

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON THE PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN CONSERVATION FOR THE INNER CITY  
OF GEORGE TOWN, PENANG**

**by**

**TAN SOOK FERN**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**November 2013**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I would like to express my sincere acknowledgement to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lee Lik Meng, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, insightful comments, guidance and knowledge in this Ph.D. study. Without his encouragement, I would not be able to complete this thesis.

I am grateful to my late grandparents and my parents for their unconditional support throughout all my studies at University. The special thank goes to my husband, C. J., and my kids for their love and tolerance especially to accompany me to travel to Penang for so many times.

I would like to thank my ex-team members in NAPREC funded project, they are Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nor'Aini Yusof, Assoc. Prof. Sr. Lim Yoke Mui and all the research assistants. The working experience with them gave me the inspirations of doing this research. I would also like to thank Dr. Matthew W. Rofe, Prof. Abdul Ghani Salleh, Dr. Siti Hasnah Hassan for their comments in completing and enhancing this thesis.

Lastly, it is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible, and to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATION .....	viii
ABSTRAK.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH.....	1
1.1 Study Area and Its Background.....	2
1.2 Special Area Plan (SAP) for George Town World Heritage Site (WHS) .....	8
1.2.1 Management Strategies and Actions for George Town World Heritage Site... 9	
1.2.2 The Management Strategies of George Town WHS versus Macao WHS .....	13
1.3 Thesis Statement and Theoretical Framework .....	24
1.4 Research Objectives and Research Framework.....	26
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	29
1.6 Outline of Thesis by Chapters .....	30
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	33
2.1 The Importance of Community in the Planning for Urban Conservation .....	33
2.2 The Role of Community and Community's Perspectives in the International Urban Conservation Doctrines .....	34
2.2.1 Government's Lead Role in Engaging the Community in the Planning and Development of Urban Conservation .....	38
2.3 Taking Community Perspectives into the Planning and Development of Urban Conservation.....	45
2.4 Examples of Positive Outcomes by Incorporating Community Perspectives into the Process of Urban Conservation Planning and Development .....	49
2.5 Summary.....	52
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH AND COLLECTED DATA 56	
3.1 Philosophical Assumption and Position .....	57
3.1.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Theoretical Perspectives .....	59
3.1.2 Methodology .....	62
3.1.2.1 Overview of Grounded Theory Method.....	64

3.1.2.2	Method for Grounded Theory Method.....	66
3.1.2.3	Constant Comparison.....	69
3.1.2.4	Theory in Grounded Theory Method.....	70
3.1.2.5	Sources of Data.....	71
3.1.2.6	Theoretical Sensitivity.....	76
3.1.2.7	Theoretical Sampling.....	76
3.2	Research Methodology.....	77
3.2.1	Clarifications.....	78
3.2.2	The Flow of Research Methodology.....	80
3.3	Process of Data Collection.....	85
3.3.1	Secondary Research.....	87
3.3.2	Newspapers.....	88
3.3.3	Surveys, Seminar and Forum Discussion, Questionnaire and Interviews.....	92
3.3.3.1	Survey of Residents.....	93
3.3.3.2	Seminar and Forum Discussion.....	95
3.3.3.3	Questionnaire Survey.....	96
3.3.3.4	Interviews.....	97
3.3.4	Cache of Materials.....	99
3.3.5	Observation.....	99
3.4	Summary.....	101
<b>CHAPTER 4 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS THROUGH OPEN CODING AND AXIAL CODING..... 103</b>		
4.1	Memo and Open Coding.....	103
4.1.1	Newspaper Data.....	105
4.1.2	Residents' Survey.....	109
4.1.3	Seminars, Forums, Questionnaire Surveys and Interviews and the Cache of Materials.....	110
4.1.4	Observation and Early Analysis.....	111
4.1.4.1	Unintended Preservation.....	111
4.1.4.2	Impact of Inscription to World Heritage List.....	112
4.1.4.3	Low Awareness.....	114
4.1.4.4	Owners' Dilemma.....	117
4.1.4.5	Economy Oriented.....	118
4.1.4.6	Failed to See Bigger Picture.....	119
4.1.4.7	Preferred Development Concepts for George Town.....	120
4.1.4.8	Concern on Social Transformation.....	123
4.1.4.9	Conclusion for the Observation Notes.....	123
4.1.5	Draft Mind Mapping to Sort Out the Relationships of Coded Data.....	124
4.1.6	Conclusion of the Memo and Open Coding.....	127
4.2	Axial Coding.....	127
4.2.1	Awareness for Urban Conservation.....	130
4.2.2	Concern on Physical Environmental Elements (Infrastructure, Amenities, Facilities and Townscape).....	133
4.2.3	Inclination to Profit and Economy Oriented Development Strategies.....	136
4.2.4	Government's Actions in the Urban Conservation.....	140
4.2.5	Appreciation of Pre-war Buildings.....	152
4.2.6	Paradigm Model in the Form of Mini Framework.....	154
4.2.7	Conclusion for Axial Coding.....	159
4.3	Challenges Encountered During Coding Process.....	160
4.4	Summary.....	162
<b>CHAPTER 5 SELECTIVE CODING ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS..... 165</b>		
5.1	The Formation of Substantive Theory.....	165
5.2	The Substantive Theory.....	171

