

**MEDAN: THE CHALLENGES IN THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION
OF A METROPOLIS**

by

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Abstrak

Sejak zaman orde baru, konservasi kawasan kota yang bersejarah atau bernilai warisan budaya hampir tidak pernah menjadi bagian yang terpadu dari sebuah proses maupun praktek perencanaan kota-kota Indonesia. Pembangunan fisik kota yang pesat sebagai hasil dari pertumbuhan ekonomi yang cukup signifikan lebih mengejar peniruan sebagaimana wajah kota modern di Negara barat yang mengingkari masa lalu, daripada menggali dan memanfaatkan warisan fisik kota peninggalan masa lalu. Potensi budaya dan ekonomi yang dikandung oleh stok bangunan dan ruang public yang dimiliki sebuah kawasan kota yang bersejarah dikesampingkan oleh kepentingan sepihak dan jangka pendek dari pelaku ekonomi, perencana kota dan Birokrat.

Medan, sebagai sebuah kota yang sedang berkembang pesat sejak pertengahan tahun 1980-an merupakan sebuah contoh kasus yang menarik karena dapat memberikan ilustrasi tentang gejala diatas, sekaligus memberi harapan akan adanya perubahan paradigma dalam perencanaan kota masa kini yang lebih memperhatikan kekayaan masa lampau. Medan adalah sebuah kota yang “sengaja diciptakan” pada akhir abad 19 demi kepentingan ekonomi pemerintah Kolonial Belanda. Wajah dan ruang-ruang kota medan masa kini mencerminkan hasil dari interaksi tarik ulur antara ambisi pembangunan yang menganaktirikan sejarah dan tekad yang setengah hati untuk menampilkan masa lalu sebagai identitas kota masa kini.

Bagian utama makalah ini mencoba menunjukkan kegagalan dan potensi kegagalan kota Medan dalam melindungi dan memanfaatkan kembali bagian masa lalunya, analisa mengapa kegagalan itu terjadi dan bagaimana langkah-langkah pencegahan dapat diterapkan, serta bagaimana potensi yang diwariskan oleh masa lalu dapat menjadi bagian yang integral dari pembangunan kota di masa depan. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam social, ekonomi, kelembagaan, kajian kebijakan publik dan hukum yang semuanya terkait erat dengan perencanaan kota adalah unsure yang turut berperan memberi pemahaman atas bagian makalah ini.

Agar dapat memahami lebih jelas hal-hal yang diutarakan pada bagian utama pendahuluan dari makalah ini akan membahas sekilas tentang sejarah pertumbuhan kota Medan, situasi terkini dari wajah kota Medan dan kebijakan pengembangan kota di masa depan yang sedang disusun oleh pemerintah kota. Derap langkah dan perjuangan organisasi non-pemerintah seperti Badan Warisan Sumatera (BWS) juga adalah bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dari diskusi tentang konservasi dan perencanaan kota di Medan sejak beberapa tahun terakhir. Oleh sebab itu , dib again yang terkait, pemamparan tentang upaya BWS untuk konservasi kota Medan akan cukup akan cukup sering dijumpai. Pada bagian akhir, beberpa rekomendasi yang juga diharapkan relevan untuk kebutuhan ota-kota lainnya akan coba dirumuskan dengan menjadikan Medan sebagai sebuah sumber pembelajaran.

A. INTRODUCTION

Dating back to the time when its embryonic urban layout was initially created, Medan is considered a fairly new city. It has become recognized as an urbanized area with some basic relevant attributes less than 150 years ago. As similarly happened to other Indonesian cities, a discussion on the real birth date of Medan also involves two ways of interpreting the historical development of the city. Each group defies the opinions of the other. When nationalism and local indigenous pride play a role in this debate, as mostly reflected by the decision made by the Indonesian city authority in regard to the age of their city, Medan is a considerably old city. Whereas from colonial perspective this city has come into existence since 1860s and administratively gained a recognition as a municipality since 1 April 1909, the city government has drawn on indigenously produced historical facts advocated by local academicians in order to decide officially that Medan was born on 1 July, 414 years ago.

