Constructing a Proposal for PhD Research

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May 2015
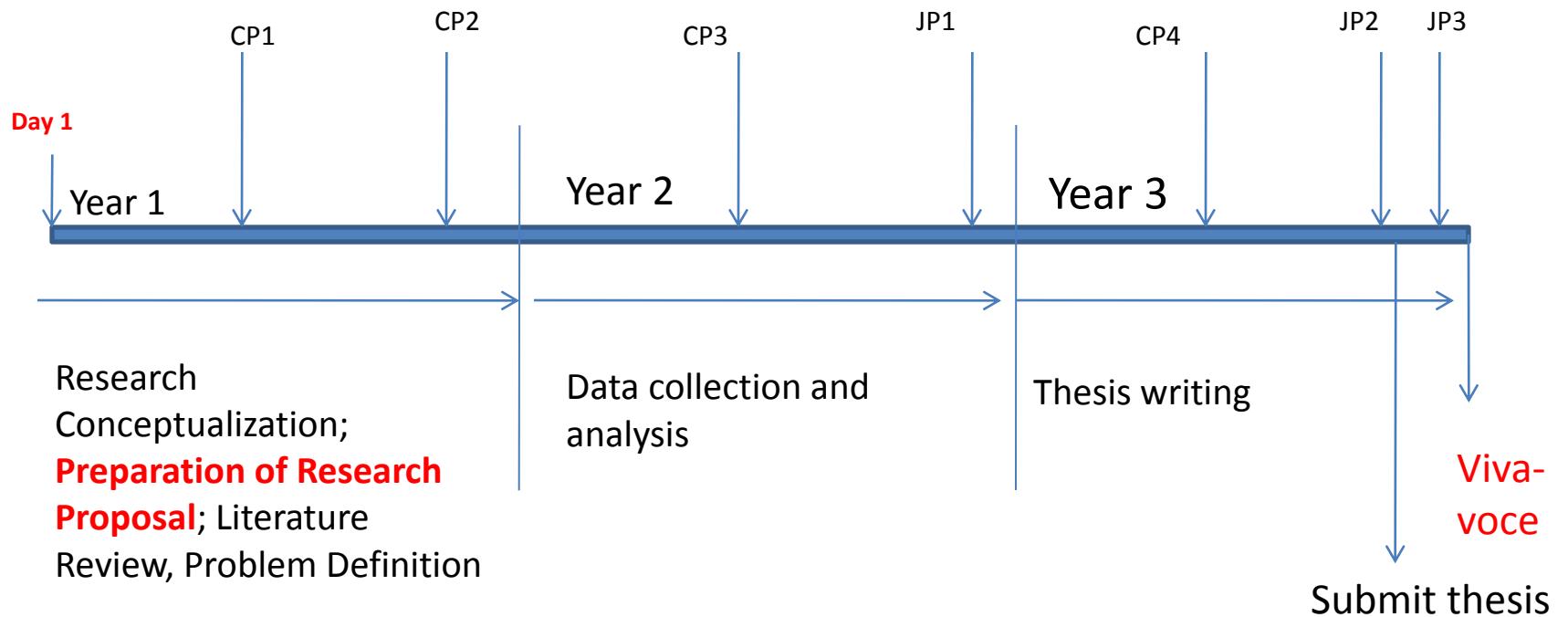
What we get at end of this workshop?

1. To learn what is required in a PhD research proposal; and

2. To learn why a good proposal will lead to a good thesis.

What is a PhD Proposal?