5.2.1	Urban Conservation Purists .....	172
5.2.2	Centrists .....	175
5.2.3	Urban Developmentalists.....	180
5.2.4	Literature Relations, Identification and Justification: Valorisation of Urban Conservation .....	183
5.2.5	Divergent Perspectives on Urban Conservation .....	185
5.2.6	Maintenance and Upgrades of the Infrastructure, Amenities and Facilities .	189
5.3	Implications of the Discovered Substantive Theory.....	191
5.3.1	Conservation Research .....	191
5.3.2	Conservation Plan.....	192
5.3.3	Conservation Practice .....	193
5.4	Summary.....	194
<b>CHAPTER 6 FINAL FINDINGS.....</b>		<b>196</b>
6.1	The Formation of Localised Model .....	196
6.1.1	The Cause of Different Standpoints: Controversy in Values.....	198
6.1.1.1	Whose Conservation and Conservation for Whom? .....	200
6.1.1.2	Socio-Economics Shift in Urban Conservation Approaches .....	202
6.1.1.3	Trends of Urban Conservation .....	203
6.1.1.4	Authentic Conservation versus Fake Conservation?.....	207
6.1.1.5	Adaptive Reuse .....	210
6.2	Localised Model for the George Town WHS.....	213
6.2.1	Balanced Development .....	215
6.2.2	Lenient Law and Regulations .....	216
6.2.3	Financial Sustainability.....	217
6.2.4	Implications .....	219
6.2.4.1	Practicality .....	220
6.2.4.2	Self Sustainability .....	220
6.2.5	Comparison with the Special Area Plan .....	221
6.2.5.1	Similarity.....	221
6.2.5.2	Differences .....	222
6.3	Conclusion of the Study .....	224
<b>REFERENCE.....</b>		<b>227</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>		<b>253</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Inscription Criteria for George Town WHS and Macao WHS .....	14
Table 2.1. Different Urban Conservation Related International Charters and Recommendations .....	35
Table 3.1. Philosophical Assumptions and Positions.....	60
Table 3.2. Examples of Research or Study Using Grounded Theory Method.....	63
Table 3.3. Elements of Paradigm Model.....	69
Table 3.4. Summary of Coding Process and the Outcomes .....	85
Table 3.5. The Keywords Used to Search the News Archives .....	89
Table 3.6. Total of News from the Newspapers Viewed and Coded .....	92
Table 4.1. Selected Examples of Memo from Newspapers .....	105
Table 4.2. Keywords that Helped to Abstract Data into Concepts and Categories.....	108
Table 4.3. Regrouped of Open Coded Data to Form Categories, Properties and Dimensions .....	129
Table 4.4. Mini Framework of Paradigm Model for Category “Awareness for Urban Conservation” .....	155
Table 5.1. Paradigm Model for Core Categories of the Research .....	167

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Early map of the inner city of George Town (Year 1798).....	2
Figure 1.2. George Town's plan for study area .....	3
Figure 1.3. Population trend of George Town, 1970 – 2000 .....	5
Figure 1.4. Theoretical framework for research.....	26
Figure 1.5. Reserach framework .....	28
Figure 3.1. Interactive model for qualitative analysis from Miles and Huberman .....	66
Figure 3.2. The flow of analysis using grounded theory method.....	68
Figure 3.3. Paradigm model for axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) .....	68
Figure 3.4. Research methodology .....	81
Figure 4.1. Relationship of early possible concepts, categories, properties and dimensions .....	125
Figure 5.1. Theoretical framework: Cognizance of urban conservation.....	166

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire .....	254
Appendix 2: Photographs in the Survey (Refer to the question Z4 to Z8).....	256
Appendix 3: Questionnaire for Stakeholders .....	258
Appendix 4: Examples of Memo .....	268
Appendix 5: Early coded concept: Problem of urban conservation in the inner city of George Town, Penang .....	271
Appendix 6: Initial coding: Possible categories, properties and dimensions for Residents’ Survey data .....	278
Appendix 7: Initial coding: Possible categories, properties and dimensions for Seminar and Forum.....	281
Appendix 8: Coding of possible category, properties and dimensions for Questionnaire Data .....	282
Appendix 9: Initial coding of possible category, properties and dimensions from Interviews .....	283
Appendix 10: Example of initial coding for one of the cache of materials obtained from a PowerPoint slides (“Development vs Conservation: Case study of George Town Inner City” presented by a social activist at Universiti Sains Malaysia on 2007).....	289
Appendix 11: Coded concept: The problems of carrying out urban conservation in the inner city.....	290
Appendix 12: Coded concept: The strategies of carrying out urban conservation in the inner city.....	298
Appendix 13: Mini framework of paradigm model for category “Physical environmental factors” .....	305
Appendix 14: Mini framework of paradigm model for category “Inclination to profit and economy oriented development strategies” .....	306
Appendix 15: Mini framework of paradigm model for category “Government’s actions for urban conservation” .....	307
Appendix 16: Mini framework of paradigm model for category “Appreciation of pre-war buildings” .....	309

## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CAP	Conservation Advisory Panel
GT1	George Town 1
GT2	George Town 2
GT3	George Town 3
GTWHI	George Town World Heritage Incorporated
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
INSPEN	Institut Penilaian Negara, National Institute of Valuation
ISM	Institute of Surveyors
IZP	Interim Zoning Plan
KOMTAR	Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak, Complex of Tun Abdul Rahman
MPPP	Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang, Penang Island Municipal Council
NAPREC	National Real Estate Research Coordinator
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
PDC	Penang Development Corporation
Ph. D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PHT	Penang Heritage Trust
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SPAB	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
US	United States
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VPSD	Valuation and Property Services Department
WHL	World Heritage List
WHO	World Heritage Office
WHS	World Heritage Site

**PERSPEKTIF KOMUNITI DALAM PERANCANGAN DAN  
PEMBANGUNAN BANDAR BAGI KAWASAN DALAMAN BANDARAYA  
GEORGE TOWN, PULAU PINANG**

**ABSTRAK**

Kawasan dalaman bandaraya George Town, Pulau Pinang merupakan bandar terancang terawal di sejarah perancangan bandar Malaysia dan mempunyai bilangan bangunan Pra Perang Dunia Kedua yang terbanyak di Asia Tenggara. Akan tetapi pemuliharaan dan pemeliharaan bandar di George Town tidak berjalan dengan menyeluruh dan berkesan kerana terdapat jurang dalam arah pembangunan di antara pihak kerajaan dan pihak komuniti. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendapatkan pandangan komuniti terhadap perancangan dan pembangunan bagi pemuliharaan dan pemeliharaan di George Town. “Grounded theory method” digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk membanding dan mengkod pandangan komuniti. Tiga teori utama telah dikenalpasti berdasarkan perbezaan komuniti dalam nilai ekonomi yang dikaitkan dengan pemuliharaan dan pemeliharaan, iaitu teori-teori daripada kumpulan penyokong pemuliharaan, kumpulan pertengahan dan kumpulan pembangunan. Daripada perbandingan tiga teori, satu model tempatan khas untuk pemuliharaan dan pemeliharaan bandar bagi “George Town World Heritage Site” telah dihasilkan.