This paper doesn't intend to take part into the discourse of the real birth date of the city of Medan. Instead, one of its purposes tries to show that both versions have contributed to the forming of a historical line which describes the emergence of multi-faceted and multicultural Medan with its particular layout of historic core and its surroundings. Both perspectives could be linked by a factual historical line, readable at the present time if some efforts are made. It could also be a potential basic tool in the process of re-identification of the city's historical identity and unique memory.

The involvement of various ethnic groups in the urbanization of modern Medan and the interaction of political-economic and social interests among these groups along its growth process have given birth to Medan as a city of colourful and diverse urban and architectural heritage. Through rapid and unfavorable change of spatial and physical pattern of development, these unique urban and architectural heritages have been experiencing an alarming rate of extinction.

By illustrating the historical background of the city's urban layout development and how the contemporary Medan has been ignoring its wealth of historical identity, this paper seeks to propose some measures and tools to prevent the continuing losses and to certain extent, to demonstrate how such actions could enhance the capability of urban heritage in contributing to the betterment of Medan's urban life, economically, socially and culturally.

B. MEDAN: A TOWN CREATED BY ENTREPRENEURS¹

1. brief historical background

Until 1857, The Dutch colonial government intervention in the island of Sumatra was fairly limited even though the island had come under the control of the Dutch colonial government as a treaty was signed between the Dutch and British governments in 1824, which ended the dispute of territorial claim over Sumatra and Malay Peninsula between both parties. As a result of a colonial intervention in 1857 into the Sultanate of Siak, one of the prominent indigenous authorities in Sumatra, on 1 February 1858, a political contract was

¹ This part draws upon Cor Passchier's paper: "Medan, Urban Development by Planters and Entrepreneurs (1870-1940), presented at the WUO/CNWS workshop on "The Indonesian City", 16-17 December 1993, Leiden, The Netherlands and Sinar, Tengku Luckman.2002."The History of Medan in Olden Times". Medan: Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengembangan Seni Budaya Melayu.

signed between the Netherlands-Indies Government and the Sultan of Siak Sri Indrapura and the respective Sultanate began to come under the rule of the colonial government. Subsequently, in 1862, the colonial administration in Batavia (Jakarta) also managed to arrange political contracts with the indigenous rulers whose areas were historically subject to the power of Sultan of Siak, thus the colonial government had been able to announce their territorial claims on more and more parts of Sumatra. Some of them were territories belonged to the Sultanate of Deli, Langkat and Serdang, which were fertile and productive grounds on the north east coast of Sumatra.

The land on which the early urban layout of Medan was established, was originally part of Deli Sultanate. Because Deli had politically come under the administration of colonial government, more and more European adventurers, planters and entrepreneurs began to flock in with greater enthusiasm and aspirations². When the first wave of European fortune seekers “invaded” the region, the indigenous harbor Labuhan Deli, at the mouth of Deli River, served as colonial administrative centre and the seat of the Sultanate of Deli, equipped with trading and harbor facilities and a garrison of military troops. In the beginning of 1870s, as Medan had begun to catch the attention as a center of the region, Labuhan Deli started to lose its attractions as an administrative center for both indigenous and colonial ruler as well as a trading centre. Labuhan Deli prominent position in the region had even become more eroded as its northern area known as Belawan was considered as a better natural harbor.

2. The role of private initiatives

During the last quarter of 19th century, European business enterprises began to take part in the establishment of Medan’s urban layout, a process which was quite unique as their roles and results of such intervention acclaimed more credits as could be acclaimed by colonial government. And at the turn of century, other ethnic groups – mainly of Chinese origin – also began to leave their marks of involvements to the physical development of the town. Thus Medan has become known as an example of late 19th century urban development which was based on private sector’s investments and a product of non-governmental efforts.