- It is a an outline of your proposed project that is designed to:

1. Define a clear question and approach to answering it

2. Highlight its **originality** and/or **significance**

3. Explain how it **adds to**, develops (or challenges) existing literature in the field

The Journey

CP1 CP2 CP3 JP1 CP4 JP2 JP3

Day 1

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Research Conceptualization; **Preparation of Research Proposal**; Literature Review, Problem Definition

Data collection and analysis

Thesis writing

Viva-voce

Submit thesis

Content of Research Proposal

1. Title (5-9)
2. Introduction/Scenario (10-13)
3. Issues or Research Problem and Research Gap (14-19)
4. Research Aim, Objectives, Questions, Hypotheses (20-24)
5. Assumptions and Delimitations (25)
6. Theoretical Framework including Underpinnings (27-28)
7. Background and Scope of Study (29-31)
8. Research Design and Methodology (32-34)
9. Research Significance (35-36)
10. References
11. Timeline

Title

- It is the prelude information of a proposal.
- Its content reflects the research aim of a study.
- E.g.

(1) Affordances of School Grounds for Children's Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

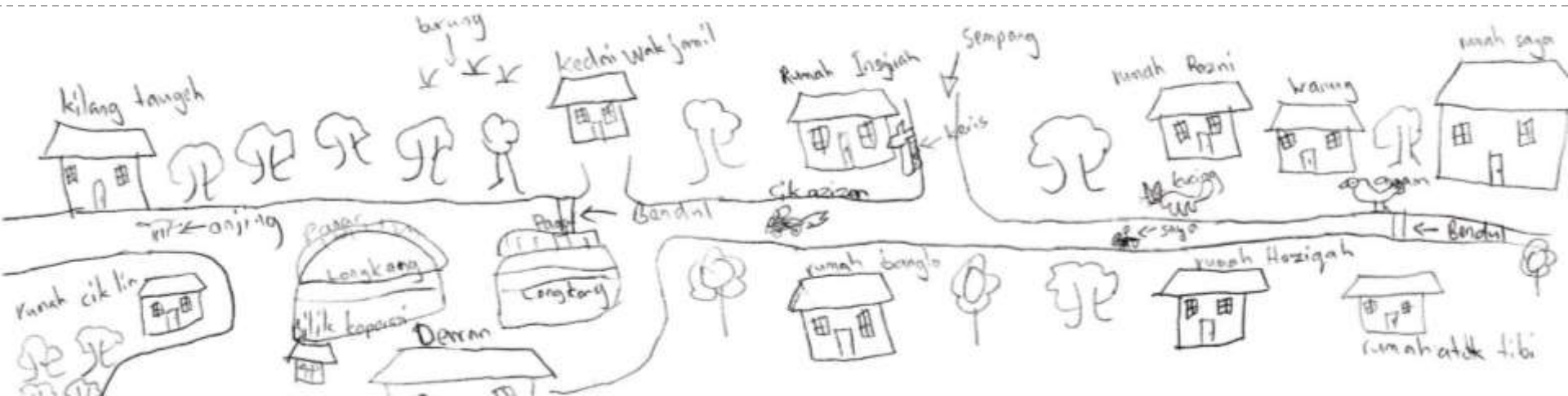(2) Affordances of Home-school Journey as a Play and Learning Environment for Rural Middle Childhood Children

Commonalty and Difference
Setting or Context
Unit of Analysis

Affordances of School Grounds
for Children's Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

Research Aim: To identify the influential factors affecting the actualization of affordances and children's preferences on the use of school grounds for outdoor play and environmental learning

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1 October 2014

AFFORDANCES OF HOME-SCHOOL JOURNEY AS A PLAY AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR MIDDLE CHILHOOD CHILDREN

