusumo 2010a). Moreover, historic urban cores are often condemned in terms of physical decay, disorder and unsanitary housing. In such "unhealthy" places total rebuilding (*tabula rasa*), as one tool of the aggressive modernism, is seen superior, but the preservation of older buildings and structures is out of question. Rearranging the "past" to fit in with contemporary agendas, however, is as much a desire in developing countries as in the developed world. (Jones & Bromley, 1996) No wonder, that conservation of *traditional* or historic urban areas was often considered sentimental, irrational and anti-progress (Martokusumo, 2008).

Urban Experiences and the Sense of Place

Regarding the discussion of authenticity in urban design and the importance of urban experience, one needs to comprehend that urban conservation has initially three interrelated objectives: physical, spatial and social as highlighted by Orbasli in Nasser (2003). *Firstly*, in term of physical, it is linked to building preservation and the type of new development to ensure that a town's past, its present, and its future combine to create a recognisable unit. Thus, its growth can be conceived and felt to be continuous, so Worskett (1969). *Secondly*, the spatial objective emphasizes the importance of townscape as a holistic entity, with its relationships between spaces and their use, as well as circulation and traffic. The third objective is social, which concerns the users, local community and the urban population. This is the most neglected objective in

⁴ In accordance with the national enactment regarding building conservation the previous Historic Preservation Act *Undang-Undang Benda Cagar Budaya No. 5/1992* had been revised. Despite critics on its conflicting content a new Act *UU BCB no. 11/2010* was issued in November 2010.

the discussion of urban conservation, as Nasser (2003) pointed out.

In Lynch's first book *The image of the City* (1961), shortly published before that of Jacobs, underlined that the city was a common place experience perceived in the context of day by day events and associations, past and present, where people were not simply observers but were also part of the spectacle⁵. He also pointed out that people's subjective perceptions of places, and the meaning that they attached to the places, might be different from the 'objective' conditions defined by the professionals. Developing from some of Lynch's ideas, the concept of 'place' was widely used by urban and environmental psychologists and human geographers to explore the meanings that people attached to places (cf. Punter & Carmona, 1997). A sense of place was seen as being composed of three elements as follows: the physical setting, embracing townscape and the dimensions of urban form; activities, embracing the vehicles and pedestrian behaviour, and meanings, embracing the public perceptions, evaluations and associations.⁶

Today, urban designers and city administrators become interested in the *genius loci* and the power of place, and other urban phenomena that reflected a belief in a place with an identity of its own. Ouf (2001) identified that the physical historical identity of an urban setting might stem from its streets corridor, its building mass and its overall urban character. As such, consequently, the focus of urban conservation might be a street, as a first approach, in which heritage conservation would be concentrated on dealing with buildings and urban

⁵ Shortly published after one of Lynch, Jacobs (1961) in her seminal book *The Death and Life of American Cities* disputed that the city can never be a work of art because of its vitality, complexity and intensity. She destroyed the arguments for a predominantly visual-artistic urban design, although she did concede a role for design in 'helping to illuminate, clarify and explain the true order of cities'.

⁶ Relph in Carmona *et al.* (2003) recognised that sense of place may be 'authentic' and 'genuine' or 'inauthentic', 'contrived' or 'artificial'. In relation to the conservation attempt, Ellin in Carmona *et al.* (2003) argues similarly that although ostensibly 'preserving' the past, preservationists could 'be more accurately explained as rewriting or inventing the past since buildings and districts are "renovated", "restored", or "rehabilitated" to correspond to ideal visions of the past and to comply with contemporary needs and tastes'. Even themed environment are criticised for being contrived and 'artificial', these might be precisely the qualities people actually like: "Accused of distracting people from the injustices and ugliness of their lives, of placating them, and of being places of spectacle and surveillance", themed environments might also be applauded for the diversion they offer, for simply providing places in which people can relax and have fun in the company of family and friends."

features along a main corridor. *Secondly*, one might refer to the so-called an area-based conservation or an area-bound approach, in which heritage conservation would be focused on dealing with buildings and urban features within a clearly defined urban area. *Thirdly*, it is the concept of a sense of place within a small urban nucleus to anchor a strong essence of heritage and attract further conservation attempts.

The discussion highlights that a shift from a focus on design as 'external appearance' and townscape to a concern with the public realm and public space, and on to a concern with the public perceptions and experience of buildings and spaces (urban areas). This has also relationship with the outgrowth of the idea of modern conservation approach, which does not simply focus on single individual building, rather than is even ruled by functional and ecological concerns. Thus, conservation does concern with both physical and natural environment. In other words, urban conservation efforts might have successful result, as long as they can be responsive, they do have real contributions to the beneficiaries, and they do satisfy important human needs. Urban designers need to learn how to make places by observing existing places and by establishing a dialogue with their users and stakeholders.



