



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCUSSION

#### 7.0 Introduction

To gain more understanding about the findings presented in Chapter Six, this chapter will interpret and explain these findings in order to discuss and analyse data that directly answers, contradicts, or enlarges on the research questions and hypotheses as outlined in Chapter One. The concluding argument will be viewed in context and supported by secondary data such as journal articles, government reports and conference papers.

The information from three groups of respondents, namely local community, local government personnel, and tourists will be analysed and synthesised to highlight the important findings on local community involvement in cultural heritage management in Malaysia. The chapter is divided into four sections and each section reflects on differing outcomes of local community involvement. Section one discusses the local government's administrative framework; section two evaluates the existing attitudes of government officers; section three examines the relationship between local community attachment and involvement in heritage management, and the final section highlights the experience of the local community in terms of direct involvement towards the development of the Melaka Heritage Trail as a positive or negative

experience. Each section discusses the results of survey materials collated from questionnaire surveys and interviews.

### **7.1 The Administrative Framework of Local Community Involvement**

Overall, the previous chapter found that one of the major contributions to the lack of participation in managing and conserving heritage assets in Malaysia is due to the authorities' administration framework at Federal and State Government levels (see Section 6.1 to 6.1.2). For instance, a complex governmental bureaucratic process and top-down decision making attitude to development are typical approaches to future development in Malaysia. This finding concurs with previous studies by Malaysian authors such as Ibrahim (2006); Kamariah and Dolbani (2006) Hamzah and Noor (2006) Ahmad Puad (2005) Goh (1991) and Shamsudin (2000).

With respect to the administrative framework experienced in the development of the Melaka WHS, it became clear that the amount of power Melaka's government allowed for participation varied, ranging from tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation) to manipulation (see Section 4.4 and 6.1.2). Tosun (2000) emphasised that these various levels were commonly found in many developing countries. The authority usually made the final decision for the community, rather than allowing the community to decide the best course of action for themselves (Tosun 2006). According to Goh (1991), local community involvement was rather informative in its lack of powers when deciding on government's policies and strategies. Shamsudin (2000) further argued that, besides the lack of direct participation experienced by the local community, the participation from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in heritage conservation was often limited. Mostly, the NGOs involvement towards heritage conservation occurs via government invitation. This was because the government wanted to perpetuate their

existing policies towards heritage conservation and management, for example in choosing appropriate heritage assets for conservation work in order to align with the government's funding, and to 'transform' heritage assets into tourist attractions. Selecting the NGOs that have similar or parallel principles to government plans makes it easier for the government to shape and retain control of cultural heritage planning and management. Ahmad Puad (2005) suggested the lack of local community involvement was not only found within the urban environment in Malaysia, but also in natural landscapes such as National Parks where top-down decision making process was highly practiced.

After a decade of research that encompasses a wide range of studies, it argues that the level of local community involvement in Malaysia and particularly in Melaka has remained at the level of tokenism. Moreover, all the authors (Tosun 2006, Ahmad Puad 2005, Shamsudin 2000, Goh 1991) were agreed that the low involvement from the local community was due to various local limitations such as a closed decision-making structure and paternalistic culture among government officers.

Furthermore, the internal conflicts within governmental structures and administrations were identified as one of the factors contributing to the lack of open government engagement and encouragement towards local community involvement. One of the issues that often occurred within government agencies was regarding 'ownership' of a particular territory or area. For example, according to the Structural and Local Plan of Melaka, the responsibility to manage the conservation area (Civic and Old Quarter Zones) was still within the purview of the municipal authority, i.e. Historic City of Melaka Municipal Council (Majlis Bandaraya Melaka Bersejarah - MBMB). At the same time, according to Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment of Melaka (1988), the power to administer and manage cultural heritage in the

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conservation areas still with the Melaka Museums Corporation (Perbadanan Muzium Melaka - PERZIM) (see Appendix 7.1).

In fact, the general roles and responsibilities of MBMB include planning and developing Melaka city through a variety of services especially for local communities in terms of local economy development, social and community development, and urban landscape maintenance (MBMB, 2012). Meanwhile, the role of PERZIM is more specific to manage and conserve the cultural and heritage assets in Melaka (PERZIM, 2012). However, PERZIM has often been criticised by the public (i.e local community, NGOs, press media) and government agencies due to the lack of administration and management towards conserving heritage assets. For example, PERZIM failed to maintain and supervise the conservation work in the vicinity of local landscapes (Utusan Malaysia 2010). This was mainly because of ineffective financial management, such as not having enough funding to pay qualified contractors for maintenance work, and a limited number of staff to do routine checks, or monitor the progress of work done by contractors. Certainly, this could undermine the image of Melaka WHS as a leading tourist attraction.

Therefore, in order to solve this issue, both PERZIM and MBMB agreed to transfer some of PERZIM's roles especially in managing and conserving heritage assets to the MBMB (Conservation Division) under the City Planning and Development Department (Hamzah and Noor 2006). Through this new arrangement, both PERZIM and MBMB can focus on their own 'core businesses'. For instance, PERZIM can focus on managing museums in the city, and MBMB can integrate the heritage assets conservation with the city's existing and future planning and development.