However, it should also be noted that the urbanized area of Medan, as a result of fledgling and bustling economic activities of its surrounding region – which were focused on plantations and agriculture and their relevant industries – would not come into existence if the colonial government did not end its own practice of monopoly on agriculture and plantations in 1872. But long before this drastic change of political and economic policies – as earlier as 1863 – the Dutch and other European private entrepreneurs had already begun searching new business challenges in the island, including to the north east coast of Sumatra. It is in this context that the lucrative business relations between the native rulers at the north-east coast of Sumatra and the western business communities were established, and subsequently gave birth to Medan as a modern city.

During those pioneering days, there was one man whose successful endeavors in tobacco cultivation triggered the beginning of massive exploitations on Deli fertile grounds and consequently paved the way for the incremental growth of its center, namely Medan – which by that time was just a small village - to become an urbanized area with modern urban amenities. He was Jacob Nienhuys, a planter from Java who visited Deli in 1863. He managed to secure a piece of land from the Sultan of Deli, Mahmood Perkasa Alam. The

² A novel entitled “Rubber” by Madelon H. SzekelyLulofs, first published in 1935, painted quite a clear picture of the ways these groups of earlier Europeans in Deli region lived and survived.

successful European market acceptance of the first shipment of tobacco leaves - used as premium cigar wrapper - which were cultivated on his land, encouraged other large scale Western agricultural and plantations enterprises to begin their exploitation on the north-east coast of Sumatra.

Since the last quarter of 19th century, larger and more areas of fertile land were conferred by the Sultan of Deli to western companies who cultivated the productive ground with not only tobacco but also rubber, palm oil, coffee and tea. The result of such activities was an ever expanding and developing of the region at an extraordinary pace, particularly Medan as the center of the region. If there was Jacob Nienhuys to whom the newly established western business communities owed their fortune, there was also a particular western enterprise to which the city of Medan owed its existence in some way or another. It was the Dutch company, the Deli Maatschappij³, the largest and most prominent of its kind in the region, founded around 1869. It contributed much of its land concessions for the development of earlier layout of Medan city and the company's initiatives for better infrastructure and living condition in the region provided the urbanized area of Medan with basic facilities as a modern city. It founded a railway company in 1883, a hospital in 1885, a telephone company in 1886, and in 1905 it established a water-supply company.

The growing significance of Medan as a colonial city and the center of region's economic boom went hand in hand with the development of the Deli Maatschappij as the most powerful company in the region. And this new status of Medan as an urbanized area was made possible after the Deli Maatschappij established their administrative center at an area located at the confluence of Deli river and Babura river, approximately 10 km south of Labuhan Deli. The area was historically acknowledged as Medan Putri⁴, which already had a settlement of some indigenous villages. Kesawan, was a village to the south of Medan Putri, at the western bank of Deli river. Kesawan later emerged as one of the most important commercial districts of Medan.

The ever expanding plantation and agricultural business demanded enormous need for laborers and coolies. They were employed under contract to the western companies. Because the indigenous people did not meet the employment conditions, Chinese and Javanese were the alternatives. The Malay people, the original inhabitants of Deli, were few in number and culturally, were not used to work on agricultural fields. The Batak people who settled in the hinterland were politically unsuitable as they accused Sultan of Deli as having illegally taken large parts of their lands and sold them to the western companies. The Chinese coolies were originally recruited from Malay Peninsula and Singapore. In 1877, the British colonial government of the Straits Settlements refused to cooperate in this recruitment business and thus forced the Deli planters association to organize the recruitments directly from China. At the same time, Javanese workers were also being transported in large number from Java. At the end of their contract period, most of these laborers chose to remain in the region and started their own ways of earning a living. This is how Deli region, especially Medan has a multi-racial society and colorful cultural heritage.

³ The Deli Company as it is translated in English

⁴ Some scholars argued that this is how the respective urbanized area was called Medan. The name "Medan Putri" might be associated with a local princess called "Putri Hijau" who built a fortress at the location which was later destroyed by a Acehnese invasion at the end of 16th century.