Figure 1. The Old Town Jakarta, a superimposed map

Source: Dinas Kebudayaan dan Permusiuman DKI Jakarta, 2008

The Old Town Jakarta (*Kota Tua*)

Comparing to other Indonesian cities, the capital city Jakarta has a relative long-established track record in (urban) heritage conservation praxis. The first conservation programme had been com-

menced in the early of 1970s. Since then *Kota Tua* has been one of a model for conservation/historic preservation exercise in Jakarta. The conservation programme with its stressing on *preservation district* was then evaluated too ambitious; besides unwillingness, lack of adequate knowledge and sceptical attitude towards colonialism related to the issue on conservation of historical artefacts was obvious. Mismanagement and lack of co-ordination among those local authorities were in many cases admitted one of the main institutional weaknesses (Figure 1).

The underlying notions for the revitalization of 1990s had primarily been influenced by the expanded concept of conservation. The objective was almost the same with the previous endeavours, i.e. protecting heritage structures, while anticipating the nation-wide construction boom of the early 1990s. In such undertakings, a renaissance of history has additionally been followed by increasing thoughts on social sensitiveness and ecological concerns (Martokusumo, 2002).

All over again, the programmes could only be partial implemented, due to lack of comprehensive understanding. In addition, conservation praxis had focused merely on some individual buildings, while the proposed redevelopment schemes with tendency of *tabula rasa* have always been the chosen strategy. In all, it was also finally criticized that in the improvement activities a more market-led development was still evident (Martokusumo, 2008).

In 2006 the revitalization programme of Jakarta waterfront areas has been declared as one of the priority for the urban (heritage) development schemes in Jakarta.⁷ The issues on conservation were initially also integrated into the revitalization programme of the areas. This had been set up in line with the new strategy of the period of 2000s, in which the revitalization of *Kota Tua* is projected to attract many beneficiaries. Consequently, physical interventions were mainly concentrated on the improvement of public spaces. This took the stand that improving the urban amenities will enrich the quality of public space. Furthermore, it aimed at creating an enjoyable overall urban experience in promoting its sense of place. A shift of focus on physical intervention from buildings to public spaces goes back to the condition that many existing buildings due to their ownerships are difficult to be controlled. Thus, the underlying idea on this approach emphasized that improvements should be started

from the external (public space), rather than focused on the restoration of buildings. This not to say that the existence of historical buildings is not important, but more than ever, the creation of public space through physical improvement would be able to endorse the maintenance of the area, stimulate for more appreciation on historic buildings and raising public awareness on heritage. Another reason compelling for the traffic calming was the reality that the area of *Kota Tua* has significant traffic burdens which in some degree affect the quality of its environment (cf. Figure 2 dan 3).



Figure 2: Before (a) and after (b): Simulation of the semi-pedestrian area in Kota Tua

Source: The Culture and Tourism Agency of DKI Jakarta, 2006 (a); Doc. Martokusumo, 2008 (b)

The Town Planning Office of Jakarta has prepared a traffic calming measure for *Kota Tua* in form of semi-pedestrian area (pedestrian walkways), as part of the new strategy. The traffic calming measure at *Kota Tua* was implemented in two stages from 2006-2008, and is a part of Jakarta's Macro Transportation Plan and the Spatial Plan of Jakarta 2010 which intends to stimulate a "culture of walking".

⁷ Jejak Sejarah: Revitalisasi Kota Tua Menjadi Program Prioritas Pemprov DKI. (2006, 10 Juni), *Kompas*, 27, and also *Kota Tua to be Heritage Area* in. (2007, 28 August), *The Jakarta Post*.

The pedestrianization of the area Fatahillah Square (*Taman Fatahillah*) might play a significant role in supporting the economic and cultural activities. Besides, the traffic calming would also contribute to reduction in the use of motorized vehicles and accident rates and provide more security for *Kota Tua*'s visitors, inhabitants, and business communities. To-

gether with that, new street lightings, trees and other streetscaping facilities had been provided. Eventually, the idea of pedestrianization is to enhance the linkage between place of interest such as Fatahillah Museum, Puppet Museum, Museum of Art and Ceramics and the Fatahillah Square as the centre of the area (Figure 4).



Figure 3: Keyplan (left) and the traffic calming zone in the Old Town Jakarta (right)

Source: Master plan of DKI Jakarta 2007 (l.), Doc. Martokusumo, 2007 (r.)