However, the exchange of responsibilities between these authorities may have several outcomes with regard to the local community. In terms of the involvement process, it may include both positive and negative implications. One negative issue from this new arrangement is that the prevailing local community involvement may well be rearranged by the 'new' authority, in order to align the involvement of the local community with the authority's policies and strategies. For example, with the change of new authority, there was a lack of initial contact between 'new staff' and the local community in terms of creating a new open relationship with each other. This is possibly because the staff thought that the local community participation was not always desirable or less importance, especially in making decisions on technical aspects such as setting-up government policies. The implementation of autocratic decision making may be appropriate in order to boost economic or social outcomes especially in relation to the benefits of improving the quality of life to the local community. According to Khwaja (2004), the local community participation may not always be a good thing in terms of allowing the community to have 'ownership' over the decisions as its too large a burden on the community and it may evolve into a complex system more appropriate to government administrations. However, Creighton (2005) argues that the local community does not need to take part in technical decisions, and many government officers make decisions that are what they believe are technical aspect of law, but which in fact are not. For example, according to the National Heritage Act 2005 in Part VII (Heritage Site), Chapter 1 (Designation of heritage site), Clauses 24 to 32 (see Appendix 7.2) and Part X (National Heritage), Clause 67 (See Appendix 7.3), both the Minister and the Heritage Commissioner are holding the supreme 'power' to declare any cultural heritage which is desirable to be preserved or conserved, and also may designate an area within such a heritage location as a conservation area. This is suggesting the involvement of public views (see Clause 28 and 29 in Appendix 7.2, and Clause 96 in Appendix 7.4) towards nominating the heritage elements may not necessarily influence

the primary decision by the government. In addition, “[government officers] cannot make decisions without assigning a weight or priority to competing values that society believes as good” (Creighton 2005 p. 15). For example, there is no universal standard that can estimate cultural or monetary worth in order to decide on *what* and *which* cultural heritage asset should be protected. This suggests that the term of ‘technical decision’ has been misunderstood or manipulated by the government to limit local involvement. The local community may not be able to engage on point of law (legislation), but could be directly involved in the decision making process with regards to values (local and cultural) or philosophy (ethics, conservation, etc.).

Meanwhile, there are positive improvements in terms of the quality of life offered to the local community through noticeable improvements to planning and development of infrastructure upgrades such as the repair, rebuild and renewal of roads and pavements for vehicles, pedestrians, and trishaws and the adaptive reuse of empty urban spaces for social, commercial and recreational activities. Certainly, all these improvements and upgrades in infrastructures are expected to create new job opportunities, and spur economy growth as well as protect heritage assets.

However, when it comes to local community involvement, the lack of monetary funding still becomes a major issue as it has been identified as one of the areas that the local authorities have difficulty in actively developing. Due to funding limitations, the government officers claim that they have limited opportunities to engage with the local community. For example, the local authorities are unable to plan a series of activities or events, in order to engage local community participation. Consequently, the government proposed an alternative, by inviting private sector participation, such as tourism operators and NGOs to operate their businesses or

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programmes, in order to develop conservation in the city. This alternative initiative is seen by the local government to include community engagement via the local community sharing in the benefits generated by increased economic income.

Kamariah and Dolbani (2006) and Kamariah (2003) found that the private sectors are the most active groups when it comes to participation (see Section 6.1.2). This could create an active interaction between private sectors, i.e. tourism operator and the local community in promoting critical thinking and shared understanding towards developing sustainable cultural assets and events. For instance, appropriate engagement with local community could help the tourism operator identify or minimise sensitive issues relating to local culture and tradition when developing tourist attractions or destinations.

In contrast, Ahmad Puad (2005) emphasised that the external involvement (private sectors) may be decreasing at a certain period in the development process, when their engagement with the local community has reached their corporate objectives or aims (see Section 6.2.3). Consequently, the local community will become powerless to voice their opinions (see Section 6.3.4). Arnstein (1969) raises this issue “[...] it is not a legitimate step to ensure active participation because there is no assurance [that the community’s] idea or comment can be taken as the final decision” p. 219.

Evidence shows that the government has failed to be a good moderator in balancing the corporate dominance against a ‘local voice’ for the community and providing space for all to discuss sensitive local issues that may contradict with corporate interests. This may be due to the fact that the government continuously receives benefits from the private sector through currency exchange and taxes.

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## **7.2 The Attitudes of Government Officers towards Local Community Involvement**

This research revealed the existing process of engagement with the local community was strongly influenced by the prevailing attitudes of government officers. For instance, the majority of government employees held preconceived and stereotypical attitudes towards the lack of benefits from the involvement of the local community in the decision making process due to a lack of professional judgement and time restraints (see Section 6.1 and 6.1.2).