3. The earlier layout of a colonial town

The earliest intervention by planters society which is still recognizable until present time and which exercised the most profound influence on the creation of earlier Medan's townscape was the Esplanade⁵. Initially, this considerably large area of 275 meter by 175 meter was part of a tobacco plantation. Through the colonial time, it assumed many roles as various as simply a vacant open space with some greenery, a sport ground, an urban park, a spot to play a movie and an exhibition venue. Spatially, it was used as a reference point on which other important buildings were situated.

On the north-west side of the Esplanade were an estate of houses belonged to the Deli Maatschappij which served also as guest houses, hospital, church and public auditorium. In 1884, a small hotel called "Grand Hotel Medan" was built to the southern side of the Esplanade. The colonial club "De Witte" which was already founded in 1879 had its permanent premise made of masonry completed in 1887. Together with the central post office which was firstly built in 1879 (later was rebuilt in 1909 and finished in 1911), De Witte building formed the northern side of the Esplanade. The Deli Maatschappij set up a railway company the "Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij"⁶ or DSM in 1883 and got the railway between Medan and Labuhan Deli officially opened in 1885. This railway company built its railway station with a pedestrian bridge over the railway tracks on the east side of the Esplanade and in 1918 constructed its head office to the north east side of the Esplanade.

Only at the end of the first decade of 20th century, the western plot of the Esplanade began to be filled with permanent buildings. Following the decentralization policy, a regional council by the name "de Afdeelingraad van Deli" was established in 1906. But in just a short period, and that was on 1 April 1909, this council ceased to exist and was replaced by a Municipal Council as Medan gained the status as an independent municipality⁷. A representative town hall built in 1909 on the western side of the Esplanade was made available for the newly founded municipal council after 'de Afdeelingraad van Deli' bought this building which was originally designed as an office of "Javasche Bank"⁸. The "Javasche Bank" then occupied another building which was also constructed in 1909, situated next to the town hall. The famous Hotel de Boer whose construction began in 1898 was the northern neighbor of the Javasche Bank. On the south west corner of the Esplanade, the British firm "Harrisons and Crossfields" established their 5-storey office building in 1914. And around the corner, the Dutch Trading Company also built their offices in 1929. So this is how the urban setting around the Esplanade was determined up to the early 1930s.

Meanwhile, at the end of 19th century, Kesawan village which was located at the south west corner of the Esplanade had begun its transformation to become a commercial district. Its main road, also called Kesawan, was flanked by rows of shop houses which were mainly owned by Chinese entrepreneurs. After the big fire in 1899, these modest one storey constructions of wood were replaced by two-storey buildings made of plastered bricks. After the turn of the century, Kesawan began to win its position as a modern – western inspired – shopping street, with continuous street facades comprised of various architectural styles.

⁵ Nowadays is well-known by the name Lapangan Merdeka or Merdeka Square

⁶ Deli Railway Company

⁷ But Medan had to wait until 1 April 1918 in order to function fully and effectively as a municipality since the first mayor was only officially appointed on this date.

⁸ The origin of Indonesian Central Bank

Although both the colonial administration and local indigenous ruler played subordinate role in the physical development of the town, buildings which affirmed their political and social presence were placed on some strategic spots around the town. The Netherlands-Indies government built a monumental residential building for its Assistant-Resident of Sumatra East Coast in 1898, situated at the western side of Deli river. In line with the shifting of economic center from Labuhan Deli to Medan, the Sultan of Deli “Ma’amoen al Rasjid Perkasa Alam Sjah”, also chose to settle in Medan and built his stylish new palace at the west bank of the Deli river from 1887 to 1891. To the southwest of his palace, a grand mosque in Moroccan style was constructed and finished in 1906. And a cross the mosque, a park famous by the name “Siti Khadijah Park” was designed for the enjoyment of the royal family at their leisure time.

5. city of multi-racial society

As various ethnic groups played different roles and held different positions in the endeavors of plantation exploitation on the north east coast of Sumatra, the region witnessed the rise of a multi-racial society, particularly in the center of the region, Medan. Like other colonial city, Medan also practiced the law of racial segregation and expressed in the ways the different groups of population were arranged around its urban areas. The existence of each particular group was recognizable through the architectural typology and urban morphology found in their respective urban neighborhood.