This phenomenology research **investigates children's experiences during a home-school journey in the rural environment** in order to identify the actualised affordances which stimulate their performances.
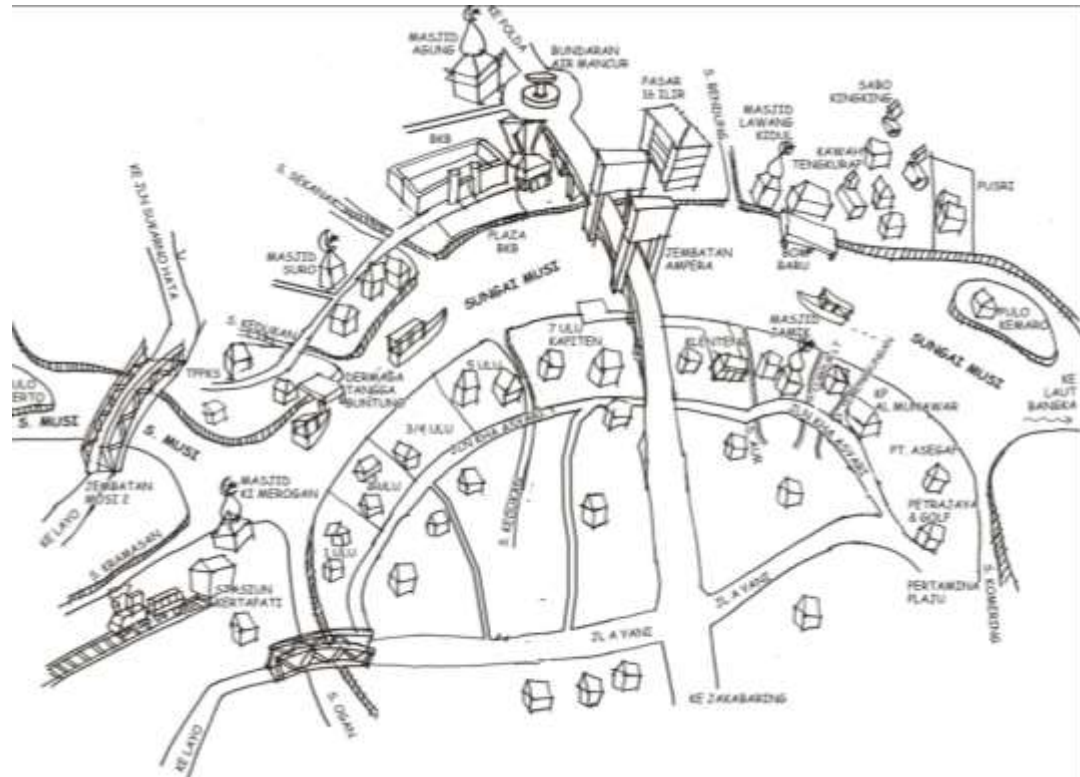
NOOR AIN YATIMAN : MB113011
SUPERVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. DR. ISMAIL SAID

Question

Research topic

Urban Morphology at Historical Urban Riverside Settlement Area: Rebuilding City's Identity Through Morphology of Historical Area

Answer

Research Aim

To identify the morphology of riverside settlement in Palembang for the rebuilding of the city as a historical place.

Introduction/Scenario

- It is a prelude that explains what is the concern of a study.

- What do you plan to study?

- Why it is important to study the subject?

- The quality of life and of the environment can never be improved **without an understanding of the person-environment relationship**.

- **There is a need to understand children's perceptions about their environment** as perceptions are a good predictor of people's behaviour in some contexts (Ball et al., 2008) when the psychology behind their behaviour remains unexplained by the objective measure approach (Ward Thompson, 2013).

- An understanding of children's perceptions will **lead to an understanding of their emotions, needs, preferences and interactions**.

- **It is an essential part of the process of creating a child-friendly environment** that will offer more meaningful experiences for children through an encouraging engagement and interaction with the environment.

Bring these words into a theme

DNA-based computational systems

Global internet

Ordinal biological world

Engineering tool-kit

Turing Test

Smart configuration system

Artificial intelligence

Biotechnology

Speech recognition

Synthetic biology software

Nanorobots

Computational biology

INTRODUCTION

Home, school and recreational facilities are referred as institutional triangle in children's lives.

The settings are created by adults that are embedded with rules about how and where the children should play and learn with limited engagement of outdoor environment.

Concerned with this situation, this study recognized home-school journey as a part of children's everyday routine place that allows children to play and stimulates three aspects of children performance which are physical, cognitive and social.