The officers claimed community involvement was hindered due to 'personal interest' among the local community influencing not only policing decisions but undermining through self-interest cultural assets and community interests (see Section 6.1.2). In light of this situation, it has become a primary concern, and the government officers highlighted the importance, to establish comprehensive legislative acts to encourage the local community to protect their cultural heritage assets and to avoid individual bias.

With regards to the issue of personal interest, as stated earlier by government employees, the results presented in Section 6.1.2 showed some contradictive findings. It was evident that the attachment of local born residents towards 'identity of place' was much higher compared to 'foreign residents'<sup>1</sup> attachment values (see Section 6.2.2). Hence, two different groups of residents would require different types of 'involvement' indicators to measure respective outcomes. For example, the residents who are highly attached to a particular place because of place identity were inclined towards the conservation and preservation of heritage assets. However, those who are inclined to utilise the heritage assets for economic benefits, such as tourist guides or tourists themselves could be involved in tourism planning and development.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign resident is a similar term as non-local born resident (see Section 6.2.1).



Therefore, it can be suggested that the initial suggestion by government officers to establish comprehensive legislative acts in order to 'control' the resident is too 'aggressive'. Varma (2001) emphasised that laws are not enough to cope with a historic preservation challenge. However, involving the local community in an effort to create awareness and deeper understanding about their heritage and its importance is an appropriate course of action and could be initiated by the local authority.

In Malaysia, as in many other countries, government alone cannot afford to do all the work of heritage conservation and preservation. The government must focus on finding ways to mobilise other stakeholders or partners (i.e. tourism operator, NGO, private agency, local community) to do this work voluntarily. However, it is undetermined whether comprehensive legislation was considered as a genuine motivation to solve the issue of personal interest or just a pretext by the government to remain in control with regards to decision making.

The current approach taken by the government in engaging with the local community is clearly limited (See Section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). This is mainly because of the inflexible nature of the politico-bureaucratic process of local government. For instance, the government often uses legitimate policy or acts as a mechanism to manage the heritage assets (i.e conservation and preservation work). It is evident that the government's domination in decision making and little engagement with the opinions from local community in heritage assets management (see Section 3.5.1). In the case of Malaysian heritage assets management, several issues related to lack of government's engagement with the local community have been experienced in a series of objections by the public and NGOs towards government's decision to utilise or manipulate the heritage assets (see Figure 3.16 and Figure 3.17). The government's decision is highly 'protected' by the legislation act; this is to say the government has little interest to involve the

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local community, where most the current legislation acts in Malaysia has little passage regarding the involvement of local community especially in decision making (see Section 4.6).

Moreover, with respect to the government's distribution of power in decision making, the findings revealed that top-down decisions were also linked to a shrinking population especially with regard to the lack of engagement from young residents in Melaka WHS (see Section 6.2.1). The population in this city is mainly elderly; hence the government is doubtful about the ability of this aging group to engage actively in the participation process. Therefore, by considering this 'capability limitation' of existing local community, the government emphasised that they are left with no other choice except to decide what is best for the local community either economically or socially. Research data suggest that the government has used these justifications to create a gap between the government and the local community in the participation process.

### **7.2.1 Suggestion to Encourage Government Support towards Local Community Involvement**

In the light of the lack integrated administrative framework of government to promoting local community involvement, this study is recommending several solutions to increase participation from the local community.

A fundamental issue is that the government needs to improve the various communication channels. The enhancement of communication is essential to disseminate information to the public. For example, according to a statistical report from The Department of Town and Country Planning in 2006, less than 12% of the local population attended the exhibition session called 'SERANTA' (public engagement), during the Draft Local Plan exhibition (see Section 3.5.1).

Although the local authority has followed the legitimate procedure as emphasised in Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172), however, the SERANTA has failed to deliver and disseminate as widely as possible the information to the local community.

This programme is a comprehensive effort by the government to inform and encourage public participation; however, lack of communication channels has been seen as a main factor in the low public participation. A study by Kamariah (2003) reveals that there are two types of communication channels that require improvement in order to encourage public participation in SERANTA. First, the government claimed the publicity of SERANTA has been employed in all types of publications such as in four local newspapers (Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin), banners and radio announcements. However, a fieldwork observation found that the government is not fully utilising all these publications in terms of the strategic announcement spaces in the newspaper and suitable time to broadcast the announcement from the radio. For instance, an announcement via local newspaper was found blended with newspaper advertisement, and the radio broadcast was not announced in peak hours that can be heard by a large number of listeners. This suggests that the government has allocated small amounts of funding for announcement publicity.

Secondly, the low level of public participation is due to little knowledge about the correct meaning of the work of SERANTA among the public. This can suggest the lack of supportive activities such as seminars, focus group discussions and interviews, and innovative activities such as user-friendly material and information using sketches, plans, diagrams, pictures and models, especially to educate people in rural areas. Besides, the usage of *online* SERANTA should be practiced to solve an issue related to reading people that have limited time to attend due to their job requirements.