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON THE PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN CONSERVATION FOR THE INNER CITY  
OF GEORGE TOWN, PENANG**

**ABSTRACT**

The inner city of George Town, Penang has the earliest urban planning history in Malaysia and it has the largest number of pre-war (World War II) buildings in Southeast Asia. However, its urban conservation is not carried out comprehensively and effectively. There are gaps in the development direction of urban conservation between the government and the community. So this research aimed to find out the community perspectives on the planning and development of urban conservation in the inner city of George Town. By using grounded theory method, this research constantly compared and coded the community perspectives in the inner city of George Town. Substantive theory was discovered and translated into three standpoints that associated different economy values to urban conservation which affected the community's attitudes and responses to the planning and the development of urban conservation, namely, the conservation purists, the centrists and the urban developmentalists. By reviewing and comparing the three theories, a localised urban conservation development model for George Town World Heritage Site aimed to conserve the pre-war buildings sustainably from the socio-economic aspects was developed.

## **CHAPTER 1      INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH**

The inner city of George Town is where the urban planning history of Penang begins. The historical elements can be found on the inner city's predominant pre-war buildings (from 1800s to 1940s). One can also find the diverse socio-cultural and religious activities which were formed in the past but still practised today on the quaint streets. The large number of pre-war buildings and the continuing socio-cultural activities constitute a unique cultural townscape with archaic ambience within the inner city of George Town. This unique historical setting has successfully placed George Town on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List (WHL) in July 2008 (joint inscription with Melaka). Nevertheless, the successful inscription of George Town does not indicate a conclusive triumph in its on-going urban conservation efforts. It still faces various challenges in protecting and preserving the pre-war properties such as the lack of financial aid, the weak implementation of conservation related policies, the absence of enforcement and low awareness among the residents. The inner city of George Town has also been losing population and encountering development pressures to become a modern city. These challenges and problems have caused George Town to gradually lose its unique historical characteristics (Jenkins, 2008). In addition, if George Town does not properly safeguard the pre-war properties in its conservation site its WHL status can be revoked by UNESCO. To keep George Town on the WHL the above challenges and problems must be resolved but it is crucial to find the most suitable or appropriate suggestions for the city's planning and development. In a bigger picture, what urban conservation approach is suitable and will work to preserve the historical townscape of the city of George Town while

bringing back the crowds and creating enough demands to help revitalise the inner city? This research aims to find out the answer for the above question.

## 1.1 Study Area and Its Background

The study area of this research is set in the inner city of George Town where the earliest modern planning system in Malaysia started (Lee, Abdullah & Rahim, 1990). The early inner city of George Town was planned in a grid pattern (see Figure 1.1).

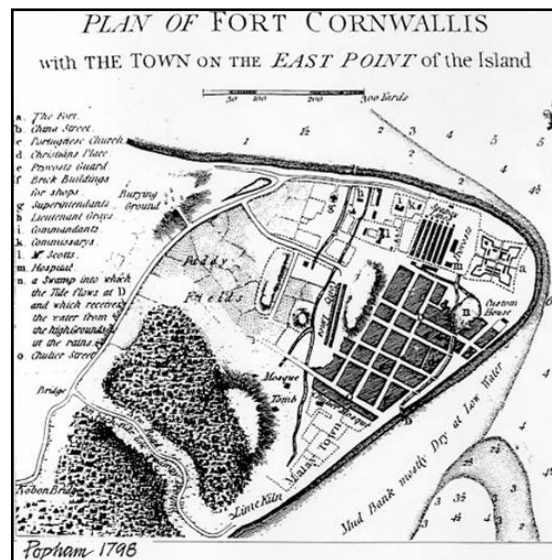


Figure 1.1. Early map of the inner city of George Town (Year 1798)

Source: Presentation titled: *Cadangan Pembangunan di Atas Kawasan Masjid Kapitan Keling George Town* by Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Director of Town Planning and Development Department, MPPP on 14 July 2005

Due to the cumulative expansion of the town over time, it is very hard to define the exact boundaries of the inner city. For planning purposes, Penang Island Municipal Council, the local authority (more commonly known as Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang, MPPP) divided George Town into eight administration districts, namely George Town 1 to George Town 8. George Town 1 (GT1) contains the earliest town structure and has the highest number of pre-war buildings. Both the core and buffer

zones of the UNESCO WHL are located in GT1. Meanwhile George Town 2 (GT2) and George Town 3 (GT3) show evidence of the expansion of the inner city. So the study area for this research is set on GT1, GT2 and GT3 (see Figure 1.2).

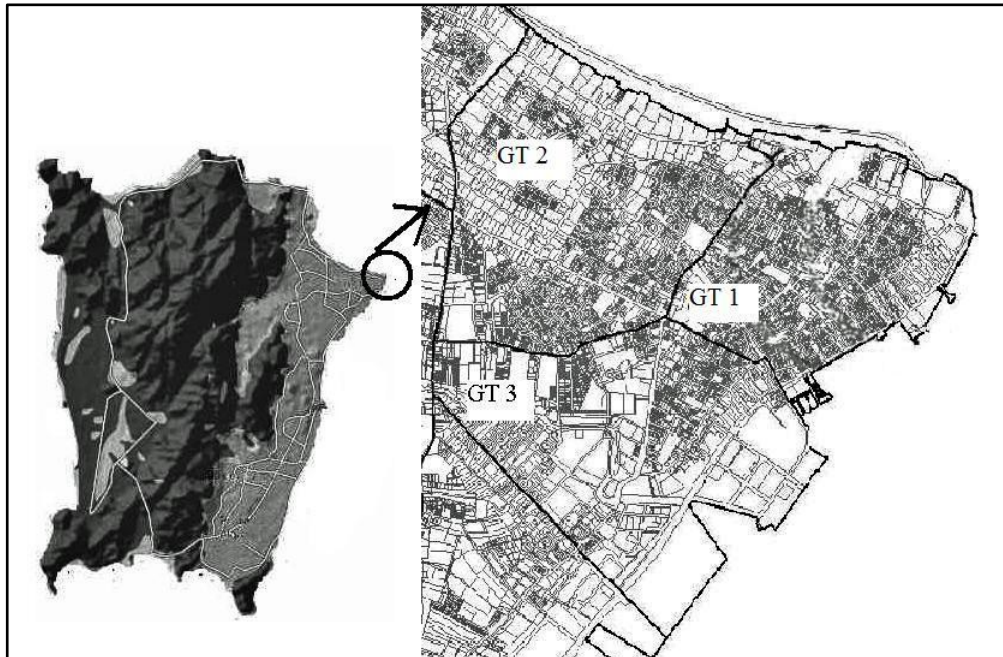


Figure 1.2. George Town's plan for study area  
*Source: Modified Penang Island Map from Esri, 2009*

