



Commercial Gentrification in the Conservation Area: Boat Quay in Singapore

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Boat Quay is one of the oldest river quays in Singapore, located at the pool area of the river opposite Raffle landing and Empress Place. Boat Quay was completed in 1842 and became the first of a long line of reclamation projects that characterized the history of Singapore's development. The area grew rapidly and eventually outpaced the developments on the northern bank to earn the name of "Tao Poh" in Hokkien means "The Big Town". Typically two-to three storey shop houses were built around Boat Quay; however there were variations in the architectural style.

With the removal of the bum-boats as part of a master plan to clean up the river in 1972, as the shops and offices lost their trade, they closed. Building began to fall derelict as no other commercial activity moved in. However, the area was in a prime position bordering the C.B.D (central business district) area. The government could have reconstructed the run down area with high-rise buildings with more efficient food outlets and larger entertainment centers to serve the C.B.D., but instead they chose to conserve the historical site of Singapore. In 1989 conservation guidelines were drawn up by the Urban Redevelopment Authority allowing shop owners to restore their shops without changing the structure of the buildings and retaining original features so as not to spoil the general character of the Boat Quay area however, a change in commercial activity (a process known commercial gentrification) was allowed as long as the first storey was used a shop or a food establishment.

This paper aims to test the validity of the two following hypothesis: 1). There are observable land use patterns at Boat Quay; 2). Commercial certification has occurred in the Boat Quay area.

Various different data-collection methods were used such as mapping, land-use survey, perception profiles, field sketches and general observations. The Boat Quay area was divided into four zones to be compared. The land-use survey was carried out vertically that is the use mode of all floors above ground level was recorded. Seven categories of land land-use were decided. Besides, perception profiles were taken from total twelve locations by taking into account eleven attributes which each location possessed.

The results and analysis indicated that a land-use pattern has existed in the area. The pattern was presented zone by zone and storey by storey in tables and coded maps of the Boat Quay area. The results of the perception profile were also presented which indicated the existence of gentrification in the area.

KEY WORDS: Gentrification, Boat Quay, Singapore.