Previous research has shown that an effective channel of communication is the most useful tool to deal with the lack of government transparency (Guy 2011; Kamariah 2003); to achieve stakeholder collaboration (Aas *et al.* 2005; Collier and Berman 2002); to promote tourism destinations (Chhabra 2009; Dea, Yeong and Fesenmaier 2005); and to promote sustainability of planning and management (Kwan 2010; Walker 2010; Al Rabady 2006; Endresen 1999).

The establishment of a two-way communication between the local community and the government is an effective communication strategy. Through this strategy, not only will the information be delivered effectively, but it also allows the local community to have a channel to 'communicate' with the governmental department. This is essential if/when the local community has issues or suggestions to make to the authorities. Furthermore, it can create a healthy relationship between the two parties involved. The same strategy can also be used by the authority to introduce new members, such as a new stakeholder or partners into the local community. It is important for the local community to know these 'new' members in order to minimise potential future conflicts and create a harmonious environment. Perhaps they can work as a team in the future.

In order to be proficient in the effective communication strategy, government employees are required to undertake comprehensive training. The training may include interpersonal communication skills, as well as an 'interpretation' course. This is essential because the improvement of interpretation skills could help the government employees to 'communicate' effectively with visitors in order to promote awareness among tourists (Woodward, 2008). For example, a study by Hamzah and Noor (2002) found that the conservation and interpretation of intangible resources in Melaka WHS are often less inspiring. According to Johari (2010), the lack of effective interpretation materials, such as informative and entertaining signages or

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panels, has a particularly strong influence on the satisfaction levels among visitors at the heritage sites in Melaka WHS. Thus, it can be concluded that the importance of communication skills is a strategic mechanism to solve various issues related to managerial aspects and local community involvement.

### **7.3 Relationship between Community Attachment and Involvement in Heritage Management**

Apart from understanding how the administrative framework can be used to measure the extent of active involvement in heritage management by the local community, another objective of this study was to determine the influence of place attachment attitudes towards local community involvement in heritage management (see Section 6.2.2). Literature across diverse disciplines demonstrates that the local community attachment (towards the place settings) creates a strong relationship for local participation. However, there is little research that examines or synthesises this connection at managerial level, as measuring intra-psychic phenomenon is a dynamic concept, and people's attitudes may change over time (Mannarini 2011). Within the context of this study, this is an interesting phenomenon because it can provide valuable information in measuring the dimension of a community's attachment to place either in terms of place identity, or place dependence (see Section 4.5). This information is pivotal as it is essential for an authority to recognise which attachment values are culturally symbolic or socially meaningful to the community. These assets can then be highlighted to encourage local community participation in heritage management and tourism development.

The findings showed that the majority of communities demonstrate high levels of place attachment for both dimensions of place identity and place dependence. Indeed, the main factor influencing the formation of place attachment at the community level include socio-

demographic characteristics (Manzo and Perkins 2006; Hidalgo and Hernandez 2001). For example, varieties of age groups, ethnic groups, educational background, length of residency and the community's geographical areas were found to correlate with particular place attachment variables. It is important to understand these findings in order to provide further insight, or even a predictor (Gross and Brown 2008; Halpenny 2006) towards local community involvement. Moreover, as suggested by Gu and Ryan (2008), and Davenport and Anderson (2005), the values of 'place attachments' can be measured and are 'capable' of influencing residents' attitudes, shaping perceptions and are an indicator to behavioural reaction towards landscape change and development.

The results indicate that the two dimensions of place attachment, 'place identity' and 'place dependence', have divided the local community into two groups according to their specific socio-demographic characteristics. However, the difference of local community groups via demographic profiles between 'place identity' and 'place dependence' has been noted in previous studies, (Williams and Vaske 2003; Vaske and Kobrin 2001). Kyle *et al.* (2004) suggested that both dimensions do not always act uniformly despite being moderately and positively correlated. In the light of these findings, each opposite pattern of a community's attachment suggests different 'sources of meaning'. For instance, Bricker and Kerstetter (2000) conducted a study to examine the relationship between the dimensions of place attachment and skill levels of recreational users in handling a boat along the South Fork of the American River in California. Bricker and Kerstetter found that respondents with higher score levels on 'place identity' had higher skill in handling a boat. Meanwhile, those who scored higher on 'place dependency' had low skill levels (see Appendix 7.5). Therefore, it suggests that the global interpretations of place attachment and its effect can be misleading. These two dimensions of place attachment, while related to one another, represent different elements of

human-place bonding. Hence, by carefully conceptualising and understanding how a local community identify with specific attachment values, authorities can re-use this information in order to engage with the local community.

Regarding the different directions of community's attachments (place identity and place dependence) towards the neighbourhood setting and its heritage, it can be suggested that both directions could positively lead, or motivate, the community to engage in the participation process (i.e. heritage management). The results showed that those who were attracted to and interest in 'place identity' tended to engage with heritage conservation and preservation; and those who recognised their attachment through the role or function of the setting (place dependence) would be more interested in tourism based planning and development.