One of the significant heritage characters in the study area is the large number of pre-war buildings. Evidence show the pre-war buildings can be traced back to a letter written by Captain Francis Light in 1793 (City Council of George Town, 1966) and also recorded by Lieutenant-Governor George Leith in 1803 (as cited in Khoo, 1994). According to Khoo (1994), of all the pre-war buildings left in George Town during 1990 to 1993, almost 10% were built from 1850s, around 30% built from 1850 to 1900 and the 60% were built from 1900 to 1930. These pre-war buildings varied from shophouses, mansions, and godowns to public buildings like shrines, temples, mosques and administrative buildings. Until 1997, there were about 13,000 pre-war buildings in George Town. However, these pre-war buildings were vanishing fast

due to the dilapidated condition of the properties, natural disasters and human activities (Tan, 2007; Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin, 2005). Dilapidated pre-war buildings can easily collapse or catch fire due to the lack of maintenance. Natural disaster such as fire and flood bring damage to the pre-war buildings which are not meeting the modern safety and security standards. Meanwhile human activities due to development pressures and business opportunities bring drastic changes to the pre-war buildings and the historic surrounding. The changes include demolition, rebuilding or renovation of the pre-war buildings without following the proper preservation guidelines. Pre-war buildings are transformed into swiftlet farms or modern terrace shophouses. A Penang-based local cultural and heritage researcher recorded that in the year 2006 alone a total of 96 units of shophouses in George Town were demolished and rebuilt (Tan, 2007).

The rapidly vanishing pre-war properties revealed the lack of adequate comprehensive plan, insufficient financial support and absence of strong enforcement in urban conservation. Although some individual and non-government organisations had successfully preserved the pre-war heritage, most of the pre-war properties do not get proper protection (Khoo, 2008). Khoo (2000) described the pre-war buildings of George Town as “overcrowded, underprovided, dilapidated, unimproved premises” back in 1960s and 1970s. But even to this day these buildings remain deplorable and in disrepair though these buildings are located in the prime area of George Town (Poh, 2005). Other problems associated with the pre-war properties in the inner city of George Town are outdated infrastructure, congested roads and constant flooding (Tan, 2003; Jenkins, 2008; Khoo, 2008).

One reason that the pre-war buildings are still standing is because the Control of Rent Act restrained the pre-war buildings from being developed even though the areas surrounding the inner city has already transformed into modern skyscrapers (Khoo, 2000; Jenkins, 2008; Tan, 2003; Lee, Lim & Yusof, 2006). The delay in development in a way saved the pre-war buildings from modern exploitation but at the same time it also pushed the people to migrate out as the development is stagnant (see Figure 1.3). When the Act for rent control was repealed in 1997, many tenants could not afford the hike in rentals so they moved out and left the pre-war buildings vacant. Most of these pre-war buildings remain vacant and underutilised until today. The inner city of George Town is thus becoming a dead town. As a result, this not only affects the image of the inner city, it also affects the socio-economic activities (Ho, 2009).

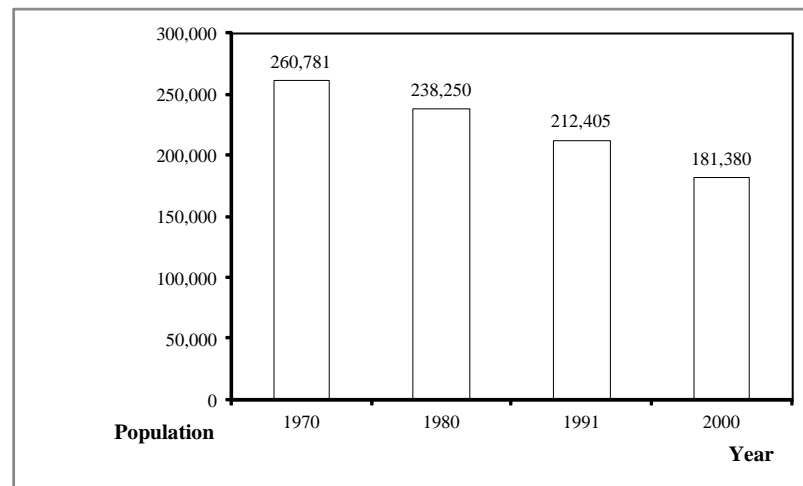


Figure 1.3. Population trend of George Town, 1970 – 2000

Source: Compiled and modified from Preliminary Count Report of Mukim, Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 1970, 1980, 1991 & 2000

The continual lost of population in George Town also indicates that the people are not getting what they want in various aspects such as a dynamic economy or a sustainable living environment. This in a way shows that the existing planning and

development policies of George Town may not match the demand of the local residents who suffer the biggest development impact. Now added with the unique historical background to be considered, what planning decisions are going to work for inner city of George Town to have a sustainable development? Based on the local community's needs, what are the balanced and suitable planning strategies which will stimulate the growth of socio-economy in the inner city without sacrificing its historical characteristics?

George Town is relatively new in the planning and development for urban conservation. When trying to promote urban conservation, many of the planning ideas were copied from other historical towns which were not suitable to the local environment nor fit the local socio-culture. For instance in an effort to improve the historical image of the inner city of George Town, the local municipal council has carried out facelift projects such as upgrading the pedestrian pavements, building public toilets, adding decorative lampposts and bollards as well as approving night market and bazaar activities. However, these upgrades received negative feedbacks as they ruined the local heritage sense of place (Saving cultural landscapes, 2006). As commented by Tan Cheng Chui (Forum discussion, 4 August 2007), the intention of government to conserve was noble but the implementation was not in a right way.

