Returning to Nothing:

The Lost of Malay Settlement in Pasir Mas, Kelantan

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Abstract

Natural calamities such as earthquakes, landslides, windstorms, and floods are considered disasters according to the degree of disruption they caused to the human population, built environment, or natural ecosystem. Natural disasters are a common occurrence in rural settlements of Malaysia, affecting the lives of the rural population and damaging the rural settlements, agriculture, roads, drainage schemes, and other infrastructure. This threat continues to exist, and disasters are still wreaking havoc in rural areas. However, this disaster is compounded by the current rate of urbanization in the region. Human life conjures a spatial location due to the unique combination of movement and strength that characterizes humans. Humans, unlike trees, are not stationary; yet they require more manmade shelters than other animals, and communities. Humans, in particular, share their space. A loss narrative defines today's place literature: specifically, the loss of the correct link between place and meaning (Cox, 1968; Lynch, 1972; Jacobs & Appleyard, 1987; Kunstler, 1993). Simultaneously, this article aims to investigate the disappearance of Malay settlements and discuss some of the implications. In February 2021. a landslide event took place in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. Researchers implemented on observation, mapping technique using Google Earth and Autocad 2018 software and visual analysis approach. It is an area where researchers used to spend their youth. The objective of this paper is to provide a perspective on the disappearance of Malay settlement by studying two theories, namely natural calamity and Malay settlement in order to discuss the finding about the reflection of place, and secondly, the loss of Malay culture crisis.

1.   Introduction

"The places round the billabong
are pretty much the way they were
but like a lot of things, they're gone"

Hodgins wrote this poem after returning to his childhood location and discovering it had been altered, changed or destroyed. He told a lot about the history of migration out from dying homes, streets, neighbourhoods, suburbs, towns, cities and countries - and the journey back to their former empty. We can call it a journey, either on the ground or in mind, 'returning to nothing'. Historically, human settlements have been motivated by organizational and community demands, such as food, water, security, and access to the economy. Almost invariably, increasing natural hazard risk has been assumed to achieve these goals, frequently resulting from a view that hazard risk can be accepted as a "natural part of life" or effectively managed. However, as the population and size of these settlements increase, the number of cases increases proportionately. The general rates of population migrating from rural to urban regions (urbanization) has increased throughout time. Rising populations in almost every country exacerbates the urbanization impact. In 1950, less than 30% of the world's 2.5 billion population lived in the city. By 1998, the world's population had risen to 5.7 billion, with cities holding 45 per cent of them. According to U.N. estimates, the world's population will reach 8.2 billion by 2025, with cities accommodating more than 60% of them (UNFPA 2013; WHO 2014). When humans settle in high-risk urban areas, their hazard risks increase. As of the year 2000, it was estimated that at least 75 per cent of the world's population lived in disaster-prone areas (UNDP 2004a). Furthermore, because these high-risk areas periodically experience major disasters, the annual number of people affected by disasters (defined as having their homes, crops, animals, livelihoods, or health impacted) is equally high (UNISDR 2004).

2.   Literature Review

Humans live in various settlements, from hunter-gatherer camps and villages of several families to modern megacities and metropolitan areas with millions worldwide. Economic and social structure of settlements and infrastructure components supporting settlements such as energy, water supply, transportation, sewerage, and waste disposal are all vulnerable to climate change and evolve at a far faster than the natural environment. Human health and infrastructure changes can directly influence settlements, impacting the environment, natural resources, and local industries such as tourism and agriculture. Furthermore, these effects on human settlements may have tertiary consequences such as changes in land use, migration of people and changing trading patterns across regions, leading to even more significant changes in natural resources and other activities. On the other hand, tertiary implications are mostly theoretical at this time. Some of these tertiary effects may be beneficial or detrimental at regional level. According to Sampson & Gifford, 2010; McCunn & Gifford (2014), aesthetic sensibility in human settlements entails incorporating specific building shapes, space, and surface as symbolic experience and quality. It is influenced by geographic, economic, social, and technological constraints and cultural aspects., Phenomenologists will raise how settlements exist in this environment based on the factors described in the previous section. In addition, settlement development components aim to integrate interior space with the surrounding nature environment (Doxiadis, 1974). Globally, the social and economic fragility of households and communities to catastrophe impacts has been

widely investigated, with several models developed to assess potential impacts. In general, household vulnerability to catastrophes is a multidimensional phenomenon. It involves physical aspects such as location and housing quality but focusing exclusively on those aspects is insufficient. Generally, social and economic conditions in coping with risk are equally important. Any attempt to improve the safety of human settlements must be based on an understanding of how disasters impact individual households' social and economic conditions and how households can cope with these threats.

