GEYLANG SERAI MALAY VILLAGE
Conservation or Theme Park?

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to investigate the relationship between conservation and theme parks in the local context. While they seem distinct and separate, there are obvious signs that they have the tendency to converge. Singapore Tourism Board's decision of developing places of historic interest like Chinatown into one of its 11 theme parks is one of these signs and have spurred me into exploring these concepts - are they distinct and separate or one and the same? Can they be both at the same time? How and why have they become as such?

This dissertation hopes to prove my hypothesis that under pressure for economic success, and the consecutive recognition of a place as a tourist landscape, these two concepts can and will most likely converge, resulting in conservation pieces that look like theme parks.

In an attempt to find out more about this 'converging phenomenon' I have decided to take the example of the Malay Village – because it typically exemplifies this characteristic – and dig deeper into the context, the reason behind its creation, ideas behind its shaping, its function and architecture. However, this is preceded by the necessary investigation of the local approach to conservation, its ethos and any trend in its development, and an in depth account of theme parks and their objectives.

Besides covering the reasons and methods behind this convergence, also question the effects – whether good or bad – and hence suggest how to encourage or avoid it. With this I hope to find out how we can improve our conservation efforts.

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