At the turn of the century, the Europeans resided on the northern and western sides of the Esplanade. The architecture of their residential buildings evolved from wooden constructions inspired by the Malay type of dwelling – but adapted to the needs of European households in the tropics – to houses in British cottage style, which were wooden houses with stone basement. In the twenties and thirties of 20th century, European houses were recognizable as being often two-storey high, detached houses with tiled roofs and a garage, mostly accompanied with some small auxiliary buildings.

From 1920s until 1950s, elite Europeans domiciled in a new neighborhood called Polonia which was planned with the concept inspired by the idea of a garden city. In 1919, as a result of land transaction, the Medan municipality managed to secure a piece of land to the south west of Deli Maatschappij headquarters complex. The area formerly was a tobacco plantation famous by the name Polonia⁹, flanked by Babura river at its west side and Deli river to the east and *Polonia* airport¹⁰ to the south. An important north-south road - *Polonianeweg*¹¹ - connected this new neighborhood to the city center around the Esplanade. But historically, since 1870s, it had served as a major road for transporting tobacco leaves from *Polonia* plantation to the headquarters of the *Deli Maatschappij*, before it was sent to Belawan port for export. Later, another north-south artery road, called *Manggalaan*¹² was established. These two north – south main roads that connected the newly extended residential neighborhood of *Polonia* with the city’s historic core were linked at the south by an east-west road named *Sultansweg*¹³ and joined at their north end by a green open field. This open space

⁹ In 1869, the Polish Count Michalsky obtained a land concession and kept to its possession until 1890, the year it was taken over by the Deli Maatschappij.

¹⁰ Fund for the airport development was raised through private initiatives. In this case, it was based on a joint-venture formed by the societies of rubber planters and tobacco planters.

¹¹ In present time known as Jalan Imam Bonjol / Imam Bonjol street

¹² In present time known as Jalan Diponegoro / Diponegoro street

¹³ In present time known as Jalan Sudirman / Sudirman street

was used as sports ground in 1930s and nowadays is known by the name *Lapangan Benteng* or Benteng Square. Whereas the Esplanade's urban ensemble was dominated by business, leisure and infrastructure institutions, Benteng Square's urban ensemble was characterized by colonial administration and militaristic institutions such as the Court of Justice and the barracks of the Dutch Indies military troops.

The houses in *Polonia* area was principally arranged on the east-west streets plans except for some houses on a few secondary roads. The streetscape of this residential neighborhood was characterized with cozy small roads covered with leafy big trees, interesting parks and green lawns in front of the houses. Along both sides of *Manggalaan* and *Poloniaweg* many urban villas – mostly belonged to planters and industrialists – with imposing grandeur in tropically sensitive design principles stood firmly on beautifully landscaped compound. During 1930s new development started at the southern part of the *Sultansweg* with urban layout reminiscent of those at the northern part.

The Chinese population with quite considerable number, lived and worked mainly in the commercial district of *Kesawan* and in the adjacent area on the eastern side of the railway tracks. They occupied a grid patterned urban area of main and secondary roads. Both sides of these roads were lined up by two-storey shop houses and warehouses. The architectural concept and design of this combination of working and living were similar to those found in other Chinese settlements on the other side of the Straits of Malacca, namely in *George Town*, *Penang* and in *Singapore*. These shop houses accommodate space for trading or working – mainly were home-industries – on the lower ground and space for dwelling on the upper ground. A small courtyard functioned as air and light well was to be found in the middle of the house. A covered five-foot width circulation space meant for pedestrian along the frontage of the shop houses resulted in a form of an arcade, creating an interesting feature of urban design unique to the region. Its climatic consideration and its visual expression of a continuous street façade and urban skyline made these shop houses possess some intrinsic values worthy of safeguarding as a heritage unique to the region. Whereas Europeans were proud of their social clubs, sports arena and churches, the Chinese were proud of their temples and clan houses.