Natural Calamity and Settlement

In this paper, four major disasters were explored. A city is usually rebuilt in its original location after a major catastrophe or calamity. People sometimes have moved away and never returned. According to records, Rome was the first city to face such such calamity (Ward-Perkins, 1961). It suffered a severe sack by the Gauls, and the new settlement in Veii was rebuilt as a 'place' of refuge (Gowing, 2008). During WWII, most cities were destroyed and rebuilt in their original 'location.' According to history, the Polish want to relocate to Warsaw, while the Soviets planned to relocate Stalingrad, rather than London after the great fire in 1666 and Lisbon after the earthquake, which remained in the same areas (Hanson, 1989). Meanwhile, the idea of relocating Berlin was rejected due to concerns that it would generate traffic congestion in the city centre, where the entire traffic network has accumulated 3,800 miles (approximately 6000 km) of streets, railways, and public transportation. Humans are naturally optimistic about their future; even after the catastrophe of WWll, people continue to return to their neighbourhoods; over 900,000 people returned to Hamburg (80 per cent of them were children). We referred to as the human settlement, and they desired to return to their original place, which held many memories for them throughout their lifetimes. It is a 'place' where families raise their children, bury their parents, and celebrate new births (Doxiadis & Papaioannou, 1974).

The Destruction of Fire

Property destruction is extensive in the event of a fire. Fire has been a primary agent of urban destruction in recent years. Since ancient times, major flames have consumed buildings and all human civilization remnants, according to history. Rome in A.D. 64, London in 1666, Moscow in 1812, and Chicago in 1871 were all destroyed in fires, and none of the cities could be restored (Doxiadis & Papaioannou, 1974). Russia and Finland are both known for their timber settlements, and fires have burned the settlements in this area several times (Bekasova, 2020). It is believed that the town in Finland was destroyed by fire over a 30- or 40-year cycle. It was evident that a few towns, such as Pori in 1801, Oulu in 1822, and Turku in 1827, were destroyed by fire during the early nineteenth century (Doxiadis & Papaioannou, 1974). This tragedy had a profound effect on the "wooden city" of Finland. Many lives and elements were destroyed due to the catastrophe, altering the future of Finland's settlement pattern. The traditional high wall surrounding the street was demolished, the aisles became the boundaries between buildings, preventing buildings from being built too close together, the roadways became extensive, density could be expanded, and the city profile was reduced. Fire incidences in informal settlements in South Africa increased from approximately 3,200 to 5,544 between 2004 and 2019 [Walls et al., 2020]. In December 2020, a fire in Cape Town's Masiphumelele (Masi) I.S. destroyed 1,030 residences, displacing almost 5,000 people. Some settlements have suffered numerous large-loss fires, such as the Khayelitsha I.S. in Cape Town, where 400 residences were destroyed in October 2018, and another 152 in January 2021.

According to the University of Edinburgh database [2021], 12 per cent of I.S. fires in Cape Town from 2009 to 2015 affected ten or more buildings. In 2018, over half of all fire deaths in South Africa occurred in informal buildings, with a fire mortality rate of 5 deaths per 100 fires [Walls. et al., 2020]. In 2018, approximately 40% of fires with known causes in South African informal homes were caused by open flames, followed by electrical difficulties . Open flames are used for heating, cooking, and lighting, particularly in dwellings without electricity. South Africa has expanded electrical power to informal settlements in recent years, reducing the number of fires involving open flames but increased the number of fires due to electrical issues. Unsafe lighting and heating sources, such as candles, are frequently left unattended and within reach of small children [Kahanji et al., 2019]. While some residences have electricity, it is frequently due to illegal connections to municipal infrastructure via poor wiring methods (Antonellis et al., 2018).

