MEMORY ARCHIPELAGO

Living Heritage in the Sea Region

by

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The Riau Archipelago consists of 1248 islands. Singapore, Batam, Bintan and Karimun are the largest and the most populated islands in the region. While many of the remote and smaller islands in the archipelago are still relatively shielded from urban and industrial development, major coastal stretches of the larger islands are developed as industrial zones, and have turned into inaccessible areas. This industrially occupied areas of the coastline now stand in between the cities and the sea; the urban centers and the residential areas are withdrawn inland from the coast.

The islands’ economies, ways of life and daily routines have changed too; the traditional cultures of the archipelago can still be found on and around the smaller islands, in the archipelagos remote waters, while ‘the modern life’ and employment possibilities are strong magnets for migration to the cities on the bigger islands, or on the ‘land’.

Recently, the tourism industry has started to discover the remote parts of the archipelago, where the ‘tropical paradise islands’ benefit from their proximity to Singapore, but the tensions between the ensuing tourist developments and the island communities remain.

This project attempts to portray the unique way of life in the archipelago, and proposes that parts of Riau Archipelago should be seen as the territory of the living heritage of the entire region. The role and the practices of heritage protection in the region have been further examined and presented. As a possible vision of such Memory Archipelago, the project proposes a heritage park, which allows the establishment of noninvasive forms of tourism and urban living in the archipelago landscapes, in alliance with nature. The park supports the local island economies, enables the improvement of infrastructures, and provides a framework for the protection of natural resources. The Memory Archipelago heritage park is situated off the west coast of Batam, which has been identified as one of the most valuable remaining areas of archipelago culture.
Archipelago as Heritage

What we understand by the word ‘heritage’ is evidence of the past. All the elements which connect the past to the present and to the future give this trinational, differentiated region an identity. So we can say that heritage is something strongly connected with the perception of the past. Historical sites, buildings as well as the natural environment, can be considered as the heritage of the present-day society.
From The Sea to the Land
The perception of the archipelago has changed greatly throughout history; this change is clearly visible in the evolution of the cartographic representation. The initial focus of cartographers was to provide detailed information for the shipping routes passing through the Malacca and Singapore Straits. Everything related to the hinterland remained a mystery. Cities along the coast were represented only insofar as their capacity to perform as port facilities.

A significant historical change in the region’s cartographic representation is the shift from mapping the sea to the mapping the mainland. Only gradually did the perception of land beyond the inhabited coastlines become important. Initially, maps of the region represented the water and the coastline; later detailed information, e.g., names of places, further inland appeared on the maps. Another major change in mapping the region, was the awareness of proportion. When mapping naval movement in the Straits, the proportions and size of the islands tended to be perceived as smaller and more distorted than they were in reality. What is the perception the maritime region today?
Borders in the Archipelago

Initially, the region was understood as a vast expanse of sea with fragments of land, linked to each other through the water. The sea was the connecting element of the region until the implementation of national borders ended the interactions of communities within the newly defined nations. The move from a unified region to a detached and distant relationship between the three nations have made exchange complex and the effects of this are still strongly felt today.

Strong Interaction before Confrontation
Before the confrontation in 1963, the borders set from the Anglo-Dutch Treaty still allowed strong interactions within the archipelago. The sea region was perceived as one whole space. As shown in the image, the early 20th century Riau islanders used to go to Singapore to exchange goods and meet people from throughout the archipelago.

Reduced Interaction after Implementation of Borders
After the confrontation, national borders radically divided the region. The increasingly formalized and regulated process of border crossing and the growing economic differences between Singapore and the rest of the region represented a radical change. For inhabitants of the Riau Archipelago, it became more and more difficult to maintain a connection to Singapore. The industrial development of Batam began in the early 1970s and the population grew rapidly. Batam, rather than Singapore, became the new socio-economic point of interaction for the surrounding island communities.

Pulau Macan
“I went working to a Malaysian palm oil plantation for five years. I didn’t have a passport at that time and had to go to Tanjung Pinang and then to Johor Bahru on a small boat with 8 other people.”

Pulau Belakang Padang
“I’m Singaporean, I don’t belong to Belakang Padang. I was ten during the years of the confrontation when I left my hometown. I wish I could go back to my sister but unfortunately I don’t have enough money.”
Archipelago as Urban Backstage

Since the seventies, the similarities across the archipelago have diminished and the differences and inequalities between the individual islands have escalated. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first leader after independence, described the achievements of Singapore as "a transition from third world to first." While the cities with a strong land-based economy fit into the world market and continue to grow, the rest of the archipelago is experiencing stagnation and decline. The population of the islands tends to decrease as people migrate to cities in search of economic prosperity.