Home

Home school journey

Recreational area

School

HOME-SCHOOL JOURNEY IN A RURAL SETTING (VILLAGE)

COGNITIVE

CHILD

PHYSICAL

SOCIAL
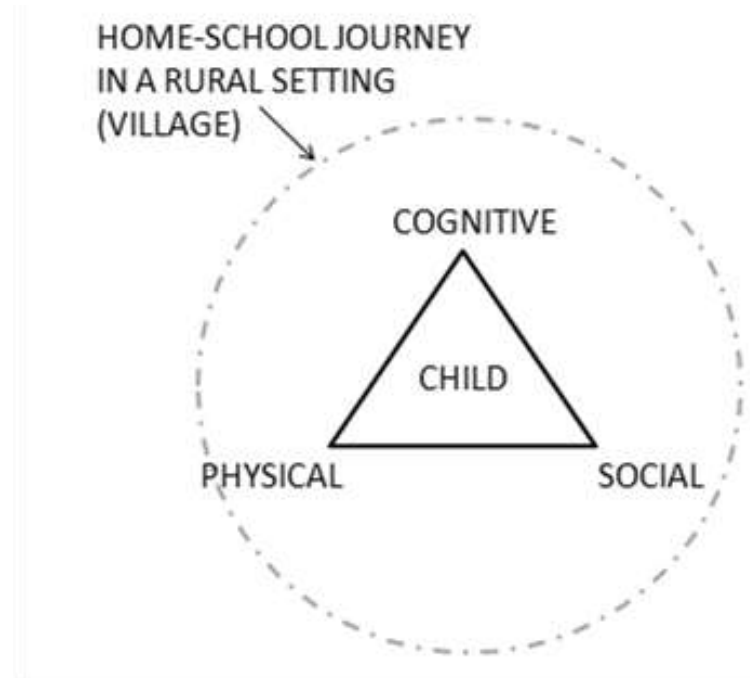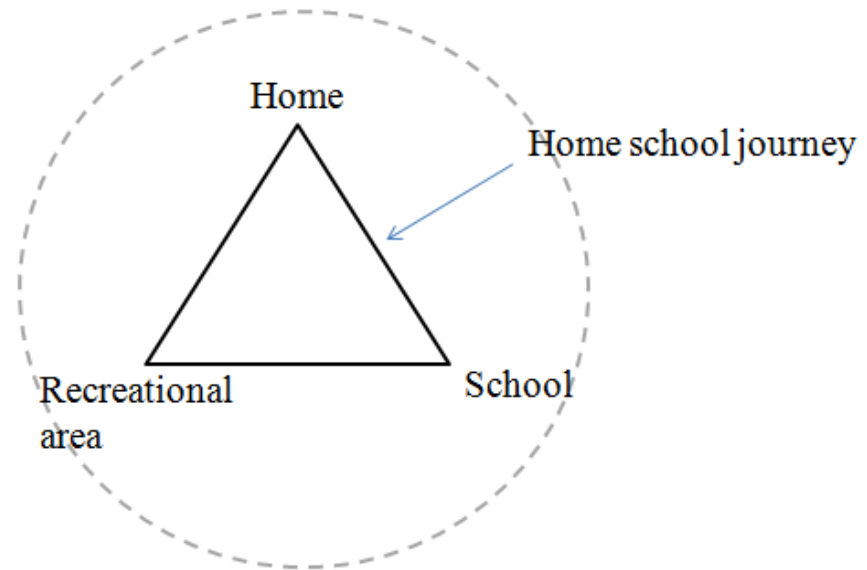
Issue or Research Problem

- The fundamental matter that you like to solve.

- You get the research problem for synthesis of literature and/or from your expert observation.

- Easy to elicit data.

Defining research gap

- Once a problem is encountered, a researcher foresees the gap of study that he or she would like to bridge through empirical investigation.

- A review of literature can ensure a researcher to define his or her study gap by analyzing what previous studies had examined and what have not been investigated.

