Understanding the Historic Centre of Merdeka-Kesawan: Heritage Significance Assessment in Planning and Development Context

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Abstract. The paper explores the significance of the Merdeka-Kesawan that is a historic city center Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Also, it describes the conflicts and potentials outcome of heritage conservation and development interventions by carrying out the observation and the unstructured interview to the local communities. The group discussion meeting was performed to get a consensus on the statement of significance of the area. The Merdeka-Kesawan is the heart of Medan city that up to the date it still has control and organizes the economic activity of the town covering an area of approximately 62 hectares. The pattern of the Merdeka historic area was different from the Kesawan area. Until the late 20th Century, the pattern and townscape have significant changes. Besides, the study highlighted that the Merdeka-Kesawan is losing its character and functionality due to the development plans have much ignored the historic urban landscape. Therefore, it is recommended to the Medan Municipal Government to develop comprehensive planning through historic urban landscape approach. Besides, it needs to improve the level of collaboration between conservation organizations and the local community to achieve the perspective win-win solution. Medan Municipal should develop a Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) collaboration among conservation organizations and the local community to government in fulfilling the dual goals of heritage conservation and development.

1. Introduction
Medan is a city in Indonesia that triggered by the growth of many industrial estates along the east coast of Sumatra since the 1860s. Although in the midst of the threat of urban development and modernisation plans, it is much cultural heritage in the city of Medan that still survives. Nonetheless, like any other third world cities, Medan faces various rapid changes as the impact of the exhilarating speed of urbanisation and facing mounting social-economic pressures during the last quarter of the 20th century [1]. The rapid growth of Medan following the independence of Indonesia was primarily due to its importance as a provincial capital and economic centre. However, the development of one of the world's most essential plantation areas still becomes the economic basis for the growth of Medan city and the settlement pattern of the hinterland [2]. Even today, the export trade with the plantation product still dominated the commercial scene of Medan.
As occurring since the mid of the 1960s, the rapid development that dominated by economic has threatened many historic cities and cultural heritage included Medan city. Many people realised how intensive the damages had been done for many architectural heritages in Medan during recent years. This situation has caused the growing awareness of the people stimulated by the continuous debate among the historians, the architects, the planners, and the government on the protection issues to the heritages. Therefore, it needs innovative ways or concepts to reduce conflicts. The idea of integrated conservation between heritage preservation and town planning at the global level that has rapidly been developed since the mid-1970s in Europe becomes a solution to this issue. However, it has not been widely applied in Indonesia especially in Medan city. Consequently, the problem of the gap between protection of cultural heritage and the urban development remains unsolved, even after the Indonesian government published a new law on cultural heritage conservation in 2010. The current situation shows several crucial issues in heritage protection have not yet overcome.

Medan, as one of the historic towns in Indonesia, is luxurious with urban heritage, mainly the architectural heritage. However, their existence is also under the pressure of development. Today, changes in land-use planning have become a severe threat to the preservation of cultural heritage in Medan. Besides, the lack of policies and guidelines, mainly operational guidelines, have also caused the recent heritage conservation program challenging to achieve its objectives [3]. Until now, the conflict between heritage conservation and development in Medan is growing increasingly and getting more complicated. It seems that paradigm "heritage conservation versus development" was remained for many years in Medan. This paper correlates urban planning and heritage issues regarding the case study of the historic city of Medan, North Sumatra through interview and observation. There will be examined the successive urban regulations applied to the town since it has been planned to be a metropolitan city in the 1980s and their influence on the urban morphology and heritage conservation. Modernising historic cities occur unwittingly so that demolishing their heritage assets and character. To sustain modern development, there are such condition has led to the misguided belief that urban development and heritage conservation are inharmonious [4]. Mac Donald [5] asserted urban heritage had been traditionally identified by governments, scholars, and citizens as a valuable and identity-defining public ben­efit central to generating a "sense of place." Heritage places, "enhance the social capital of local communities by providing a tangible link to the past and reinforcing a sense of community identity. This enhanced sense of identity may, in turn, contribute to social cohesion within the community."

Today, changes in land-use planning have become a severe threat to the preservation of cultural heritage in Medan. Besides, the lack of policies and guidelines, mainly operational guidelines, have also caused the recent heritage conservation program challenging to achieve its objectives. Until now, the conflict between heritage conservation and development in Medan [6].

The paper explores the significance of the Merdeka-Kesawan that is a historic city centre Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Also, it describes the conflicts and potentials outcome of heritage conservation and development interventions by carrying out the observation and the unstructured interview to the local communities. The group discussion meeting was performed to get a consensus on the statement of the significance of the area. Also, it aims to describe the perspective win-win solution that can satisfy all interests to fulfil the dual goals of heritage conservation and development.