Land-Based Development

Kota Batam is the largest city and the largest island in Riau Islands Province. With its strategic location near the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, it is strongly linked to the mainland. It is one of the richest and fastest growing municipalities in the nation with a growth rate of 11% per year.

Tradition of Fishing as Everyday Life

The main activity on the smaller islands of the Archipelago remains traditional fishing, which is based on regional export. Many of the islanders started fishing directly after primary school.

Singapore Age Groups

As shown in the graphic, the average age in Singapore is relatively young: around 38.9 years old. The reason is the prospering economy of the nation offering job opportunities to people from all over the world.

Pulau Meuran Age Groups

In Pulau Meuran, a considerable portion of the youth leave the island to reach other more prospering destinations. This exodus leaves the island with a remarkably high average age.

Migration:

- Stay on the island: 31%
- Move to Kota Batam: 45%
- Move to other destinations: 24%

Under 30 years old: 30-45 years old: 55 years old and above: 55 years old and above
The southern islands of Singapore are used for industrial, military and leisure purposes.

The large islands of the archipelago are left while a string of smaller islands extend as an extension of mainland.

Archipelago
Population: 243,676
Total Area: 1811 km²
Density: 136.65 inh./km²
Remarkable is the huge land area of this region in comparison to the small degree of urbanisation.

Singapore
Population: 5,390,200
Total Area: 716.1 km²
Density: 7540 inh./km²
In this case the relatively small dimension of the total land area is completely urbanised and reaches an impressive density.

Terrain Vague?
The French word "vague" means wave, emptiness and uncertainty. It refers to the open or uncertain future of areas on the edges of the metropolis, which could be progressing or declining; their future is vague. Some parts of the archipelago are becoming industrial extensions of other cities but without becoming cities themselves.
The Shrinking vs. the Growing Archipelago

A regional trend of migration from the smaller islands towards the larger, more prosperous islands can be identified throughout the smaller islands of the archipelago. The graph of Pulau Sembu shows a clear population decline, whereas Kota Batam’s population is still growing.
From Monuments to Territories of Heritage

An economically and culturally developed country such as Singapore considers it increasingly important to preserve and construct a national identity. There is a strong effort to protect the country’s history and many heritage institutions operate in Singapore. Yet, if we consider the archipelago as a whole region and its history as a shared history, we would understand that heritage doesn’t find its limits within the national borders. The economically disadvantaged parts of the Riau Archipelago, despite being very rich in terms of history and heritage, seem to be forgotten. Their cultural contributions are left off the radar of most preservationists.

Heritage Gallery and Museums

The total number of museums and heritage galleries in Singapore has grown steadily from 46 in 2007 to 89 in 2012. More museums are stated to open in the coming years to add to the heritage scene in Singapore.
Scanning the Physical Geography

Each island in the archipelago is different from the others. Each has different properties that allow it to be distinguished from the rest of the archipelago. An island can typically be defined by its form, name and functions. These island qualities used to be a constant in the past, today, they are increasingly put into question. To understand the dynamics of the island transformations, it is essential to have an overview on the actual situation. The land area and the form of some of these islands changes constantly due to processes of land reclamation. Their names also change over the course of history or even vanish. This archive seeks to provide a temporal snapshot of the appearance and formation of the fragments of the present archipelago.
The Island Archive

An archive of the islands of the archipelago offers an idea of the uniqueness and diversity of this region. The distinction of the islands by shape, function, and in some cases, by name seems crucial. Normally, a name refers to the historical background and so to the cultural heritage. Many of the islands in this region are unnamed and unpopulated.
... and other 995 unnamed islands
Extended Mainland

Singapore is comprised of a mainland island and sixty-two much smaller islands, totalling 719 km² of land. The precious land in the constellation of islands around Singapore is exploited and transformed into mono-functional zones. The gravitation exerted from the mainland economic activities, which include the petrochemical industry, waste disposal, military, housing and leisure zones, absorbs the surrounding islands and transforms them into an extension of itself. The minority of these islands are accessible to the public; the majority are accessible only to authorized personnel. These islands become a kind of extension of the city and the mainland without being a real part of it.