Affordances of School Grounds for Children's Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

PROBLEMS

- **Adults often overlook the values of outdoor play and informal learning that lies outside the classroom**

1 SG DESIGN

- Conventional school grounds
- Limited spaces and landscape features for children's play
- Children's views in planning and design are generally ignored

2 SG CULTURE

- The regulations restrict children from playing at certain times and places
- The creative, widespread use of school grounds for outdoor play were viewed as hazardous and irrelevant

Design

Courtyard (paved area)

Field

Backyard

Culture

DIBENARKAN MASUK DENGAN KEBENARAN GURU.

AWAS !

MURID TIDAK DIBENARKAN BERMAIN DI KAWASAN PADANG TANPA KEBENARAN GURU

Restrictions and the issues of accessibility

Research Gap

There has been a variety of research about school grounds, but most studies have focused either on the impacts of the physical environment on children's behaviour and levels of physical activity or on children's perception of their school grounds environment.

- The studies overlooked **the connection between the physical environment and the social context of school grounds** regarding the actualisation of affordances and the formation of children's preferences.

- Research focusing on **children's values of outdoor play for environmental learning** in relation to the physical and social contexts of school grounds is less studied.

Therefore, **more comprehensive research is required** to explore the connection between **children's experiences within the designed school grounds environment** with their **perceptions of the ideal school grounds for environmental learning.**

PLACE MAKING AND MEANING OF *PADANG* AS A PUBLIC PLACE IN HISTORIC CITIES OF MALAYSIA

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Research Gap

But amid the resurgence of interest in such researches, literature review indicates that:

1. Very little, attempts at bringing public space contribution to the identity of place and people. Attention was often concentrated on single or dual component of place (physical and activities) with not much is done to integrate whole components (physical+activities+meaning) ; the interdisciplinary nature between urban design and environmental psychology.

2. Although research on both disciplines is recorded in the western countries, it is still minimal in developing countries including Malaysia.

3. Lack of theoretical discussion on the process of place meaning beyond the widely acknowledged three levels of meaning; low, moderate and high levels.

4. The roles of place attachment as a component that give place meanings has not been adequately explored.

5. Even though place literature suggests that place attachment may imply a deep concern about place however there is not much is known about how changes on favorite places affects or disrupts people.

Research Aim, Objective, Question and Hypothesis

- A research **aim** is the purpose of a study

- Must be stated succinctly; a broad statement

- Emphasize what is to be accomplished

===

- An **objective** emphasize how aims are to be accomplished

- It must be highly focused and feasible

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- A research **question** instigates what an objective to attain

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- A research hypothesis is the statement created by researchers when they speculate upon the outcome of a research or experiment.