The city's indigenous population mainly comprised of local Malays, small groups of *Bataks* and *Karonese* from the hinterland and immigrants which were mostly of Javanese origins. The indigenous people settled in *kampong*¹⁴ built on Sultan's lands located mostly on the south eastern part of the fledgling town and some on the outskirts of the town. In most cases, their living conditions were less hygienic and spatially less organized compared to those of the Chinese and Europeans. Their growth was often explosive, spontaneous and uncontrollable as the population number rapidly increased but the economic opportunities and social facilities were slow to follow.

While the indigenous Malays royal family inherited great mosque, palace and other administration institution, the peasant left their marks in the city's history in forms of uniquely designed *rumah panggung*¹⁵ and mosques specific to certain ethnic origin such as *Mandailing*¹⁶ mosques.

¹⁴ A type of local settlement with village characteristics socially and physically, but is located in urbanized areas, often referred to as urban villages.

¹⁵ Platform house, a wooden house with raised floor to prevent termites, dampness and flood, decorated with Malay design ornaments.

¹⁶ Mandailing people come from the south west part of present North Sumatra province. Their region borders with the province of West Sumatra.

The small groups of Arabs and other Asiatic origins, chiefly Indians from British colonies were to be found settled on the western side of the Esplanade. The dwelling of Indians origins did not feature prominently in the city's townscape but they did group themselves in certain areas of the town. The most important one is known until today as Kampong Keling situated on the east bank of Babura river, in one of the main commercial districts of the city. While their dwelling typology does not attract much attention, their worship places do.

B. MEDAN: TOWARDS A METROPOLIS WITH DISSAPEARING HERITAGE

Like any other cities of the third world, during the last quarter of 20th century, Medan also has been experiencing an exhilarating speed of urbanization and facing mounting social-economic pressures. The inevitable impacts of this uncontrollable urbanizing process are crumbling urban infrastructure, poor social services, descending quality of livelihood and over-stretching urban environment. Weak government and unscrupulous real estate ventures and speculations put tremendous pressures on the existence of the historical parts of Medan which are often the loci of invaluable architectural and urbanistic heritage. Coupled with the lack of adequate and appropriate spatial planning tools, they all contribute either to the creation of ever-increasing state of isolation and disintegration of these urban heritage from the rest of the city or destroying the city's historic urban tissue.

Around the Esplanade, the very core of the city's earliest urban layout, some buildings which witnessed the colorful lifestyles of the emerging cosmopolitan society had been replaced by contemporary buildings designed without any reference to their historic settings. In early 1970s, social club De Witte and the Grand Hotel Medan were torn down to give room for the construction of bank buildings. Few parts of hotel de Boer was kept while most part of it was replaced by new buildings and a high rise hotel tower. The bungalow styles houses occupied by employees of the Deli Maatschappij were flattened down to earth and on top of them a shopping complex was constructed in middle of 1980s. Some housing estates for the workers of the Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij had been disappeared and the remaining ones are neglected and in a very desperate state of decay. Many planters villas were either destroyed and replaced by Spanish style palace-look like mansion or are deteriorating. The unique urban environment of Polonia is hardly recognizable nowadays as houses had been renovated or redesigned without any appreciation for harmonious scale, proportion and appropriate materials of their surroundings. Medan's first department store¹⁷ and the adjacent office buildings in the neighborhood of Kesawan have been neglected for quite some time. Many buildings along Kesawan street have been replaced by new buildings insensitive to scale, materials used and their historical background. The streetscape is no longer continuous and attractive. The skyline has been altered and become an eye-shore.

Lindeteves-Stokvis building built in 1912, was dismantled in 2002 to make way for a shopping complex. The headquarter of the Deli Maatschappij still stands firmly until today, but it has been sold to a private enterprise, thus its fate is also worrying.