Discussion

The creation of pleasant urban experiences that have a historical identity, by providing a semi-pedestrian area at the heart of *Kota Tua* is more crucial, rather the simple retention of authentic urban history. Creating a sense of place is more than to the exact restoration of urban details, in term of stylistic restoration of some selected buildings. A shift of focus on design interventions has been illustrated in the case of *Kota Tua* Jakarta, i.e. from the protection of individual building as monument to the physical improvement of urban spaces which certainly play an important role in defining and increasing the quality of public open space. Somewhat, this has illustrated an outgrowth of the idea of the latest conservation approach, which does not merely focus on individual historic building and monument, rather than is even ruled by functional concerns of public (open) space. Nevertheless, this not to say that the existence of historical buildings is not important, but more than ever. As mentioned, such

historic environment around us enriches our human existence and makes our knowledge of the past more comprehensible. Therefore, without the presence of the historic environment, the story of long human experiences, our identity as human beings, be that individually and collectively, would be unsatisfactory and less meaningful. Thus, the creation of public space through physical improvement would be able to support the maintenance of the area, stimulate for more appreciation on historic buildings and raising public awareness on heritage as well.

The intervention in public spaces should generate and stimulate the process of safeguarding for the historic structures in that area. Apart of the authenticity on the buildings itself, such improvements offer alternatives in increasing the quality of public space in *Kota Tua*. In the process of place making, the creation of interesting place will respectively offer different experiences which can stimulate and encourage a dialogue between stake-

holders. It should be borne in mind that the significance of a district should not be exposed simply in terms of *beautiful* place, but it would rather be more important to promote the making of interesting and liveable urban milieu that would guarantee social, cultural and environmental sustainability.



Figure 4: Exploring the old town by bicycle.

Source: Dhoni Setiawan/Kompas Images.
<http://travel.kompas.com/read/2011/03/12/07350756/Belum.ke.Kota.Tua.Belum.Pelancong> diunduh 1 Juli 2011

In accordance with that, urban conservation attempts must critically be committed to social—not just architectural—restoration to make a more habitable environment, and conservation must also cope with economic, demographic, and political forces that they have previously been ignored. Altogether, conservation must be better integrated with the entire planning process too, and must promote social diversity and help give greater meaning to life (sense of place) in an urban community (Martokusumo, 2010b).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In relation to urban conservation, this paper addresses the issues on authenticity and on creating urban places which offer pleasant experiences. A new understanding about urban heritage, which also part of the concerns for urban designer, was materialized from the latest urban conservation praxis. It is based on the contention that the latest discourses to urban heritage conservation aims at the creation of pleasant urban experiences that have a historical identity, rather at the simple retention of authentic urban history. Moreover, regarding the issue of sense of place, the authentic and unauthentic might be relatively comprehended. In relation to conservation attempts, the rehabilitated or restored

fabrics are commonly designed to comply with the contemporary needs and tastes. Thus, the issue of authenticity in urban conservation requires critical considerations, since it involves both physical and intangible aspects.

In accordance with that heritage conservation is more than a question of the management of cultural and economic resources. Moreover, it is inextricably locked into a wider national political framework. Therefore, a new understanding of (urban) heritage and its meaning in the context of urban development will be of great consequence. Hence, the heritage conservation and urban development scheme must be implemented through a well-managed urban improvement programme that consists of physical rehabilitation, socio-economic improvement, management and empowerment action plans.

The case of Jakarta's *Kota Tua* reveals that current conservation efforts have gradually shifted from a concern with individual building/structure to a respect for a larger ensemble of cityscape and for public spaces. This can be seen at the traffic calming programme as part the new revitalization strategy, which still had been implemented into several interrelated physical interventions, such as the semi-pedestrian project, rehabilitation of historic buildings and the improvement of public amenities. The case of *Kota Tua* Jakarta reveals that public policy regarding conservation and urban development is relatively inadequate too. It is formulated based on limited assumptions and still a search for better thought-out approach and understanding of the *big picture* is imperative. This signifies a need of substantial and procedural improvements in conservation strategy and urban development.

Plurality and diversity are socially, culturally and spatially reflected in our urban realm. As mentioned, cultural layering is a common attribute of most Asian cities, and all of these layering are significant, since they reveal stories about stages in spatial production and societies. Thus, they contribute significantly to the distinctiveness of certain urban areas, and may offer enjoyable experiences. The richness of such urban experiences is to be found in *Kota Tua* with their richness, multi-faceted, frenetic and colourful in terms of architecture and urban forms. It is the mixture of the indigenous, the locality and modern culture that makes Asian cities so vibrant and exciting. Thus, the future conservation policies must be re-conceptualized on the basis of the recognition and acceptance both the colonial past, and also the cross-cultural interactions embedded in large Asian cities.

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