The results also indicated that identity of the place consists of the significance of shared social and emotional connections towards a community's culture and tradition (see Section 6.2.2- Table 6.3). Research findings highlighted the fact that an individual's social and emotional connection was in line with their 'collective memory' (see Section 6.2.2 pp. 35). This is to say that the shared collective memory of residents appears to be linked to socio-demographic background such as age, length of residency and ethnic group (Johnson 1998).

The research results confirmed that no significant relationship was found between a resident's educational background and the 'place identity attachment'. However, a socio-economy background (education and income) appears to be linked more to the local community attachment towards 'place dependence'. As suggested by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983), Becker (2003) and Manzo (2003), place identity is a dynamic phenomenon; it can be grown and transformed through lived experience. Hence, the significance of place can

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command 'loyalty' to place because of some emotional bonding that has occurred at some point in a resident's life.

With regards to residents' attachment towards social and emotional bond to place, it is not surprising to observe ethnicity as a 'unique characteristic' of a local community where cultural heritage shapes individual attachment to place identity. For instance, *Peranakan* ethnic groups were inclined to report strong emotional ties with their childhood neighbourhood and heritage assets (i.e traditional dwelling, and religious buildings). It suggests that there is an initial indicator to determine a 'genuine' participation from local community towards Cultural Heritage Management (CHM).

Moreover, the attachment values of *Peranakan* community did not show any influence from tourism activities such as business based tourism. Therefore, the intention of the *Peranakan* community towards participation in CHM is genuinely for conserving and protecting the cultural heritage assets. Besides, this 'indicator' is the evident to eliminate the government's perception that the involvement of local community in CHM in Melaka WHS was derived from personal interest (see Section 7.2).

In addition, supporting evidence from 'geographical setting' such as a neighbourhood area where residents lived in an isolated area (distance of residence from tourist attractions) were likely to build strong social bonds in developing their place attachment values. This in turn affirms their attachment towards place identity. Therefore, it can be suggested that residents who live away from tourist attractions not necessarily depends on tourism industry in order to receive economic benefits nor feel committed to maintain their cultural identity for the need of tourism business. Similarly, Din (1988) suggests that this group of residents are not adapting



their business culture in terms of prospective tourist trade. The residents (entrepreneurs) would rather serve the everyday consumer in their local neighbourhood areas. However, it is noted that some of these people are now struggling to retain their business due to modernisation and pressure of tourism (see Section 6.21 and Figure 6.11). Tosun (2006) suggested that financial and entrepreneurial (tourism) commitment by the local community is necessary for effective community participation.

While this may be true, Chawla (1992) highlighted both the positive and negative side to the dynamic of place attachment where the negative implication tends to create 'territorial conflicts' among the community when each community member argues for their culture and tradition to be emphasised as a distinctive Malaysian image. This can be a challenging issue as to whose culture should be presented. For example, Malaysia is a multicultural society, with the Malays as the majority ethnic group, but at the same time the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups have also made significant contributions to the heritage values in both Penang and Melaka (in fact, in many major cities in Malaysia) (Mohamed and Mustafa 2005). The multicultural issues are still being debated among academic scholars as well as governmental institutions (Taylor 2004). The positive implication that strong attachment may contain emotional and behavioural contents (Manzo and Perkins 2006) could be used to encourage the local community to participate in heritage and tourism management (den Camp and du Cros 2006).

The local residents with higher score on place dependence attachment present a different character of local community in terms of socio-demographic background (see Section 6.2.2 and Table 6.3). The results showed that there was social and cultural diversity within any sample group from ethnicity and age distributions to a range of educational backgrounds that affected their attachment to or dependency on 'place'. In particular, according to the age distribution of

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local residents, both 'young' and 'elderly' residents are more likely to show their commitment to the place and particular cultural and heritage assets. In the context of this study, results revealed that the commitment of youth to place was primarily through the influence of economics.

These results highlight how the government can involve younger residents through local economic benefits via tourist attractions. This is important since the issue of a shrinking younger population in Melaka (see Section 6.2.1) is due to a lack of economic opportunity, which is evident across all major modern cities in Malaysia. The remaining younger residents who stay in this city are obviously more attached to the available opportunities for increased economic income offered by tourism at the WHS. Besides employment, their involvement in the tourism industry can enhance the tourists' experiences, for example, by adopting local culture and traditions into 'creative' attractions like thematic accommodation (i.e. guesthouse, homestay, etc).

