Unpacking contested landscapes through landuse surveys: geographical field inquiry in heritage areas
‘Reading’ heritage landscapes

- Examining landscapes in a systematic way provides students with a means to examine the social, economic and political values that frame and undergird the conservation of areas deemed to have ‘historic’ or ‘cultural’ value in Singapore.
‘Reading’ heritage landscapes

• In particular it helps students to understand that:
  – ‘heritage’ is a value-laden concept
  – ‘heritage sites’ are **sites of contestation** between various users and stakeholders who have different interpretations of and relationships with a space/ place.
Landuse surveys as means to ‘unpack’ contestation in heritage spaces

• Example 1: Little India Historic District
• Example 2: Chinatown Historic District
Little India Historic District
Little India Historic District

• Various studies by different groups
  – Pre-service and in-service teachers
  – School students attending courses

• Usually involving constructing and investigating a ‘hypothesis’ about who uses a space and what they use it for, who are insiders/outsiders of the space, who would find the space attractive, whose ideology/beliefs are inscribed on a space etc.
Little India Historic District

- Various methods used to collect primary data:
  - Observations, annotated field sketches, annotated photographs
  - Questionnaires and interviews
  - Perception surveys
  - Pedestrian counts
  - Mapping boundaries
  - Landuse surveys of particular streets
Typically this involves…
Who is Little India for?
What kinds of tourists find Little India appealing?

Is little India appealing as a tourist destination?

Mass Tourists  Backpackers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Yoga</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Travel agency</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Massage</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Provision shop</th>
<th>Chinese massage</th>
<th>Electronics</th>
<th>Jewelry</th>
<th>Electronics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**UPPER DICKSON ROAD**

- Provision shop
- Maid Agency
- Textile
- Internet Cafe
- Electronics
- Agency
- Electronics
- Travel Agency
- Food
- Food
- Jewelry
- Food
- Beauty Parlour
- Jewelry
- Food
- Provision shop
- Food

**DISTRIBUTION OF LAND USE SENTIMENTS/FEELINGS TOWARDS LITTLE INDIA**

- Supermarket
- Travel agency
- Phone
- Phone
- Electronics
- Phone
- Shoes
- Shoes
- Shoes
- Phone and Electronics
- Shoes
- Food
- Food
- Supermarket
- Tailoring
- Fashion
- Phone
- Saloon
- Jewellery

**OBSERVATIONS**

- Landuse Surveys
- Interviews (9 Shopkeepers, 5 tourists)

**DRAWING ON SPECIFIC QUOTES**
Spatial concentrations of ‘touristy’ goods and services

Categories

1 - mainly tourists (more than 65% tourist clientele)
- Tourists visit rarely for leisure or cultural purposes
- Tourists may be Singaporeans or visitors from other countries

2 - mainly locals (less than 35% tourist clientele)
- Locals visit regularly or frequently for goods and services that they use in their daily lives
- Locals may be Singaporeans or foreigners residing in Singapore

3 - both tourists and locals (35-65% tourist clientele)

0 - closed

x - street corners
- Mobile SIM card vendors padle on sidewalks (may or may not be in front of a shop selling the same goods and services)

No. of businesses
- counts of actively operating activities

Land Use count
- counts of building space occupied

Percentage of active land use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of businesses</th>
<th>Land Use count</th>
<th>Percentage of active land use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14/100/(14+101.5+18.5) = 10.44770%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>87.7+22.1+0.5 = 101.5</td>
<td>101.5/103/134 = 76.746%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>17-3+4+0.5 = 18.5</td>
<td>18.5*100/134 = 13.808%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Magazine shop, provision stores on street corners and sidewalks, some mobile SIM card vendors
Read the comments made by your facilitators and the checklist provided in the table below carefully. Analyse your own strengths and weaknesses in performing the field inquiry task two weeks ago by filling in the relevant sections in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Making observations and gathering data (landuse survey)</th>
<th>Representing data (landuse transect)</th>
<th>Drawing conclusions (write-up)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Before collecting data, did I make sure I knew what I was collecting the data for?</td>
<td>- When sharing data as a group, did I clarify whether we were using terms (e.g. touristy, high-end, electronics) similarly?</td>
<td>- Did I make my assumptions and definitions clear in the write-up? (e.g. who are ‘locals’, who are ‘tourists’). Were my definitions too simplistic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did I make observations which were relevant to and useful for my purpose?</td>
<td>- When deciding on categories did we bear in mind the purpose of the transect? Were the categories chosen meaningful? Were any of the categories too general or too specific?</td>
<td>- Did I make overly-simplistic assumptions about what people come to Little India for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What types of data did I fail to collect that might have been useful?</td>
<td>- Were the colours and symbols chosen to represent landuse appropriate such that the end product was easy to read and useful to the reader?</td>
<td>- Were my arguments evidence-based? Did I draw on the spatial evidence observed to support my points?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What types of generalisations or assumptions did I make when collecting data that could have affected the accuracy of my survey?</td>
<td>- Was the legend organized in such a way that similar products were clustered together?</td>
<td>- Did I consider the extent to which my conclusions were affected by the scale of analysis (i.e. the size of the area surveyed and the time given for the tasks)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - Did I ensure that I was observing and recording the data and using terms (e.g. touristy, high-end, electronics) in the same way as my group members. | - Was my title appropriate? | }
Unpacking Contestations in Little India

- Tensions between ‘tourists’ and ‘locals’
- Tensions between different groups of tourists
- Tensions between state ideology of ‘adaptive reuse’/new businesses and traditional businesses
- Tensions between ‘local’ residents and migrant workers
Chinatown Historic District
Legend
- Indian restaurant
- Clothing/textiles/trinkets
- Jewellery
- Videos/Music
- Financial services
- IT and mobile
- Garlands
- Indian Arts Products
- Beauty/spa
- Financial services
- Emporium/household
- Travel agency
- Freight/cargo services
- Offices (property/health foods)

*Survey undertaken in Jan 2013*
What do the comparisons tell us about the nature of contestation in these landscapes...

- And relationships with the different ethnic groups/ population composition of Singapore?
- And the different ways in which these areas have been ‘conserved’ and ‘commodified’ for tourism?
What’s in it for *them*?

- Going beyond simplistic understandings of concepts like ‘heritage tourism’, ‘tourists’, ‘conservation’, ‘local population’ etc.
- Understanding the complex and dynamic interplay between different groups of people and their environments.
- Learning to ‘read’ the layers of meaning embedded in landscapes.
- Learning relevant geographical/graphical skills.