The effort to conserve George Town can be traced back to the Interim Zoning Plan (IZP) in the 1970s where large scale development was channelled to priority comprehensive development areas so that the identified historical zones could be protected. The conservation concept from IZP was incorporated into the Structure Plan 1987 under the chapter of Urban Form, Townscape and Landscape. While

drafting the Structure Plan, MPPP approved the design guidelines to preserve the historical and unique architecture of the pre-war buildings in five designated conservation zones in the heart of George Town. The heritage properties in George Town were categorised to ease conservation management. This “Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City of George Town, Penang” 1987 was the first conservation guidelines specifically for the inner city of George Town. When the Draft Structure Plan 1987 was amended in 2000, provision for incentives and design recommendations for the conservation zones were stated. Efforts at nominating George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) began before 2000 but by the year 2000 and 2002, George Town was listed on the World Monument Watch 100 Most Endangered Sites. Nevertheless the dossiers submitted for attaining UNESCO WHL was rejected in 2004.

Meanwhile, Penang State had gazetted the Structure Plan in 2007, where the conservation measures to control the development in George Town heritage zones were outlined. In the same year, the design guidelines 1987 were superseded by “Guidelines for the Conservation Area and Heritage Buildings”, which was inspired by Burra Charter 1999, and approved by the Penang State Planning Committee. These guidelines were renamed the “Regulations for the Conservation Area and Heritage Buildings” in 2009. In July 2008 George Town along with Melaka were finally declared as World Heritage Sites on UNESCO WHL after 10 years of effort.

After inscription as a WHS, a draft Special Area Plan (SAP) which included detailed proposals, guidelines and management strategies for the urban conservation of George Town World Heritage Site was prepared and opened for public reviews in

April to May 2012 (the draft SAP is still under the process of inspection and is not gazetted when this research ended in 2013). SAP is George Town's very own conservation management plan. The annexure in the SAP, "Guidelines for the Conservation Area and Heritage Buildings for George Town WHS", will supersede the "Regulations for the Conservation Area and Heritage Buildings 2009".

## **1.2 Special Area Plan (SAP) for George Town World Heritage Site (WHS)**

To solve the problems that hinder urban conservation development a draft special area plan (SAP) has been prepared under the Malaysia Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172) by consultants to the state government of Penang to meet a requirement of being listed on UNESCO WHL. Considered as part of the local plan, SAP is a statutory plan which states the detailed guidance of the implementation and the management for heritage conservation in the George Town World Heritage Site.

The preparation of the draft SAP involved the community of George Town in several stages. In the process of drafting the SAP, views and perceptions regarding the objectives, the purposes and the matters of the draft SAP were collected from interest groups and stakeholders. The draft SAP was then exhibited publicly to seek public comments and objections. Hearings and a local inquiry were carried out before the SAP is finalised and approved by the State. The drafted SAP of George Town WHS was first shown to public in April to May 2012. At the time of writing this thesis the draft SAP had not yet been gazetted.

### **1.2.1 Management Strategies and Actions for George Town World Heritage Site**

The general objective of the SAP for George Town WHS is to provide proper management and protection in order to enhance the integration of the historical built environment with the living socio-cultural activities in George Town while meeting the demand of growth to create well-being for the community in George Town. The vision of the SAP is based on a dynamic living city framework which incorporates conservation, sustainability and economy progress. From the framework, various conservation principles were identified so that the important management strategies and actions can be spelled out.

The management strategies and actions in the SAP will be carried out and implemented in phases with funding from the government. The first strategy is to set up a local non-statutory agency, which is called World Heritage Office (WHO), to partner and assist the local authority in carrying out effective management of George Town WHS. The management strategies in the SAP cover the uses and compatible development for the land and different categories of buildings in WHS. The types of development that are permitted or prohibited in the WHS are defined by categories and by zones. Category I consists of buildings and monuments with an exceptional interest which are gazetted and registered on the national heritage list. Category I buildings must be remain in their original uses and no development shall be permitted. Category II is defined as buildings or items of special interest that warrant every effort being made to preserve them, and this category consists of mostly shophouses. The uses of Category II may be changed (other than the original use or

the best use) depending on the situation and with permission from the local authority. The third category is infill development which refers to existing vacant land or temporary structures where compatible redevelopment is permitted. The last category is replacement where existing buildings without any significant value maybe sensitively redeveloped. To control the uses of the land and buildings, seven zones in the WHS were identified, namely, the waterfront zone, financial zone, trade zone, jetty zone, enterprise zone, tourism and leisure zone, and special zone. In these zones, non-permissible activities are detailed out in the SAP. To monitor the change of uses of the above properties, the George Town WHO and the local authority will carry out surveys and create and maintain an up-to-date database. To ensure that infill development and replacement of non-heritage properties in the WHS are compatible with the outstanding universal values (OUV) of the WHS, certain guidelines and examples for developers and owners to follow are provided.

For the management of the built heritage environment, the existing guidelines have to be reviewed into strong regulations in order to preserve the authenticity of the heritage buildings. Besides the revision of the existing guidelines, other management strategies for the built heritage environment include having a good monitoring system, updated building information, provision of financial aid and incentives, maintenance and repair of buildings through grants and carrying out awareness programmes.

Apart from the heritage buildings, the view and vista of George Town need to be well managed and protected as they are part of the setting of the WHS that contribute to the OUV. The strategies are to identify the unique elements in the views and vistas

(such as the vista points from different sights, the streetscape and the street furniture with special design dated back in time) and setting up guidelines to protect each of them.

Meanwhile, managing circulation and access is another key management strategy. A known problem of George Town is its traffic congestion and the lack of integrated public transport system. The circulation and accessibility problems have brought impacts to the livelihood and overall conservation of George Town WHS. To tackle the problems, the management strategies are set out in phases. In Phase I, the objectives are to improve the public transport system, maximise the existing traffic network by removing the obstruction on the roadsides, manage the traffic demand especially not encouraging the use of private vehicles, adopt universal access principles and increase the pedestrian connectivity in the WHS. In Phase II, the objectives are to promote transport policies which minimise the environmental impacts and integrate the WHS transportation system into the State Transportation Master Plan. In Phase III, the objectives are to moderate the vehicle uses to more sustainable alternatives and ensure the WHS is fully compliant with universal access principles.