However, a major drawback for young residents engaging in business based tourism is mainly due to little support being offered from local government. Little attempt has been made (by the government) to enhance the young entrepreneur in terms of educational or training activities (i.e. entrepreneurship courses), although Malaysian financial institutions introduced microcredit loan schemes such as TEKUN (The Economic Fund for National Entrepreneurs Group) and YUM (Yayasan Usaha Maju) to encourage youths to be entrepreneurs, or to help existing businesses (MCA 2012). Mokhtar, Nartea and Gan (2012) raised an issue on the loan repayment problems among the TEKUN and YUM borrowers in Malaysia. The authors have identified three cause factors. First, it was revealed that male and young (18-25 years old) borrowers are two characters that often having problem to pay their loan due to lack of

knowledge and experience in business sector. Secondly, a type of business activity chosen by borrowers was strongly connected to a lack of training activities (about business). Roslan and Abd Karim (2009) revealed that many young borrowers faced with repayment problem are involved in the agriculture sector. This is mainly because of tight repayment schedules as stated by the financial institution. Finally, borrowers who are involved in agricultural businesses used credit to buy both inputs, such as seed, fertilizer and pesticides, and assets, such as farm machinery and livestock. These borrowers have different time frames for their revenue cycle. For example, if the borrower uses credit to buy seed, the borrower needs at least six months to one year to receive the revenue from harvesting the crop. Therefore, they cannot pay back the loan in two weeks. With respect to the type of business chosen by the local residents, it can be argued that there is a lack of integration between local authorities and financial institutions. To provide a 'package deal', such as to require the borrower to attend training courses (about business) as part of loan requirement, should be one of the solutions to deal with repayment problem in the future.

Research data shows how the local government can explore and understand the criteria of their local community and their involvement towards utilising cultural and heritage resources as a 'strategic mechanism' to hold the attention of young residents from moving-out from the Melaka WHS. As a major result, it may solve the issue of the shrinking of the younger population in this city. Furthermore, it encourages authentic participation from the local community into specific roles such as tourism planning and development.

Another important indicator highlighted from local community attachment was the 'foreign residents' who had high scores towards place 'dependence' (see Figure 6.5 and Section 7.1). Results confirmed that most of the foreign residents believed (feel attached) that the Melaka

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WHS and cultural heritage assets have played a significant contribution in increasing their economic income. This suggests that their involvement can be engaged in managing heritage as long as the activities (involvement process) relates to direct economic benefits.

The local community attachment via 'place dependence' has shown how one can engage residents' behaviour and perception towards protecting their cultural heritage assets. For such a reason, this group of residents can be viewed as future guardians and protectors for heritage assets at the Melaka WHS. This is in agreement with Homburg and Stolberg (2006), who suggest that the residents may take appropriate action (behavioural reaction) when their identity is threatened. However, this study's research data highlights how the residents' reaction (behaviour) towards threats to heritage assets can act as positive catalysts towards conservation when 'place identity' values are considered or rated as of high value by the resident. For example, desperation to increase economic income may lead people to 'change' their own culture and tradition in order to fit-in with tourists' desire. In case of Melaka city, a number of heritage buildings in Melaka Conservation Area were being demolished by their owners without legal permission from the local authorities (see Appendix 5.1). It suggests that the lack of local authority enforcement in preventing this incident from happening and the lack of attachment value shown towards these assets (via the community, or owners) on an individual and group basis, have partly contributed to the unfortunate destruction of these heritage buildings. This suggests that the decision of these property owners was commercially motivated.

There are two positions held in terms of motivation by the public that directly affect their attachment values towards protecting cultural and heritage assets. This is because, while some residents score high on 'place identity' attachment and are motivated to 'conserve and

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preserve' the place and its heritage at Melaka WHS, those residents scoring high on 'place dependency' attachment are more likely to demonstrate an opposite motivation for utilising the place setting and its heritage to create an economic spotlight which may through 'ignorance' of the importance of heritage assets destroy future tourist attraction as exemplified above. Kyle *et al.* (2004) suggested that the authorities (i.e. managers, planners) should carefully assess and understand local community attachment. This is important. If the government wants to influence a community's attachment to achieve specific outcomes, they need to understand and utilise differing social reasons for local community involvement. This could be a positive sign of improvement in terms of strategies of participation or levels of local community involvement and education (see Section 4.4). In essence, the emergence of a high level of community 'place attachment' may lead the community into getting actively involved in heritage and tourism planning and management for social, cultural and economic reasons.

#### **7.4 The Experience of Local Community Involvement in Melaka Heritage Trail Development**

The previous sections explored the current level of local community involvement in greater detail. The resulting debate discussed the implication of local community involvement towards social and economic aspects. The feedback from tourists will be included to identify the influence of local community involvement in enhancing a tourist's experience and satisfaction. Furthermore, the role of a heritage trail will be discussed through tourists' insights, on whether the trail can be an effective triangulation tool to connect the local community, heritage assets, and the government.

In general, the local communities showed a high level of awareness about the existence of the Melaka Heritage Trail. Research confirmed that there was a well-connected bond between

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people (place attachment) and their place settings. However, these results cannot be taken as a primary indicator that all members of the local community will participate or be involved in this development, in spite of clear evidence that the majority of the local communities were positive about tourism development as providing great economic opportunities (see Section 6.2.3 and 7.2). Assuming the government were currently implementing a bottom-up approach to the involvement process, it cannot guarantee that the local community will actively engage in the managerial aspects. This is due to each person having different motivations in the involvement approach, as stated earlier by the government officers, (see Section 7.1). The foremost motivation that may encourage the local community to be involved would be under the benefit of economic perspective.