2. Method

The study employed multi-research approaches, which are the “qualitative and quantitative approach’ and inquiry strategies such as documentary source or literature review, field survey and interview. This kind of study is known as the mix method research. From the 1990s, the term ‘mix method research’ has become more popular, besides being also named as the pragmatic approach to research. The most frequently used mixed-method designs start with a qualitative pilot study followed by quantitative analysis [7]. Therefore, mixing different approaches have the advantages of enabling triangulation. Triangulation is a characteristic feature of mixed methods studies as Hesse-Biber, and Leavy [8]
observed that there are five specific reasons why researchers might want to use a mixed-method approach dealing with triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion.

In conclusion, triangulation using a variety of data sources becomes the main reason for researchers to use the mixed method. Besides it aims to comprehensive findings which contribute to the existing knowledge, the approach was chosen because it is also appropriate for the strategy of the study which requires the involvement of the local people who know better than the local resource. As Fossey et al. [9] noted, the qualitative research aims to give privilege to the perspectives of the participants and ‘illuminate the subjective meaning, actions and context of those being researched’.

The study was started by carrying out the literature review and documentary source; it was then continued by observation and field survey to an inventory of the urban heritage of Medan city. The SWOT analysis was then conducted to find a significant solution for better improvement of heritage conservation in this area. This is a continuation of previous studies. In 2015, there was a group discussion meeting involving 25 local people to brainstorm the delineations of the historic areas of Merdeka-Kesawan as mentioned in the Local Regulation No.13 year 2011 and its issues by the SWOT/C analysis. It was then followed by conducting the cultural mapping of the historic district of Merdeka-Kesawan in 2016. The results of the previous studies were becoming the baseline data for this research. Then, the study intends to compile the urban policies regarding on heritage conservation, to identify the changes and the threats by observation of the seven historic areas and interviewed ten people in the heritage site.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment

Munoz [10] asserted the concept of 'cultural significance' had become a central issue both to the practical activities as well as to the contemporary theory of conservation. Besides, recognizing the cultural significance of a cultural asset was critical as the basis for determining the next steps in the conservation process and management as illustrated schematically in the Burra Charter. Kerr, J.S. [11] who involved in the publishing of the BC emphasized "the cultural significance is a simple concept. It purposes to identify and assess the attributes which make a place of value to us and our society. An understanding of it is, therefore, essential to any planning process."

Furthermore, Kerr, J.S. asserted this process as a necessary sequence in conservation planning, which naturally consisted of two stages. The first covers the gathering and analysis of evidence and the assessment of significance — the second concerns about developing a conservation policy and setting out strategies for its implementation. Based on the same BC process as shown in Fig.1, in a similar vein, Zancheti, S. M., et al. [12] asserted the process divided into three phases: understanding the significance; developing policy, after that, administering or managing the heritage asset and then followed by developing a policy. This stresses that procedures should not be performed in isolation from each other, but rather they must have interacted; some procedures must repeated be conducted while consultations with stakeholders and further investigations are also necessary. Also, to obtain the purpose, it is essential to keep precise records of decisions, and changes to the historical asset help in its care, management and interpretation.

During more than three decades, many countries around the world have adopted the conservation process of Burra Charter with certain adapting to the administration structure of their countries. Accordingly, identifying or recognition values or a feature’s particular interest or heritage significances to make the historical asset secure and safe is the first phase of safeguarding and managing those assets that we as a society wish to protect. In the legal conservation planning context, it is also called a nomination or listing process.

In short, assessment of the significance attributed to heritage is a significant activity in any conservation effort, since values strongly influence the decisions that are made. It should be carried out as a necessary preliminary to any conservation action. Significance assessment is also the process of
studying and understanding the meanings and values of places, objects and collections. Many researchers argued the value assessment could be elicited and expressed by the quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, since determining of the category of value now becomes more important and needed in the sustainability of conservation works, until now there is no standard or formula for cultural heritage significance assessment which is agreed by all countries. The method to characterize the value based on the views and experiences of local people thus considered to be the best approach.

In general, the cultural heritage in Medan has the significance representing the activities and character of the town as follows:

1) Multi-ethnic city is defined by the inhabitant and population living in the inner city, the Malay as the native for Medan city. The ethnic groups are not only from local or in other cities in Indonesia, but also from other Asian countries such as Chinese, Indian, and Arab, as well from Europe countries. This character was formed as the result of the large scale of the plantation industry development on the east coast of Sumatra from the eighteen sixteen. The character of multi ethnics' city like Medan probably cannot be found in other cities in Indonesia. Perhaps, we ever heard about the Chinese town or often called Pecinan area in different cities of Indonesia, but not for the kampong of Indian or Kling; this is only in Medan city. Besides, there are various local ethnic groups reside in Medan city, for example, Malay, Javanese, Minangkabau, and sub-ethnic of Batak like Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Pakpak, Angkola and Nias. Malay is the native for Medan city since the Deli Sultanate Kingdom established in the late eighteen century. The remained historic building with Malay architectures can be found in the historic area of Deli Sultanate known as Kota Maksum located in the southern part of the centre of Medan City. The landmarks for this area are the Maimon Palace and Grand Mosque Al Mashun.

