



School of Architecture, Building & Design (SABD)

Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture

**[ARC2224] Theories of Architecture & Urbanism**

# **Theorizing Architecture**

**(Part 1 | Stage 2 | Reflective Text)**

Site | Central Klang

Theorist/ Architect | Dolores Hayden

Theory | Urban Landscape as Public History

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Klang has a history which stretches back for at least two thousand years. Approximately 600 years ago, Klang was written starting from the age of Majapahit's Government. It was never occupied by a foreign power. The Local Klang Authority, so called MPK building has become an important wall of defense to stop the enemies from getting further when the war was triggered. Another important feature to be highlighted in Klang will be River Klang. It has been a source of tin of high quality since ancient times. Malay rulers and chiefs have lived near the mouths of great rivers, so that they could control the export of forest, tin and gold. None of the place in this peninsula at a river mouth has gone through such a long period of eventful existence as Klang. Nowadays, although there isn't any prominent event carries out at the river anymore, it is still a significant feature to identify Klang.

Dolores Hayden is an American architect, professor, urban historian, author as well as a poet. She is the founder and president of the book - *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*, speaks about her experience in the urban communities in proposing new perspectives on gender, race and ethnicity to broaden the practice of public history and public art, enlarge urban preservation and reorient the writing of urban history to spatial struggles. This is what I am going to study about in corresponding to my chosen city – Central Klang. One of the highlights taken from the book, where she outlines urban public history connects people lives and livelihoods to urban landscape through architectural preservation as it changes over time.

Urban public history is fostered by both place and social memories. These memories capture the connection between human and both built and natural environments that are intertwined in a cultural landscape. These memories can be triggered based on the understanding of the shared pasts and histories of the ethnic groups, the workers (insiders) as well as oral histories. They are the best authorities on their own pasts in defining their own economic and social histories that put them in connection to their urban landscape. Through architectural preservation, it helps to assert visual presence in the spaces of the city that triggers place memory to the people. Hayden suggests efforts to integrate the preservation of vernacular buildings with local economic development, meantime preserve working people's neighbourhoods without gentrification. For instance, there are historic shophouses that are retained and preserved in Klang. In considering the local economic development and cultural businesses carried out by different ethnic groups in Klang, the buildings remain at their original look, especially on the facades even after some renovations are done. This is also supported by Hayden where preservation of

buildings should remain all that remained from the original building in order to leave the remaining elements visible to visitors and the new generations with their own imagination. This is due that the remained will physically speak with the urban fabric at local landscape. Public pasts shared within a city always tie to constantly used buildings with the involvement of the communities, ingenious mapping as well as restoration to bring out the social meaning of a city. This is how the preservation and restoration of the historic shophouses in Klang functions to encode a shared urban public history in tying the people and the urban landscape. Besides, Klang shines as a city with extensive array of the preserved landmarked buildings which are fortunate to be able to tell the stories about the buildings that literally brings great impact on embedding urban public history into an urban landscape.

#### *References /*

- Dolores Hayden. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.
- Dolores Hayden. [online] Available at: <http://www.doloreshayden.com/index.htm> Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2015.