Volcanic Disaster

For millions of years, volcanoes and their eruptions dominated the early Earth's surface, contributing to the emergence of the earliest primitive life. They were responsible for developing the Earth's crust and forming a primordial atmosphere lasting 4.5 billion years, People began to explore the planet in the last 300,000 years, developing settlements for living space, shelter, and food. Later, as civilization evolved and industries such as agriculture and farm animals were established, volcanoes and their surroundings were ideal locations for human settlements due to the fertile volcanic soils and the beauty of their landscapes. Nonetheless, as the world population increased, nature became less hospitable, and humans faced various challenges, including volcanic eruptions. Colossal volcanic eruptions such as Lake Toba (74,000 years ago in Indonesia) and Thera (3,600 years ago in the present caldera of Santorini, Greece) wiped out almost all surrounding populations, influenced human migrations, and changed the global climate. Today, over 40 million people live near threatening volcanoes at all latitudes, even though major eruptions could endanger a global population of more than 200 million. There are several places on Earth where society appears unable to endure volcanic risk, a circumstance that is frequently associated with the dormancy of active volcanoes. When the sleeping mountain erupts, the city will be blanketed in thick dust, which will take hundreds of years to clear. In the early 18th century, Pompei was destroyed along with Herculaneum and Stabiae in A.D. 79 (Sparavigna, 2016). Krakatoa, Mount Sibayak, and Mount Sinabung are all closer to home. The shockwave can destroy the entire area with high magnitudes (C.B Kaehlig, A. Wright & C. Smith, 2012). When the extinct volcanic mountain erupts, it produces dense air filled with continuous smokes and ashes, turning day into night within seconds. Regardless, quiescence, which usually leads to an underestimate of threat in the local population, will be disrupted by eruptions sooner or later. This is the scenario with the Neapolitan volcanoes in Southern Italy, where an estimated 2,500,000 people are at risk of volcanic explosions (Carlino, 2019). Volcanic eruptions have destroyed human settlements since the beginning of the century. The eruption of the volcanic mountains caused catastrophic destruction, as ashes, lava, and other elements exploded in the atmosphere, accompanied by an explosion. Animals were killed in the route of the lava flow on Mount St Helens in Washington. Mont Serrat erupted in 1995, submerging the capital city of Plymouth in mud and ash up to 12 metres deep and destroying nearly the entire infrastructure of the Caribean Island (Druitt & Kokelaar, 2002). Existing settlements or cities that were destroyed by volcanic eruptions will be demolished. It will become a rich plateau for future generations of settlers after a hundred years.

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Hurricanes

A *cyclone* refers to a strong wind in a swirly shape, along with severe rains and thunderstorms. This intense cyclone will instantly destroy the Earth's. The wreckage of a floating structure is one of the phenomena that occur during a hurricane, and the debris is dumped everywhere, resulting in destroying human settlements. The term hurricane is used in the United States of America, whereas typhoon is used in Japan.

Floods

Flood risk is defined as the probability of a flood event multiplied by the potential for potential negative implications (Smith 1996; Sayers et al. 2002; UNISDR 2009). Flood risk is a "dynamic entity" because to the fact both risk components—hazard and vulnerability—are non-stationary (Merz et al., 2010). The E.U. Floods Directive (2007/60/E.C.) highlights the changing landscape of flood risk, stating that "...human activities (such as expanding human settlements and economic assets on floodplains...) and climate change increase the likelihood and severity of flood events" (E.U. 2007). Flooding is the most prevalent catastrophe in tropical countries, resulting in systematic modifications to human habitation (Doocy et. al, 2013). This is due to a week of continuous heavy rain raises the water level. In some locations, the raging flood destroys whatever is in its way. The logs, housing debris, splash water, and the flood current will increase the force. A settlement on the river's edge is a fascinating example. Most Asian cities are almost exclusively located along rivers. The lush river plateau, delta, and sufficient water for agriculture, and the abundance of fish attracted settlers to the area. One prominent example is Sudan and Aswan in Egypt; both are located on the Nile and were the early centres of human settlement. Making the Nile River a source of daily activity led to the establishment of the earliest human settlements. Additionally, the Nile River provides a network for trade between neighbouring countries and other tribes. However, when the British took over the city in 1900, they relocated some older settlements. It failed as a result of a lack of understanding of human settlement systems. For quite some time, historic cities like Sinnar, Barbir, and Al-Damir, which were once bustling settlements, were forgotten (A. Bowman & A. Wilson, 2011). The flood destroyed the city due to the impermanence of the building materials. the flood deposited mud and rubbish throughout the city, changed the coastline, and eroded the riverbanks. The aftermath of the related catastrophe includes air pollution caused by mud dust, cholera infections, and air pollution caused by flood-blown mud. Furthermore, it ruined the crops and livelihoods of the people.

Yellow Flood (Bah Kuning) in Kelantan

The worst floods in Malaysia's history occurred in Kelantan in 1927. The people of Kelantan named the Red Flood (Bah Merah) after 10 days of continuous rain. The water was an unusual red due to the mud. The tragedy cost human live and destroyed human settlements. Forty (40) years later, in 1967, Kelantan was again hit by the Red Flood (Figure 1.0), killing 38 people and affecting 84 per cent of the country's population (Nawan, 2015). In December 2014, floods known as Yellow Flood (Bah Kuning) hit again, causing major river water levels to rise (JPSK, 2015).