Research Aim
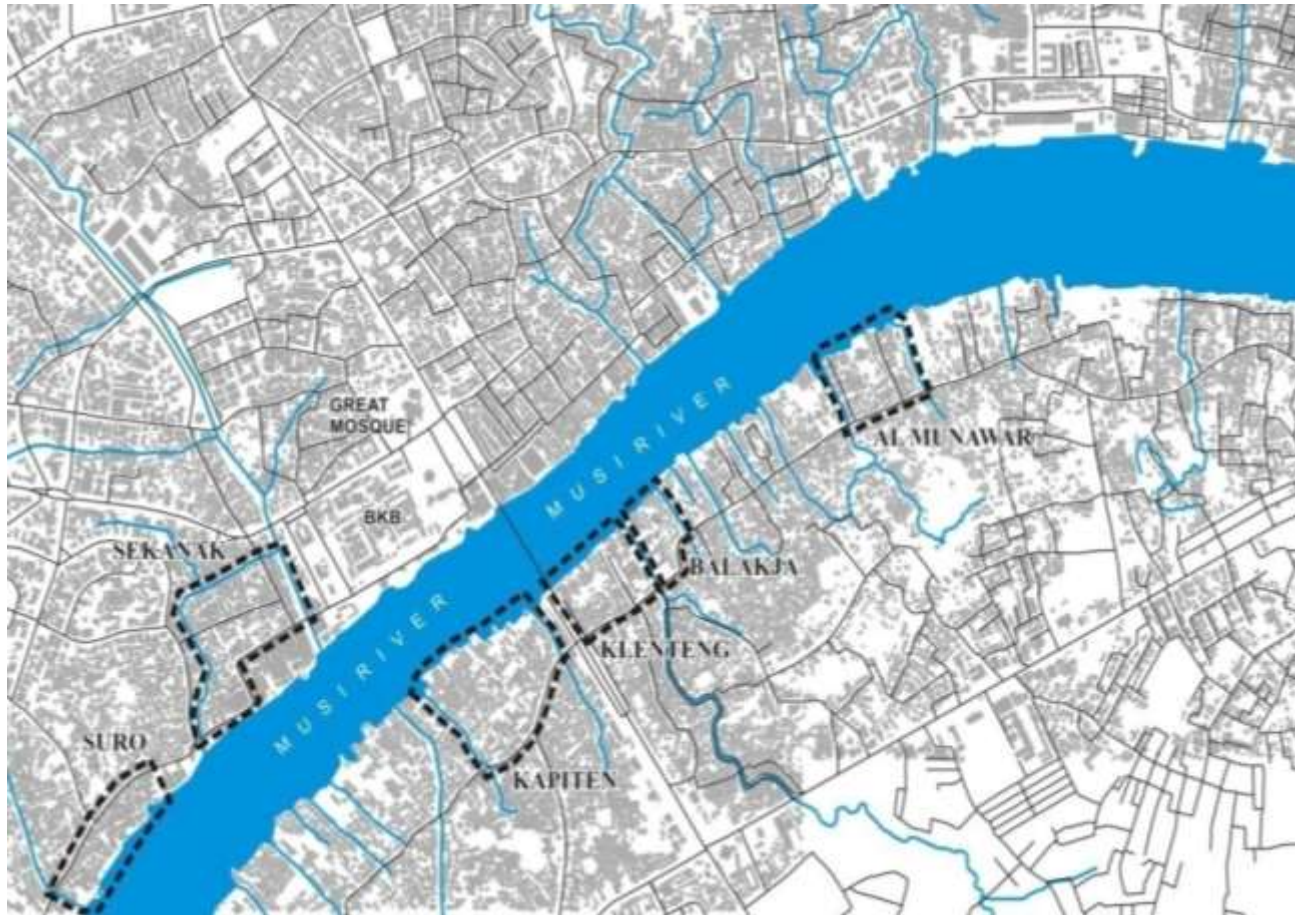
To identify the use of morphology of riverside settlement for the rebuilding of the city identity as a historical river city

Research Objectives

1. To identify the **physical and spatial structure** of riverside settlement along Musi river that characterized the character of the river city,

2. To investigate how **place character** of historical riverside area can establish the identity of river city, and

3. To identify the **interdependency between the urban morphology and identity** of the city to determine the appropriate physical development at historical riverside area.

Research Questions

RQ#1: What is the **morphology** at the historical riverside area?	• What are **the types of urban structure and form** are found at Musi historical riverside area based on **physical properties and social value** of riverside community? • What are **the changes** of building form and urban structure at Musi historical riverside settlement? • What are **the key elements** of old urban structure and how do they influence the current urban structure of Musi historical riverside settlement after the changes happens?
RQ#2: How is the **people - place relationship** at historical riverside area?	• What do **people perceive** about the physical and spatial environment at the historical riverside settlement and the city?
RQ#3: How does the urban morphology can be used **to rebuild city's identity?**	• How do the remaining key elements such as building, walls, square of old urban fabric **promote the character** of riverside urban development and rebuilding the city's identity? • How to rebuild the city's character by **using the remaining key elements** of historical urban area? • What is the **interdependency between urban morphology and city's identity?**

Assumption and Delimitation

- An assumption is a thing that is accepted as true.