While the pedestrian network is emphasised under the management of circulation and accessibility, it is also closely related to the enhancement of the public realm, which is another management strategy in the SAP. Public realm in the WHS covers the public open shared spaces such as backlanes, parks, pedestrianised walkways and streets, waterfront promenade and landscaped car parks. The strategy is to have

design which is minimising the changes of the image of WHS but focusing on a safer, greener and functional public space.

Another important management strategy of SAP is to improve the out-dated and poorly maintained infrastructure including sewerage, drainage, water supply, fire prevention system, telecommunication, electrical supply and roads. The management strategy for the urban infrastructure requires the coordination of all the responsible agencies and departments from the local authority so as to implement the proposals within a 5-10 years time frame. In addition, there is a special strategy on risk management for fire prevention with the purpose to reduce the risk of fire hazards to the heritage buildings.

As an intangible asset of urban conservation, the cultural landscape of George Town is made up of multiple cultures. The first management strategy of the cultural landscape is to promote interaction between the people and the heritage built environment with an understanding of the unique intangible heritage of the WHS by systematically mapping the cultural patterns from the spatial distribution and community activities. The identified cultural maps are the socio-cultural topography, the socio-economic topography, the residential topography and the restaurants and food stalls topography. The second management strategy is to protect and enhance living communities and their connection to the cultural landscape by engaging the community to build a sense of place and the preparing of cultural impact assessments. Through the management of cultural landscape it helps to understand the connections between the people and the heritage built environment especially in achieving a dynamic growth and sustainability of conservation.

In the meantime it is crucial to raise the awareness of the conservation in George Town. As such, related education and information need to be spread effectively to the community of George Town. The management strategies include research and digitisation in archives, award recognitions to the successful restored and preserved heritage buildings and also to engage the community directly in the activities of conservation.

In short, the management strategies in SAP cover different guidelines on the protection and conservation on both tangible and intangible assets of the WHS, which are made up of the physical built heritage environment and the cultural landscape. It also proposes to enhance and improve the urban infrastructure and facilities as well as accessibility and transportation in the historic city. Through the comprehensive management plan, the SAP intends to create a dynamic, sustainable and lively George Town in phases.

### **1.2.2 The Management Strategies of George Town WHS versus Macao WHS**

The inscription justifications that made George Town one of the World Heritage Sites are its outstanding universal values in the multi-cultural heritage aspects. In the Asian region another WHS which shares the same inscription criteria with George Town is Macao. See Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Inscription Criteria for George Town WHS and Macao WHS

WHS Criterion	George Town (Along with Melaka)	Macao
(ii)	Melaka and George Town represent exceptional examples of multi-cultural trading towns in East and Southeast Asia, forged from the mercantile and exchanges of Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultures and three successive European colonial powers for almost 500 years, each with its imprints on the architecture and urban form, technology and monumental art. Both towns show different stages of development and the successive changes over a long span of time and are thus complementary.	The strategic location of Macao on the Chinese territory, and the special relationship established between the Chinese and Portuguese authorities favoured an important interchange of human values in the various fields of culture, sciences, technology, art and architecture over several centuries.
(iii)	Melaka and George Town are living testimony to the multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia, and European colonial influences. This multi-cultural tangible and intangible heritage is expressed in the great variety of religious buildings of different faiths, ethnic quarters, the many languages, worship and religious festivals, dances, costumes, art and music, food, and daily life.	Macao bears a unique testimony to the first and longest-lasting encounter between the West and China. From the 16th to the 20th centuries, it was the focal point for traders and missionaries, and the different fields of learning. The impact of this encounter can be traced in the fusion of different cultures that characterise the historic core zone of Macao.
(iv)	Melaka and George Town reflect a mixture of influences which have created a unique architecture, culture and townscape without parallel anywhere in East and South Asia. In particular, they demonstrate an exceptional range of shophouses and townhouses. These buildings show many different types and stages of development of the building type, some originating in the Dutch or Portuguese periods.	Macao has been associated with the exchange of a variety of cultural, spiritual, scientific and technical influences between the Western and Chinese civilisations. These ideas directly motivated the introduction of crucial changes in China, ultimately ending the era of imperial feudal system and establishing the modern republic.

Source: UNESCO World Heritage List, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

Note: Macao has an additional inscription criterion than George Town and Melaka, which is criterion (vi)

Macao has been listed on the WHL since 2005. With the title of “The Historic Centre of Macao”, Macao WHS comprises two core heritage districts with a total area of 16.17 hectares. Each district has a buffer zone, and the two buffer zones are 106.77 hectares in size. The size of Macao WHS is smaller than George Town, which has a core zone of 109.38 hectares while its buffer zone is 150.04 hectares. Nevertheless these two world heritage sites have similar history and background. Both George Town and Macao were once ports and trading centres in the region, and were ruled by European colonial powers. As such the influences formed by the interchange of

different cultures in the history can be seen in the town planning, architecture, built environment, religions and daily socio-cultural activities on the two World Heritage Sites. As these two World Heritage Sites show great similarities, Macao is hence chosen for comparison with George Town in terms of the conservation management strategies.

Macao has an earlier history in conservation effort compared to George Town, where it started to register selected heritage monuments or buildings and set the protection measurements in 1950s to 1960s under the Portuguese administration. However, it was only in 1976 that the Committee for the Preservation of Architectural, Landscape and Cultural Heritage was formed to support Macao's first heritage law (Decree Law no. 34/76M) in protecting Macau's architectural patrimony, where a list of protected properties and sites was published and the government began to preserve and reuse selected designated heritage properties after purchasing them from the owners (Chung, 2009). In 1984, Decree Law no. 34/76M was replaced by Decree Law no. 56/84/M: Defence of the Architectural, Environmental and Cultural Heritage. In this revised version of heritage related legislations, categories and lists of identified heritage properties and sites were published and incentives were introduced (Cultural Affairs Bureau, n.d.a). The incentives included the property tax, additional tax on rent, business tax, purchase tax, inheritance tax, taxation on donations and planning incentive in the form of a tradable certificate which allowed the transfer of calculated development potential to a new site (Chan & Ngao, 2004). In this period the government of Macao also gradually adapted and improved the conservation rules and regulations following the international charters and conventions (Mok, 2011). One obvious improvement was to change from conserving

single heritage buildings into a more dynamic approach involving “larger historic precincts or areas” and the adaptive reuse of “the heritage building as well as social fabrics” (Chung, 2009). In 1992, another heritage law Decree Law no. 83/92/M was introduced (Cultural Affairs Bureau, n.d.a). Under this law, the categories listed in Decree Law no. 56/84/M were refined and readjusted while additional measures on conservation related works were added to protect the heritage and cultural values. By 1999 with the handover to China Macao was no longer under the Portuguese administration but the status changed to the Special Administrative Region (SAR). After the handover the conservation legislations were maintained.