Figure 1.0. Red Flood in Kelantan during 1967 (Source: www.google.com)

The Yellow Flood brought down much of Kelantan's infrastructure. It is believed to be the most catastrophic flood in Kelantan's and perhaps Malaysia. Many other issues have arisen from the flood's impacts, including power outages, food insecurity, property destruction, settlements, infrastructure loss, and land loss along the river's fringe (Md. Akhir & Azman, 2018).

3.   Methodology

The data collected were analyzed using a qualitative research approach. Direct observation was combined with the photo-tracking techniques. Social research literature was coupled with a case study to examine the impact of the landslide tragedy. There are not many journal articles on the loss of place in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. Most writings are focused on cultural aspects. Additionally, Google Maps and the AutoCAD 2018 software were used to document the evidence of the landslide and settlement changes. The superimposed map illustrated the village's impact.

4.   The Case: Natural Calamity in the Malay Settlement

Pasir Mas is one of 11 districts in Kelantan, covering around 3.9 per cent of Kelantan's land of 57,800 hectares. Kampung Pohon Celagi, Pasir Mas, Kelantan was specifically selected as the study area due to a landslide disaster on February 17, 2021. At least 50 residents from 15 families in Kampung Pohon Celagi, Pasir Mas, Kelantan have been evacuated due to the event. Kampung Pohon Celagi is unlike other villages in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. This village is located on the river fringe of the Kelantan River, which was historically used for water transportation. Landslide tragedy that shook Malaysia has destroyed the Malay settlement and the place, which became the focus of neighbourhood communities such as Pasir Mas Old Market. Figure 2.0 shows the disaster location at Kampung Pohon Celagi along the Kelantan River in Pasir Mas, Kelantan.
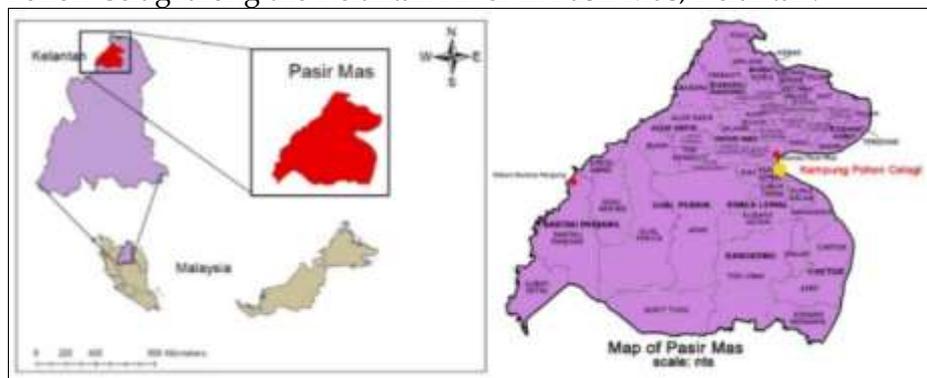

Figure 2.0. Location of the study area (Source: www. Google.com)

The Lost of the 'Place Ballet'

In his book, Seamon's A Geography of the Lifeworld, Seamon (2015) developed a phenomenological theory to portray the orderliness of places established in physical, routine, and supportive environments. Each human being will conduct daily activities with himself,' gather in space, and achieve something in a 'place.' Humans will inadvertently exploit the same space. Within a larger 'place,' each with its rhythm of activity and relaxation, the hustle and bustle, and serenity. 'Ballet' venues come in variety of sizes and configurations, both indoors and outside. Lounges, cafés, building blocks, country alleyways, or other settings where many users often interact face to face could serve as the foundation for a ballet venue. The Pasir Mas Old Market (also known as Pasar Mundok) is located near the Kelantan River's banks (Figure 3.0). Pasir Mas was a small town that suffered from landslides, specifically at Kampung Pohon Celagi, considered as the 'Place Ballet'.

Figure 3.0. Landslide's area
(Source: Abdullah & Wahid, 2021)

Before the tragedy, the Pasir Mas Old Market could have been used to explore the value of 'place ballet', and its importance in fostering a spirit of place, culture, and community. Malay settlements that had existed for a extended time were devastated in the tragedy, which destroyed 15 houses and killed 50 people (Figure 4.0). Local traders that live near the river fringe contribute the market's success. The Pasir Mas Old Market has existed in the exact place in the downtown area for an extended time. It is adjacent to Taman Air Muleh, a boat station that shuttles passengers across the river.