Island "Gated Communities"

In the case of Jurong Island, there is a new integrated security management system for the security checkpoint. The new vehicle and pedestrian checkpoint on the road link between Jurong and mainland Singapore is part of the on-going island security strategy.
"Singaporeanization" of Bintan

Since the 1970s, the growing need for land pushed Singapore to expand its economic operations onto the islands of Batam and Bintan. This only became possible through the concept of the Growth Triangle, which territorialized in the form of special economic zones. The special economic zone in the north of Bintan was developed into a tourist enclave, run by Singaporean companies. The governments of Singapore and Indonesia contribute to the creation of a ‘gated globalization’, which here occurs at the expense of local communities. Local coastal communities were evicted and resettled further inland to make space for the tourist resorts.

"The authorities used other tools of pressure to get villagers out. The school that used to be nearby was moved to the new settlement. It’s now very difficult for villagers who refused to sell their land; it is hard for us to send our children to school, which lies 9 km away."

Bintan Island's Constellation
- Industrial enclave
- Tourist enclave
- Living heritage

Enclaves: Fragmented Integration
There were many demonstrations in the 2000s and also violent reactions against the authorities defending the gated industrial and tourist communities in the areas of Tanjung Losari and Tanjung Uban. People were demonstrating to protect their evictions without just compensation. People working in the new tourist and industrial enclaves were from Java and other places; the local people were rarely included in the new economic activities of these places.
Living Heritage

The islands of western Batam have a high density of kampungs. The links between these islands also remain intact. Unlike Bintan, the forces exerted by the economies of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle less affect Batam. Its cultural content and large concentration of shrinking kampungs makes it a valuable but vulnerable area.

The area can be marked as "living heritage" as most of the population here lives by following traditional ways of life. However, the population of these kampungs is drastically decreasing and their prospects for better education and better income are low. This means and urgent intervention to safeguard the assets of the intangible cultural heritage.

Fragmented Living Heritage

In this area of the Riau, the intensity of population and living heritage is very high. Yet, the internal interactions between the different islands are getting weaker. Notice the large number of islands and the relatively small number of kampungs.
Island Heritage

Each island in this region is significant different from the others. Each island has its own history, people and thus, unique cultural heritage. In order to analyse this diverse region, we developed a series of island typologies, which present common characteristics and differences. Main distinctions were made according to the type of activities carried out on the island, its people and infrastructures. Additionally forms of relations and connections among the islands in the archipelago determine the islands typologies. The typologies include: the “Everyday Islands”, the “Forgotten Destinations”, the “Carcerary Islands”, the “Unnamed Islands” and the “Happy Islands.”
Island Stories
Hendro is staying on Pulau Sambu working along with his son as long as his employ-er allows him. In case of unemployment he would move to Batam to look for a new job.
Age: 36
Origin: Pulau Sambu
Work: Workman at Wilis Pertamina

Abdullah Azz was fisherman on Dansi. Insufficient catches due to the lack of fish forced him to move to Pulau Lenkang. He goes fishing everyday in the international waters where the fish is larger.
Age: 53
Work: Fishing
Origin: Pulau Dansi

Eja was a secondary school English and Mathematics teacher in Pulau Macan and had a class of 30 kids. After the school closed, he was forced to move to Belakang Padang in search of a new job.
Age: 35
Parents work: Fishing

Asad has lived in Belakang Padang since he was 30. His two sons live in Batam Center and occasionally visit him on the weekend.
Age: 65
Origin: Pulau Pemping

Rachman is mainly a fisherman in Pulau Akar. Besides fishing, he is an Rukun Te-tangga (RT), a neighbourhood assistant, and every two weeks, he goes to meet the RT’s of the four surrounding islands to talk about administrative decisions.
Age: 51
Work: Fishing and RT
Origin: Born on Pulau Akar

Changing Numbers of Island Inhabitants
- 4.9%
- 7.5%
- 5.5%
- 7.0%
- 0.5%

Declining Numbers on Smaller Islands
Smaller islands in the west of Batam are experiencing declining resident numbers. Mostly people move to bigger islands to have better access to public facilities or to transport to the main island.
**Everyday Island**

The Everyday Island like Pulau Langkang Kecil is the most common typology found in this part of the archipelago. The population of these islands is shrinking and the main activities are defined almost exclusively by fishing. The settlements are usually small clusters of houses that grow radially into the sea around a center, which typically include a mosque and a primary school. They normally lack access to clean water on the island and are strongly dependent on other islands for other facilities.