Macao also carried out a series of educational programmes, seminars, summer courses, youth ambassador programmes and design competitions in promoting urban conservation and increasing the awareness of the public. Following from all the efforts in conservation the next milestone in the Macao’s conservation history was the successful inscription to the WHL in 2005. Macao WHS is made up of heritage corridors which link up the identified heritage monuments, buildings and sites. The inclusion of Macao as a WHS with the theme of “the historic centre of Macao” is in accord with the UNESCO recommendation and measures focus on the notion of historic urban landscape, which was first addressed in the 2005 Vienna Memorandum (Zhang, 2012). The historic urban landscape covers broader context of not just the buildings and surroundings but a city that gradually evolves and develops through the process of urbanisation.

Macao WHS’s conservation management strategies are based on the existing legislations and focused on the promotion and education of the public, especially the

young generation. A noteworthy and good example in the Macao WHS management strategies is the revitalisation and the rehabilitation of open spaces within the heritage sites, which included pedestrianisation, upgrading the streetscapes and installing user-friendly amenities. The strategy has been successfully restoring the social interaction and improvement of the public life of the local community, enhancing public awareness of heritage conservation while attracting visitors and boosting commercial activities that help to achieve “heritage sustainability” in Macao (Chung, 2009; Mok, 2011; du Cros, 2009).

George Town’s very first urban conservation law is the design guidelines for conservation zones under the development plan and approved by local government in 1987. The government system of George Town is different from Macao. There are three tiers in the administration of George Town: local government, state government and federal government. At the national level, a national conservation law called the National Heritage Act gazetted in 2005 only covers some aspects of the urban built heritage, and does not detail the urban conservation situation of George Town at the state and local levels. There are other conservation related provisions in other laws, but like the National Heritage Act the provisions are very general and not specific to the case of George Town. These laws include Town and Country Planning Act 1976, Local Government Act 1976, Antiquities Act 1976, Street, Building and Drainage Act 1974 and Uniform Buildings By-Laws 1984. In 2011, the Penang State Heritage Bill was tabled to provide for proper legal and management mechanism to conserve the heritage of the State.

Before the Penang State Heritage Enactment passed, conservation related guidelines and regulations for George Town were found under development plans such as IZP 1973 and Structure Plan 1987 (Amended in 2000), where the inner city of George Town was highlighted as a conservation zone and the list of heritage properties was identified. Like Macao, the heritage properties were categorised and conservation incentives were provided. There were also conservation design guidelines and rules for the developers and owners who wish to develop the identified heritage properties. After the inscription to WHL, the overall conservation rules and guidelines in George Town were reviewed and improved into a more comprehensive document via a SAP.

Overall, in terms of the planning of conservation management, George Town achieved faster results than Macao. Macao WHS was inscribed in WHL three years earlier than George Town but it does not have a comprehensive conservation management plan like the SAP for George Town WHS. With the assistance of a professional consultant (the WHO) appointed by government, the SAP was prepared as a statutory plan which empowers the public with different backgrounds in the whole conservation decision making process for George Town WHS. This is important because a well managed conservation development needs the involvement and participation of the whole community (Lung, 2004; Engelhardt, 2004). There is no statutory management plan and special consultant in Macao WHS. There is also no empowerment of the community in the planning process of urban conservation. Only selected groups from the community such as the trade related organisations and certain professional bodies are invited to the decision making process of conservation development (Chung, 2009) (At the time when this thesis is being drafted in 2012, the “Cultural and Heritage Protection Bill” of Macao which includes the proposal of

establishing a heritage committee for the management, setting up heritage awards and engaging the public in the conservation decision making process was still in progress). Macao's conservation management lacked coordination and integration, while the administration is weak (Chung, 2009; Lung, 2004).

The management planning of George Town is more comprehensive but in terms of the rehabilitation and restoration of public space in heritage zones George Town has not made significant progress to match Macao. This weakness is identified as the urgent challenge to urban conservation in the SAP. Looking at the living environment in the inner city of George Town, there are many problems such as the narrow streets, neglected spaces, traffic congestion, lack of up-to-date urban utilities and services. Without proper space design the inner city of George Town is not attractive to the people.

Despite the differences, there are common management strategies for George Town and Macao WHS. One of them is the idea of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. Adaptive reuse is applied to buildings which do not fall into the category where no addition or changes are allowed, for example, places of worship. In the contested land of Macao one way to protect the heritage buildings is to encourage the owners and developers to not demolish the heritage buildings and reuse them (Lung, 2004). The adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings have been successfully carried out in Macao especially with the cooperation between government and private sectors (Chung, 2009). In George Town, the adaptive reuse is encouraged for the purpose of regeneration and economic growth (Badan Warisan Heritage Service Sdn Bhd, 2008). It is also recognised as compatible use if the best use (the original use) of the heritage

buildings does not apply. Heritage impact assessment is needed if there is a change of use of the heritage building (AJM Planning and Urban Design Group, 2011).

In an effort to increase awareness and promote urban conservation to public, there are trainings and education programmes in Macao WHS such as the “Heritage Ambassador Training Scheme” and heritage summer training camps targeting the young generation, cultural heritage tours route design and online heritage information kit (Cultural Affairs Bureau, n.d.b). Likewise, to instil awareness and to promote the concept of urban conservation to the young people in the inner city of George Town, heritage educational projects such as “Anak-anak Kota” (Children of the City) are held by a non-profit organisation, Arts-Ed, with the collaboration of non-governmental organisations (NGO) like Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) and the government. The community of George Town is also engaged in the programmes like living museum, documentation of the oral history of inner city, the creation of the intangible heritage inventory and cultural mapping (Ang, 2012).