- An example: River is important element in both old and modern city's development. For river city, river was the main transportation mode in the past. As land transportation network becomes more prominent, river transportation is not considered as the main one.

- A delimitation is the definition you set as a boundary of your study.

Space Syntax Analysis		1875	1920	1945	2004
Connectivity	River axial				
	River -street				
Integration	River				
	River-Street				
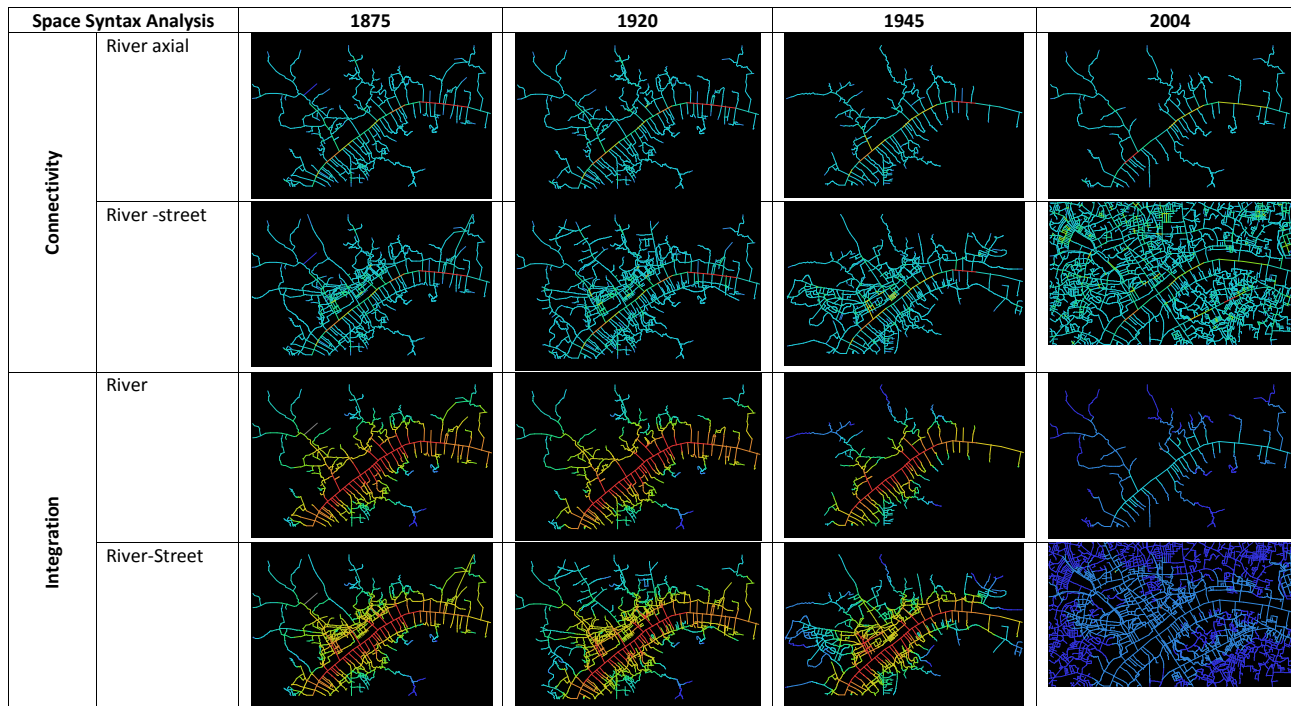
Theoretical Framework: What is a literature review?

- Literature is a body of information that has conceptual relevance for a particular topic of inquiry.

- A critical look at the existing research. It is a synthesis of your reading materials.

- It is not a summary or annotated bibliography.

- It is synthesizing a subject from a set of previous studies in your own stance.

- *It is a debate: evaluate* the work, show the *relationships* between different work, and show how it relates to *your* work.