2) The centre for plantation industry at first started from tobacco, later rubber and palm oil that is perceived by the activities and function of the buildings in the inner city and the periphery of the town. Although the atmosphere as planter's town is not very remarked today, the infrastructures that were built with railways, roads, telephone and telegraph connections support the industry mostly still in function. Also, the recognized buildings in Medan that formerly were the headquarters of the plantation companies remained and functioned as the previous.

3) The colonial city that is remarked by many colonial houses, offices and villas that stayed behind at the city centre of Medan such as Kesawan, Polonia and Lapangan Merdeka.

3.2. Historic Urban Landscape of Merdeka-Kesawan
The embryo of modern Medan city was started to be recognisable when the transportation of plantation economy had been developed by the construction of central railway station in the front of the Esplanade (later known as Lapangan Merdeka). The central city had become connected with the villages by the main roads built at the same times. By the end of the colonial aged, the influence of urban design based on the main road was apparent. The city had been rapidly developed. The elongated form developed along the railway had been superseded by a form that is much closer to a square, with a ray spreading in a different direction along the river, railway and the highway [13]. Every group ethnic had to reside in separate quarters which caused a cut-out division into European, Chinese, Malay and Indian quarter. While the Deli Sultan had his palace in the Kota Matsum or Sultans village, the southern part of the town, that most were resided by the Malay as well as the Minangkabau [14]. Then, the Indian area or 'Kampong Madras', where till today still people of Indian descents together with the Chinese, reside in this area.

In 2011, the Medan Municipality Government published the Local Regulation No. 13 regarding the Spatial Town Planning of Medan City for 2011-2031 [15]. According to Article 39, there are seven historical areas in Medan protected by law. Those are the Kesawan, Deli Sultanate, Polonia, Kampung Kling/Madras, Pulo Brayan, Labuhan, and Belawan areas. However, the local government was unable to mention what criteria have been used for the designation. Also, after six years, it is not followed by issuing the policy and operational guidelines for its implementation. As a result, it seems that this
regulation is issued merely to fulfilling their obligations by the law, in this case, the Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning so that, after seven years, it shows no influence for the better conservation effort in Medan.

In line with urban development, most of the historic areas of Medan experience the changes in land use. Another striking case in the inner city of Medan is the development surrounding the Esplanade or Lapangan Merdeka. As it is known that the historic area of Merdeka-Kesawan Historic Area is the historic core of Medan City. The first layout in the 1870s this area is the starting point for the growth of the city of Medan. Therefore, the Dutch-named this area "the heart of Medan city." As the inner city, most of the landmarks as the icon of Medan city is located at this place, for example, the ex-Old City Hall, now converted into part of the Aston hotel, the office of Indonesian Bank, Dharma Deli Hotel, Central Post Office, Central Railway Station which is located next to Hanging Bridge (locally known as Titi Gantung), Building of Harrison and Crossfield, now better known as London Sumatra office. All the historic buildings constructed in this area illustrate the great success of the city of Medan as the centre of the plantation industry in the past, consequently considering the value of Merdeka-Kesawan area as a historical core of Medan city.

**Figure 1** The development of Medan City Structure from 1895-1938

**Figure 2** Merdeka-Kesawan: Past and Present
Urban growth is transforming the essence of many historic urban areas. In line with urban development, most of the seven historic districts of Medan experience the changes in land use. Another striking case in the inner city of Medan is the development surrounding the Esplanade or Lapangan Merdeka. The new policy in the intensity of land use that permits the construction of high rise buildings have threatened the existence of historic buildings within the area. As it is known that the historic area of Merdeka-Kesawan Historic Area is the historic core of Medan City. The first layout in the 1870s this area is the starting point for the growth of the city of Medan. Therefore, the Dutch-named this area "the heart of Medan city" (Figure 1). As the core city, most of the landmarks as the icon of Medan city is located at this place, for example, the ex-Old City Hall, now converted into part of the Aston hotel, the office of Indonesian Bank, Dharma Deli Hotel, Central Post Office, Central Railway Station which is located next to Hanging Bridge (locally known as Titi Gantung), Building of Harrison and Crossfield, now better known as London Sumatra office. All the historic buildings constructed in this area illustrate the great success of the city of Medan as the centre of the plantation industry in the past. Considering the value of Merdeka-Kesawan area as a historical core of Medan city, therefore it requires to carry out the heritage impact assessment (HIA) to identify and evaluate the potential impacts a proposed development will have on the heritage values (Figure 2). The statement is highly needed by the local authorities to guide development assessment decisions [16]. Besides, UNESCO in 2011 has published a recommendation on the historic urban landscape (HUL). It has guided the authorities of historic cities of the developed world in managing and mitigating the impacts of development intervention in the historical context [17]. Also, historic urban landscape approach reflects the fact that the discipline and practice of urban heritage conservation have evolved significantly in recent decades, enabling policy-makers and managers to deal more effectively with new challenges and opportunities [18]. It allows supporting people in their search for development and adaptation while maintaining the characteristics and values associated with their history, collective memory and environment.