**Tragedies as Potential**

The long history of certain sites gives the region a strong identity. Maritime culture and traditional ways of living along with the richness of the natural resources could be used as a potential for a kind of “eco-tourism” to incentivize the local micro-environments. Traditional fishing or the production of charcoal from mangrove woods could play a role in creating a tourist attraction for living heritage.
Forgotten Destination

Islands with a rich past history, which is legible in material elements on the island represent a strong site of heritage and interest. Sambu Island had strong relations with the Dutch before independence.

Inhabitants


Primary school
Serres
Mosque

Delhi

“As we can see from the population numbers, economy and production activities are prospering on the Mainland.”

History as a Capital

The long histories of certain sites give the region a strong identity. After Indonesia won independence from the Dutch and, when

Batam was mostly covered by forest, Sambu was one of the most populated centres of the region.

When Batam built its first industry zones in the 1970s, Belakang Padang was left behind. The island used to be one of the main trading centres in the region. now it is facing depopulation. Its biggest asset is its history as a trading post.
Carcerary Island
Fantasy Island Development Pte. Ltd. was established in 2010 to pursue the vision of creating the largest eco park in the world. This vision is manifested in the 300 million SGD development of a cluster of six islands into Fantasy Island. The real estate is at 16 km from Sentosa Cove, and the prices for a bungalow start from 368,000 SGD. The development of tourist enclaves has created a fragmented condition in the Singapore-Indonesia border zone. This type of gated globalism disconnects the islands from the rest of the Riau Archipelago.

Mohammed
"All I do is for my family down in Jakarta. I'm employed on the Fantasy Island Project as a workman for 2 years. After this I'll move to my family."

Sense of Home vs. Sense of Going Home
The future of this site is an enclosed community of people mainly coming from Singapore with no interest in interacting with the surrounding areas. The result is an interruption, a void cut-out of a dense net of potential interactions.
Happy Island

The definition of a Happy Island like Belakang Padang, is an island that is experiencing prosperity and growth. Happy Island's are rich in cultural, ethnic and economic diversity and infrastructure. They are regional centres, which serve the surrounding islands and therefore create a tight network.

Happy Island typology:
- Services: 16
- Schools: 1
- Mosque: 4
- Primary schools: 3
- Secondary schools: 2
- High schools: 1

Edy Yusuf

"I'm owner of a restaurant in the center of Belakang Padang with a total of 2 employees: my wife and my daughter. We cook all kind of traditional dishes."

Tourist Hotspot and Traditions

Moving life is what characterizes this islands. The streets are full of people coming from different places of the archipelago. Many kids come from kampungs to go to secondary or high school; others come here for work. Others come from Batam for eating or shopping. "My mum, my friends and I went to Batam during the holidays. However, we decided to take a tiny boat or sampan, to Pulau Belakang Padang, the home to our newly met Indonesian friends."

1. View on the kampung and Pulau Sintikhu
2. Edy Yusuf, restaurant owner in Belakang Padang
3. Street view of a lively kampung in Belakang Padang town centre
4. Traditional food production
Unnamed Island

Only a short distance from the urban centres of Singapore and Batam, untouched islands appear. Covered in mangroves, these islands and their surrounding waters serve as source of livelihood for fisherman. It is crucial to preserve mangrove and other unnamed and uninhabited islands from development.

Archipelago’s quiet Edge

Fishing and agriculture are still important in the quiet parts of the Risu Archipelago, and could be valuable for the city in the future. Any development here should be most carefully considered.
Riau Archipelago Heritage Park

The idea of the project is to acknowledge and promote the potential created by high density of living heritage in the Riau Archipelago, and, by doing so, create opportunities for its revitalization. Increasing the intensity of linkages between the islands of the area would be the basis for forming a single, large island constellation named "Riau Archipelago Heritage Park". The park would function as an archipelago within an archipelago. With a size equal to that of Singapore and as a destination for tourism which seeks to encourage and preserve the natural environment and local traditions. The proximity and good connections to Singapore and Batam make it a potentially attractive destination for socially responsible tourism, personal growth, and environmental sustainability.
Natural Cultural Heritage Park

The park should be the result of the three most powerful potentials of the region: traditional production, cultural heritage and nature within the archipelago. These potentials should be developed and promoted as attractors, giving a stronger identity to the unique heritage of the archipelago. The zone should be put under protection to incentivize only less-invasive eco-tourism, which does not pose a threat for micro-environmental relations. There is a need to prevent the park from "Singaporization" and the establishment of enclaves and carcerary islands in the Riau Archipelago Heritage Park.
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