The Chinese population have lost part of their identity and memory by the time they began to knock-down their original shop houses and replaced them with anonymous

¹⁷ It was inaugurated by the first Mayor of Medan, Baron Mackaay in 1918.

form of contemporary shop houses as high as 4-storey. Many of them were just simply torn down to give space for the building of bird houses¹⁸.

The indigenous Malay has lost their *Gedung Kerapatan Adat Deli*, one of their prominent institutional buildings, in early 1980s. Many Malay style houses also had disappeared to give space for new developments.

Functionally and economically, Medan's architectural heritage has lost its place in the contemporary urban landscape to the needs of a modern society that actually could be catered equally effective if proper planning techniques were in place, hand in hand with creativity and imagination. Aesthetically, the city's heritages were substituted with choice of architectural vocabularies that were manifest of the society's chronic crisis of identity. Medan's society has shown their tendency to either reject the contemporary and repeat the iconic forms of the past – often with the forms that are irrelevant to their original culture – or they try to break out of the locale and import the westernized modern as an expression of “progress”. Both approaches tend to be heavy handed and devoid of sensibility to either time or space¹⁹.

In short, unless some firm actions are taken and exercised, soon Medan will find itself as one of the big cities of Asia with anonymous and banal urban landscape, devoid of its identity and sense of place.

C. A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SAFEGUARDING MEDAN'S URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE²⁰

Conservation of historic parts of cities under the mounting pressures of rapid urbanization must be approached by searching for a sound framework capable of addressing parts of the problem in a positive and continuing process. The synergy of solutions found through creative discourses and effective political processes of addressing parts of the problem will create a powerful upward spiral of rejuvenation for decaying historic part of a city. The framework must at least address the issues of urban planning, legal aspects of conservation practice, finance and investment policy, and participation of relevant stakeholders.

1. Urban planning policy

It is impossible for such a rapidly urbanized city as Medan to only direct its growth and development outside the historic areas. It is not advisable to protect and conserve its architectural and urban heritage merely as monuments, frozen in time in a format similar to an open air museum. The urban places of cultural and historic significance inevitably will absorb and respond to new urban realities and aspirations and changing life styles of its residents. Thus, arguably, historic precinct is meant to be a living organism, an integral part of a modern city. But interventions within such historical context must not only

¹⁸ A permanent building of 4-5 storey high, with artificial micro-climate inside the building and specific treatment at its exterior appearance in order to attract the swallow birds to nest. The saliva produced by these birds has high economic value as it is believed to possess nutritional ingredients.

¹⁹ See “ Very special places: The architecture and economics of intervening in historic cities” in Serageldin (1999, p. 8)

²⁰ This part draws on “ Very special places: The architecture and economics of intervening in historic cities” in Serageldin (1999, p. 10-25)

protect the historic district's character, but also to strengthen its sense of place and sense of identity. These efforts require subversive creativity and liberating contribution of innovative concepts to search for architecture that can reflect and enrich the critical discourse about the contemporary architectural language and expression. An architecture that reinterprets the past through contemporary eyes, and sees respect for the heritage not in the slavish copying of past form, but in the respectful incorporation of the spirit of the past in the new²¹.

Discussions on how sensible architectural interventions within places of historic and cultural importance could be lengthy and subject to the competencies and capacities of the architects working in Medan, and it would not be discussed further in this section. The birth of an architectural intervention that honors the past, celebrates the present, and invents the future could be stimulated after a comprehensive planning policy is applied within the urban area of cultural and historic significance. A comprehensive and holistic planning policy must take into account how the current various systems of the city are operating and affecting the domain of the historic area. The resulting analysis would be synthesized and developed into an **integrated conservation plan** for particular historic area. The idea is that a sound planning policy must seek to integrate Medan's historic area with the rest of the city, the one that appreciate the morphological character of the particular area while respecting the inherent charming quality of individual structure within the historic area. Subsequently, a more detailed urban design proposal should be produced to translate those policies into application.