Today, the historic urban landscape approach has been recommended as a tool for better and effective urban heritage planning. It aims to preserve the quality of the human environment, promote sustainable and productive use of urban space while recognizing its dynamic character, and promoting...
social and functional diversity. Also, it integrates the conservation goals of urban heritage and social and economic development. Indeed, the concepts of integrated conservation globally have been developed in line with the evolving issues of urban planning. Many international heritage forums intended to discuss the role of the integrated conservation for a creative, resilient and sustainable city as becoming a trending topic among planners and experts. Over the past 50 years, the process of urban planning has much applied the dogmatic approach in which strongly emphasizes on economic and refers to physical plan based on technical standards, on correlations between standards and needs, all within a top-down vision (Figure 3). Many economic processes offer ways and means to alleviate urban poverty and to promote social and human development. The greater availability of innovations, such as information technology and sustainable planning, design and building practices, can improve urban areas, thus enhancing the quality of life. When adequately managed through the historic urban landscape approach, new functions such as services and tourism are essential economic initiatives that can contribute to the well-being of the communities and to the conservation of historic urban areas and their cultural heritage while ensuring economic and social diversity and the private function. Failing to capture these opportunities leads to unsustainable and unviable cities, just as implementing them inadequately and inappropriately results in the destruction of heritage assets and irreplaceable losses for future generations.

3.3. Integrated Urban Planning
In paving the way for successful conservation, it should cover many social, governance, economic, and broader cultural issues. Also, today, the planners often pointed out that integrated planning of urban cultural resources which are not only things like buildings, but also include historical, industrial and artistic heritages representing assets of architecture, urban landscape or landmarks, local and indigenous traditions of public life, festivals, rituals or stories, as well as hobbies and enthusiasm. Therefore, broad knowledge and understanding of the cultural and ecological character of the area have based to establish cultural planning and town planning.

At the community level, heritage conservation help in creating a “sense of place, urban identity and pride and specific preservation of the community. Today, it has become a trend everywhere that cultural heritage conservation works are not relying on a single individual or a profession anymore. The responsibilities link with the conservation of other specialities, so they become interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. However, it has been increasingly recognized that preservation is neither the responsibility nor domain experts alone but also links to the local community as the owners of the heritage. The public needs to be responsible and participate in decision-making [19]. Therefore, to achieve the perspective win-win solution that can satisfy all interests in fulfilling the dual goals of heritage conservation and development, it should improve collaboration between conservation organizations and the local community, even though now still faced problems associated with unequal power relations, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of trust, transparency, and communication. Also, it needs the better link or coordination between different departments and agencies or stakeholder in managing the heritage and collectively incorporates them into a common and agreed vision.

4. Conclusions
Merdeka-Kesawan historic area as the historic core of Medan city has begun starting to lose its character. It clearly shows the conflicts and potentials outcome of heritage conservation and development interventions. Despite the concept of integrated conservation between heritage preservation and town planning that developed since the mid-1970s has not been widely promoted in Indonesia. It is, therefore, the issue of the gap between the conservation of urban heritage and development remains even after the Indonesian government published the new law on cultural heritage conservation in 2010. Until the present, the urban policies for Medan city still has much emphasized on the vital issues on public health, economic and education. Therefore, issues concerning the conservation of cultural heritage may seem
less priority. Until today, there still has not even an integrated plan to safeguard the urban heritage. The changes in land-use planning have become a severe threat to the conservation of urban heritage in Medan. Most of the seven historic areas in Medan have experienced the changes in the land uses. Besides, the lack of policies, guidelines and coordination between the stakeholders managing the urban heritage in Medan has also caused the recent heritage conservation program challenging to achieve its objectives. Therefore, it is recommended to the Medan Municipal Government to revise its town planning, which covered the integrated heritage conservation through the historic urban landscape approach. Besides, it needs to improve the level of collaboration between conservation organizations and the local community to achieve the perspective win-win solution. Medan Municipal should develop a Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) collaboration among conservation organizations and the local community to government in fulfilling the dual goals of heritage conservation and development.

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