With regard to residents' perceptions in perceiving the economic benefits from the development of the Melaka heritage trail, the residents have yet to see the development of this trail providing a significant increase in their economic income. This is because the community's anticipation of prospective economic benefits is relatively low because they have been let down by earlier projects due to unrealised opportunities. Interestingly, residents tend to refer to another; unofficial trail (i.e. Jonker Walk Street) as a site to stimulate more local economic opportunities.

This is to suggest that the development of the Melaka heritage trail was not intentionally designed to provide economic outcomes to the local community. For instance, as discussed in Figure 6.37 (see Section 6.3.3), homestay operators (by the local community) are now struggling to be chosen by tourists to provide holiday accommodation, as these homestay residences are considered unpopular. Despite the fact that the homestay programme has faced several controversies such as higher price rates, and low service quality, it was found that the government played a small role dealing with these issues (Yahya and Rasid 2010). The

government merely supported this programme through promotional and advertising strategies. Besides, few courses or sessions were held such as training, education and development in order to enable the local community to improve the quality of their services (homestay). However, this was considered by homestay operators as 'not enough' governmental support to engage with the local community in terms of developing the desired economic outcomes.

Furthermore, as seen in Figure 6.18 (see Section 6.2.3), the elements and attractions along the official trail consist of architectural features and religious buildings, which creates some level of frustration (i.e. economic conflict) among the residents along the trail as these currently do not provide many economic benefits. In sharp contrast, the development of the 'unofficial' Jonker Walk Street, consists of spacious residential buildings, antique shops, and a rich mix of cultures in terms of dialect and produce, and as such highlights the colour and texture of the local culture and heritage as a multi-faceted and highly versatile commodity that encourages economic exchange. The result of this is that the rich environment of this unofficial route attracts tourists to engage and barter along the length of the street, creating much needed local revenue (Wan Hashimah and Suhana 2005; Ong and Ong 2003).

It can be suggested that the Melaka heritage trail is not well synthesised with the local community's needs, as no direct or indirect involvement from the local community can be clearly seen. There is a lack of interaction between the local community and the trail provider as illustrated through a decision made by the management of Sri Poyyatha Vinayagar Temple to remove the trail's information panels. This action caused serious tensions to arise between the trail provider and local residents. Not only the lack of 'physical' involvement from local community, but also the lack of valid information panels has created social outrage from the *Chitty* community, as religious abuse via manipulation of the facts (psychological harm) is a

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very sensitive issue in Malaysia and particularly in Melaka. It is evident that the intention of trail provider (local authorities) to utilise the information materials such as history background, architectural design and religious belief from one source of information (mainly from PERZIM) are not being referred (to confirm) with local people who are very close to the assets. In fact, these sources of information have been 'modified' to create a 'sensational' story about the assets, which can attract more tourists to this property and to the city in general. Therefore, without any consent from the local community or devotee about the published information, the conflict as explained above provoked public mistrust and alienation towards the government as a whole (see Section 4.2).

As the Melaka Heritage Trail (MHT) project was initiated through a collaboration between local government and private agencies (see Section 5.9), this project is merely seen as a 'cosmetic' project (Timothy 1999) from both parties to gain public attention and publicity. The private agencies may have an economic agenda as they have business investments in this city, while the local government took it as a 'credit' to highlight their commitment to awareness programmes to both local community and visitors alike. Lai (2009) argued that the MHT has no specific themes, and this weakens a user's ability to culturally read and understand the trail, hence lowering expectation and experience. By the same token, Kamarul (2009) and Nurulhalim (2006) claimed that the trail was almost defunct because no information about the trail can be found at the hotels, or even at the Melaka Tourist Information Centre. Clearly, no overarching strategies, such as promotion, or management, have been outlined to sustain this trail in terms of long term development or marketing.

In terms of social implication, cross referencing of findings from residents' 'place attachment' and 'heritage trail perceptions' showed that there was little interaction between both sets of

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findings. Research findings revealed insightful information with regard to the high level of local attachment, as locals agreed that the Melaka heritage trail has represented their local culture and tradition. Still, the number of residents reading and understanding this 'symbolic meaning' in terms of representing their cultural and heritage identity is relatively low. The numbers of local communities that perceive a positive implication from the development of the Melaka heritage trail are frequently highly attached to place through 'identity attachment', while those who have 'dependency attached' to this place still overlook the important role played by this trail (see Section 6.2.4). Hence, residents with greater place dependency attachment preferred the 'unofficial' development of Jonker Walk Street rather than the official Melaka heritage trail.

However, it is noted that the residents do not object to the development of the Melaka heritage trail, but object to the way they have been overlooked and neglected by the trail provider in terms of its development which has created an emotional tension between both parties. This concurs with Mohamed and Mustafa (2005), who suggested that the local community should be included in any form of tourism development (i.e. heritage trail), as without direct engagement and involvement with the local community, the city of Melaka may merely become a museum city.