Figure 4.0: The landslides impact on February 2021 (Source: www.google.com, 2021)

Boats were used before the Salor Bridge was completed. The Salor Bridge has been constructed to replace the water transportation system, making the boat terminal is no longer visible. The market is at the base of a square area surrounding by traditional timber settlements and shophouses. It is open 6.30 a.m to 11 a.m (Figure 5.0). The majority of sales are of daily necessities such as fruits, vegetables, fish, and others by Malay traders who were persistent and hardworking. This market becomes an attraction for locals eager to purchase 'ikan pekasam budu,' a traditional dish during the monsoon season.

Figure 5.0: Pasir Mas Old Market activity before landslides disaster
(Source: www.google.com)

The market has been rendered inaccessible. Due to safety concerns, the authorities have enforced a restriction on using the area (Figure 5.0). The market site area has also developed cracks and is on the verge of collapsing, resulting in a second erosion if no action is taken. A similar event occurred in the Malay settlement zone. Many settlements have been destroyed, and many family members have been evacuated. The now-silent atmosphere resembles a place that used to be vibrant with various activities. Unfortunately, 'place ballet' is now changing into a place devoid of function.

Figure 6.0: The ambience of Pasar Lama Pasir Mas after landslides disaster
(Source: Wahid & Abdullah, 2021)

Loss of Meaning in the Malay Settlement

The transformation of place into a location is not the only changes in the modern understanding of place. Along with the 'devaluation' and 'commodification' of place, the sense of place has changed considerably. However, the loss of the place's character is often unnoticed by the locals until it affects their daily activities, altering the nature of the settlement in which they inhabit (Wahid & Karsono, 2008). At least three modifications have been occurred in the meaning of place or a sense of place, from the unconscious to the conscious and from the conscious to the manufacturing level (Arefi, 1999). The dispute regarding 'rootedness,' 'sense of place,' and 'manufactured meaning' highlights the ongoing debate about redefining the place's meaning. As a social construct, a place has several numerous levels and classifications, such as national, regional, and local. The emphasis on tracing the transformations in the meaning of location that led to the emergence of 'placelessness.' Even though 'placelessness' is embedded in the idea of rootedness, indicating fate and destiny and inspires will and desire, the absence of a place represents a loss of meaning (Relph, 1976; Houston, 1978; Jacobs & Appleyard, 1987; Hayden, 1995). Loss of meaning indicates a dramatic paradigm shift in urban design and how place attachment concepts have evolved. When one follows the lineage of the place's meaning, one confronts the grassroots as a kind of people connection – the most natural, pure, and unmediated sort of people-place connection. According to the geographer Tuan (1980), rootedness is a state of unconsciousness, peace, and discomfort associated with being in a place - mainly because one's integration in a place renders one's unaware of the currents of time, or even the world within one's surroundings. In its place, modernism disrupts emotional attachment. Implicitly, the sense of place grows the seeds of placelessness. As a conscious act and legacy of modernism, a sense of place is frequently a romantic and nostalgic approach to identity formation. This approach has historically coincided with the so-called 'commodification' of places (Agnew, 1984). Along with commodification, there appears to be a deterioration. In addition to place modification and devaluation, the root of placelessness is globalization, resulting in standardized landscapes and 'inauthenticity' (Relph, 1976; Jacobs & Appleyard, 1987).

5. Discussion

Destruction of relationships between the environment and Malay settlements have created vulnerable ecosystems. This is due to the custom of the Malays to build settlements on the banks of rivers, showing the relationship between nature and humans. The greatness of the Malay settlement which is directly connected to the River and the Malay community, and the settlement is expressed as a village in Malay urbanism. Malay urban life patterns are influenced by their needs and the way of life of the community.Significant transformations have occurred in the components of the notion of place in recent years. These transformations have highlighted placelessness and non-place as the epitome of the current place practice and meaning. The conceptual component of place has undergone a significant transformation. This disaster has exposed the loss of place and place ballet as a symbolic for previous activities and meaning. Given the disaster has damaged the place and 'place ballet,' a specific strategy is needed to rebuild its splendour. Due to the loss of 'place,' the area has ceased to be active. Unfortunately, it destroyed the Malays' community's value, cultural, social, and economic growth in a small town. Lastly, returning to nothing has erased the Malay community's sense of place and cultural activities.

6.   Conclusion

The landslide disaster destroyed an old market that was considered a town place in Pasir Mas. These losses also wiped out all memory and glory of the Malay settlements, which were teeming with diverse social activities. Passing the scene gives much nostalgia among the elderly who have lived here for an extended time. With the speed of urbanization and natural disasters threat, we will witness places that were once the pride of the Malay community vanishing one by one. The governance should take action of the destruction of Malay settlements. The destruction of Malay settlements in the city will eventually destroy identity and local wisdom for Malay. Return to nothing is a profound experience for the Malay community.

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