Both of the World Heritage Sites are facing the challenge of meeting modernisation needs in the historic areas. For instance the economy oriented high-rise developments from the gaming industry has threatened the authenticity and integrity of the heritage site in the case of Guia Fortress, Macao, where the view was blocked by high-rise buildings (Zhang, 2012; Mok, 2011). This even raised the concern of UNESCO which issued a “warning letter” to the SAR government of Macao (Chung, 2009). A similar incident happened in George Town when it attained the WHL in 2008. The height of four approved hotels within the heritage zones did not comply with the height limit proposed in the dossier submitted to UNESCO (Filmer, 2008b).

As the hotels were granted the planning approval before the inscription this incident created a prolonged dispute among the developers, government, conservation activists, UNESCO and the public. Finally the four hotels agreed to rescale and modify the development according to the WHS requirements (Mcintyre, 2009).

Both World Heritage Sites have to prepare and face the impacts that could be brought by mass tourism activities after the inscription to WHL. For Macao, the increase of the China mainland tourists and the China monolithic influence could wipe out the diversity of local cultures and traditions, the sense of place and the businesses that serve the local community (du Cros, 2009). In the case of George Town, mass tourism could generate uncontrolled gentrification that causes the displacement of the original communities and the existing lifestyles, changes the original uses and characters of the heritage buildings and streets and ruin the authenticity (Jenkins, 2008; Lim, 2011). Mass tourism could also worsen the traffic congestion in the inner city of George Town, which then threatens the liveability and damages the heritage buildings (Bahauddin, Abdullah & Mohamed, 2008). Following the impact of tourism, the heritage properties in George Town are in a boom in prices with many heritage properties being sold to foreigners (Lim & Lee, 2010). As a result, gentrification is slowly taking place in George Town WHS, the traditional trades and businesses are closed and replaced by boutique hotels and modern cafes (Grusaite, 2012; Lim, 2012).

To overcome the challenges, both Macao and George Town WHS emphasise community-based management strategies in order to gain success in urban conservation. Conservation management cannot be limited as an elite activity but

have to go through community stewardship (Engelhardt, 2004). In other words, community-based management is a result of evolving conservation trend that aims to protect and sustain the conservation. In Macao, community awareness is rising and community support for conservation is higher than expected (du Cros, 2009). The on-going Cultural and Heritage Protection Bill also proposes to engage the public in the process of decision making for conservation development (Choi, 2012). As for George Town, public interest and awareness on the conservation related programmes and activities have been growing especially after the listing (“Qi Li Zong Wei Fu Fen Xiang Hui. Yu 50 Ren Xue Wen Hua Bao Hu Yi Chan”, 2008). The SAP also adopts the bottom up approach, which is to empower the community and public into the process of the planning for conservation development in George Town WHS.

As a conclusion, both Macao and George Town are gradually forming the suitable conservation laws and guidelines in managing their World Heritage Sites. The laws and guidelines are in accordance with the evolving recommendations and guidelines from international charters and conventions in order to meet contemporary conservation needs. Main policies adapted from international charters and conventions included the living historic town, urban historic landscape and community-based management. These policies show the trend of urban conservation has shifted from merely monument or building preservation to larger area and cover the cultural landscape of an historic site which involves the local community, the cultures and the socio-economic activities, as portrayed in the concepts of cultural heritage and urban historic landscape. The adaptation of the evolving policies is to meet the changes of the built environment today. By adapting the international guidelines into the local conservation policies it helps to bring positive impacts to the

heritage site and the local community. For instance the revitalisation and rehabilitation of the once neglected public spaces within the heritage zones in Macao not only improve the sense of place, the view and vista, but it also brings more economic benefits. In George Town, the promotion of cultural tourism following the inscription to WHL has been attracting tourists (“UNESCO listing a boost for Penang tourism”, 2008).

Nevertheless, not all the international guidelines and policies work smoothly. Some guidelines are easier to follow, and accepted by the public easily. For instance the idea of adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings is accepted in Macao WHS and George Town WHS. Some guidelines are too strict, or seen as too restrictive especially when put before the consideration of economy and development. For example, the height limit of the buildings in the conservation zones.

In addition, some policies and guidelines are hard to be carried out in reality such as the community based management in the conservation as it is a long term effort that requires continuous education and awareness. In Macao WHS there are conservation training and education especially for young people but there is not enough support of law to make the public get involved in the conservation planning process. Whereas in George Town WHS though there is backup of law to empower the public in the conservation planning process but there is not enough promotion in getting people to join and enjoy the conservation. There is a lack of leadership in the government, and there are doubts and criticisms in the leadership of government in the effort of urban conservation, especially in the poor ability to implement and enforce the conservation regulations. There is a lack of political will to engage the public in the

urban planning decision making process (Lim, 2005). The conservation awareness and promotion in George Town are initiated and mainly carried out by PHT and Nanyang Folk Culture society. Led by elites, the NGO have been promoting the awareness of conservation through events and activities, but their influence are limited to the community due to the focus of heritage and the language barriers (Jenkins, 2008).

Moreover, there is always conflict between private and public responsibility in the heritage conservation (Enders, 2009). This results in the difficulty in the establishment of efficient community based management as there are different interests between developers, owners and conservationists. In short, it will take time to implement and realise the international guidelines and policies into the local urban conservation in Macao WHS and George Town WHS. Sustainable urban conservation can only be achieved with the collaboration of the government, NGO, stakeholders and local community.

### **1.3 Thesis Statement and Theoretical Framework**

Despite all the efforts in conservation, the inner city of George Town has been stagnant in its development and the pre-war buildings are being demolished or destroyed continuously. Without truly empowering the community in the planning process of urban conservation, the problems in the conservation district will not be solved (Elnokaly & Elseragy, 2013). This is because in a complex and dynamic planning process planners alone may not able to identify or assess the genuine local communal interests (New South Wales Heritage Office, 2005; Yuen & Ng, 2001).