2. Legal aspect

One of common approaches in conservation is restriction on development activities in respective historic area. Usually a legal product is introduced by the local authority in regards to prohibition on destroying culturally significant structures and requirement of how the structures should be up-kept. In accordance to Local Legislation no. 6 / 1988, Medan has had a list of protected buildings. Not less than 42 buildings are listed as heritage. However, the law is still ambiguous in identifying designated buildings as it was not made through a careful inventory study. Moreover, law enforcement was weak as some buildings were demolished shortly after they were registered. But the future of some historically significant buildings is vulnerable as they are not listed as protected buildings. The case of Mega Eltra building which was torn down in 2001 served as an example. Thus an extension of the list has been proposed by Sumatra Heritage Trust to the municipal government and a consultation process is slowly on going.

Furthermore, a need for a legal product to support the conservation of a heritage area as an integrated morphological entity, such as for Polonia neighborhood, shall be addressed.

A transparency and confirmation on the issue of ownership is also worth legal support as these are part of the obstructions when certain questions of ownership become central in the conservation planning process and heritage investment promotion. Clarity of ownership also helps organizations concerned in heritage conservation to build communication lines with the owners of heritage buildings as part of pro-active step to promote heritage safeguarding and optimum investment.

²¹ See "Very special places: The architecture and economics of intervening in historic cities" in Serageldin (1999, p. 8-9)

3. Finance and urban economics policy

Conservation shall not only incorporate restriction on actions but a direct action by the concerned municipal government shall include the giving of financial incentives to motivate other actors to intervene in positive ways. Both an economic and a financial analysis should be conducted to determine to what extent each group of society benefits the conservation investment as they bear the costs based on their disparate actions. Standard urban economics analysis techniques combined with recent advances in the field of environmental economics are relevant to how such cost-benefit analysis of a heritage conservation project might be conducted.

In line with the practice of decentralization policy in current Indonesian public sector, certain fiscal policies such as tax incentives for private sectors are worth of exploration. Historically, Medan was built based on private initiatives. Thus the city just needs a sound investment framework in heritage conservation which could balance the interests of the entrepreneurs and the measures advocated by relevant planning policy. An appropriate form of private-public partnership is another tool as how the important resources in the society might be mobilized to undertake the risk associated with conservation investment.

4. Involvement of relevant actors

Finance and economics are dependent on a framework that brings together the different actors – public and private; international, national and local; formal and informal – in a manner that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Such processes require not only sound finance and economics, but also effective political processes that bring all these actors together towards working collaboratively on effective approaches to conservation and socio-economic rejuvenation in historic areas of a city.

In Medan, the Sumatra Heritage Trust has assumed initiatives to start building alliances with both private and public sector, besides maintaining its relationship with grass roots community. The publishing of its monthly newsletter and informal consultation framework with Medan's business community and relevant municipal agencies serve as strategic tool for building such above-mentioned processes in gathering necessary political support for the trust's aim to promote Medan's urban and architectural heritage.

D. CONCLUSION

After some pitfalls in safeguarding the city's heritage and the up-hill struggle to convince other stakeholders in joining the alliance to protect the city's colorful heritage, finally there is a shed of light at the end of the tunnel. Community's awareness has been raising and the city as a whole has begun to take pride of their heritage. A group of local investors in certain partnership with the municipal government has undertaken an investment to redevelop the area surrounding the old Town Hall of Medan, with the conservation efforts at the historic Town Hall as one of its prime selling points. Although the architectural language in the intervention is disputable, this step will evoke the interest of the other private enterprises to start re-thinking of the prospect of conserving Medan's architectural heritage.

Peter van Dun, a NMCP consultant assisted to the Sumatra Heritage Trust has proposed an integrated conservation framework for the inner city of Medan, which cover the neighborhood of Kesawan and the Esplanade²². The Trust has brought the proposal to municipal authority for further discussion on its implementation. The political process is slow but at least something is rolling.

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²² See “The City of Medan: Undestroyable Progress” (2001) and “The City of Medan: The Continuation of History” (2003), reports of a mission on Integrated Conservation of Medan’s city center by Peter van Dun, NMCP project no. 20587 MIC.