Jonker Walk Street played a more significant role in the economy of the local community because its trail offered plenty of activities to enhance visitors' experiences and provides benefits for the local community. As stated earlier, this trail offered more commercialised activities. In terms of attention given by the local authority, the Melaka heritage trail was getting less attention because it was seen as not 'economic' by the local government. A study by Triana (2005) found that not all heritage assets were suitable in promoting culture tourism because of the lack of activities, or support facilities, and poor access to the assets' features.

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This limitation, either directly or indirectly, justified the government's decision to focus on tourism development in the Civic Area and some areas in the Old Quarter.

The lack of local community engagement along the trail may affect the tourists' experience too, as they perceive more enjoyable experience while walking along Jonker Walk Street rather than Melaka heritage trail, as it has better infrastructural facilities, maintenance works and more attention in promoting and encouraging the social and economic development along the Jonker Walk Street. In comparison, only a low level of cooperation existed between municipal authorities and the local community to 'design' suitable facilities to meet tourists' needs along the Melaka heritage trail. Hence, tourists are more likely to divert their attention to Jonker Walk Street. These cases clearly demonstrate that the local authorities have failed to balance the maintenance work within the city.

In terms of tourists' interaction with the local community, the majority of tourists claimed that they had minimal interaction with the local community while walking along the Melaka heritage trail. Undoubtedly, the tourists perceive more interaction with the local community along the Jonker Walk Street, even though this interaction was merely for business purposes. Meanwhile, certain groups of tourists claimed that they had experienced genuine interaction with the local community along the Melaka heritage trail, but this was by prior arrangement by a third party, such as tour agencies (see Section 6.3.2). This highlighted an initiative found by the local community to improve their own economic income rather than relying on intensive support from the government. Moreover, it was evident that a healthy relationship between local community and tourism operators had developed (without governmental support) in providing hands-on experience and direct activities to the tourists (see Figure 6.42). For example, both tourism operators and local community played an important role in 'supplying the experience' to

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the tourists. In particular, the tourism operators were more likely to engage in promotion and marketing strategies, whilst the local community were the key players in engaging with tourists via their cultural performances, such as, cultural dances, playing traditional instruments, demonstrating traditional skills in arts and crafts, and demonstrating the Melaka and *Peranakan* cuisines through cooking preparations starting from selecting the raw ingredients to cooking and serving the food.

To emphasise the crucial role of the Melaka heritage trail development, the trail's physical condition may only play a small part in enhancing a tourist's experience. More important, to enhance tourist experience and satisfaction, is pro-active engagement involving the local community. Hence, the involvement of the local community is pivotal to the success of any tourism development and sustainable heritage management.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The Melaka Heritage Trail was developed to meet a 'requirement' (as token) to gain status as a World Heritage Site (WHS). Through highlighting 'interactions' from multiple key stakeholders in the development of the Melaka heritage trail, such as local community, private sector, local government, and tourists, the government was able to illustrate the desire to conserve the cultural and heritage assets of Melaka.

The findings showed that the level of local community involvement in Melaka WHS was mainly influenced by the government administrative framework. It is evident that the current approach for decision making related to tourism development or heritage management is still under government control (top-down). In addition, negative attitudes prevail amongst government

officers which parallel the current minimal governmental approach towards local community involvement.

Internal 'conflicts' within governmental structures and administrations have also been identified as additional factors contributing to the lack of engagement with the local community. This includes territorial administrative clashes that occur when several government agencies try to claim territorial control in a certain area.

In addition, the findings showed that the prevailing attitudes of local communities such as place attachment could be encouraged in order to engage and involve residents more fully in managerial processes. This engagement could be built on as the majority of the local communities demonstrated a high level of attachment, especially in relation to enhancing their culture and traditional identity. The results also confirmed that the elements such as emotional and social connection were influenced by unique characteristics of local districts with diverse heritage, and the affiliation of socio-demographic backgrounds, such as ethnic groups, length of residency, and age groups.

However, in an attempt to assess the current local community involvement towards the development of the Melaka heritage trail, the findings showed that there was minimal interaction from the local community. There was also low interaction from residents in terms of 'place attachment' in relation to local community involvement in the development of the Melaka heritage trail. This is presumably because the development of the Melaka heritage trail does not include any benefits that can be perceived by the residents along the trail and a triangulation partnership between government, private organisations, and local community was not actively sought or naturally occurring during, or after, the development of the Melaka

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heritage trail. Hence the local community view the development of the Melaka heritage trail as just another experimental partnership programme between government and private organisations. It was intentionally designed to publicly promote conservation or awareness projects.

With regard to the lack of local community engagement in the Melaka heritage trail, the findings confirmed that tourists also had minimal contact with the local community while using this trail. Moreover, the tourists would rather not use this trail because of its condition, i.e. lack of maintenance work on infrastructure and public facilities. Hence, it can be suggested that there was no comprehensive strategy outlined in order to manage this trail. The research implication of these findings will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.