Theoretical Framework as part of scope of study

A rigorous literature search and review affords you:

- Finding a research problem

- Defining research gap and situating a research with current status quo of a subject

- Finding underpinnings and developing framework of study

- Searching for research method, research design or research approach, and parameters of study

Theoretical Framework
Modelling of street network connectivity for good wayfinding in small towns in Malaysia

Cognitive Memory/Spatial Representation → Allin (1896) → **Real World Action (Wayfinding)**

Underpinning 1
Theory of Recognition Memory; Dual Process Theory
Wixted, 2007; Atkinson & Juole, 1973, 1974; Hintzman & Curran, 1994; Jacoby, 1991; Jacoby & Dallas, 1981; Mandler, 1980

Recognition Memory Process

Familiarity Process

Recollection Process

Fast Reaction

Slow Reaction

Repoport (1970)

Hillier and Hanson (1984)

Street network of Small Town as Context

Human Behavior (Space)

Human Behavior In Space

Axial Line — Move

Convex Space (polygon) — Interact

Visibility (Isovist Polygon) — Visualize

Street Connectivity

Underpinning 2
Theory of Space Syntax (Social Logic Space)
Porta et al., 2006; Batty, 2004; Jiang, Claramunt, & Batty, 1999; Jiang et al., 2000; Hillier & Hanson, 1984

PROCESS

Recollection

Object (Spatial Information – 15 street feature)

Subject (Spatial Knowledge – 3 familiarity factors)

Familiarity

reflection

Real World - Wayfinding (decision making/reaction/verbal explanation)

Situating a research with current status quo of a subject

Urban Morphology

Conzen, 1960; Lynch, 1960; Kostof, 1991; Wikantyoso,1997; Hillier, 2001; Ikaputra, et. Al, 2000; Fattahi and Kobayashi, 2009a, 2009b

Boblic, 1990; Hall, 1997; Purwanto, 2005; Hanh, 2006; Hara, et.al (2008)

Schuller, 1898; Geisler, 1918; Whitby, 1951; Conzen, 1960; Muratori, 1960; Hillier aand Hanson, 1984; Forties; 1989; Kropt, 1996; Hall, 1997; Levy, 1999; Canigia, 2001; Jiang and Claramunt, 2002; Chapman, 2006; james and Bound, 2009; Tian et.al, 2010; Topcu and Kubat, 2012

Inn, 2004;Gospodini, 2004, 2011; Doralti, 2004;Watson, 2006; Plaza, 2006, 2008; Butina, 2006; Niebrzydowski, 2007; Novickas, 2007; Lewicka, 2008; Handal, 2009;Chen, 2011; Sainz, 2012

Tuan, 1974; Steele, 1981; Altman and Low, 1992; Hummon, 1992; Jackson, 1994; Cross, 2001; Guillani, 2003; Willian and Vaske, 2003; Smaldone, 2006; Handal. 2006; Beidler, 2007; Hernandez, 2007; Brown and raymond, 2007; Watson and Bentley, 2007; White et.al, 2008; Liu, 2009; Raymod et.al, 2010; Najafi and Kamal, 2011

Whitehand and Morton, 2004; Rapoport, 2004; Samant, 2004; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007; Smith, 2008; Rabady, 2010; Ragab, 2011, Kim, 2011

Urban Element

Urban Structure Change

Urban Setting

Urban Reminder

Place Familiarity

Place Character

Rebuilding City Identity

Sense of Place

Authenticity

City Marketing

Identity

Culture

Place Attachment

Place Identity

City's Identity

Identity of Place

Image of the city

Environmental Psychology

Conservation Preservation

Rodwel, 2007; Kolzlowski and Bowen, 1997; Sevinc, 2009; Wei and Kiang, 2009; Whitehand and Gu, 2010; Albert and Hanzen, 2010; Hillier, 2001

Research Background

- Explain how you came to be interested in this subject. You can summarise what you know of the existing literature in this area, perhaps identifying where it does and does not provide enlightenment on what you are interested in.

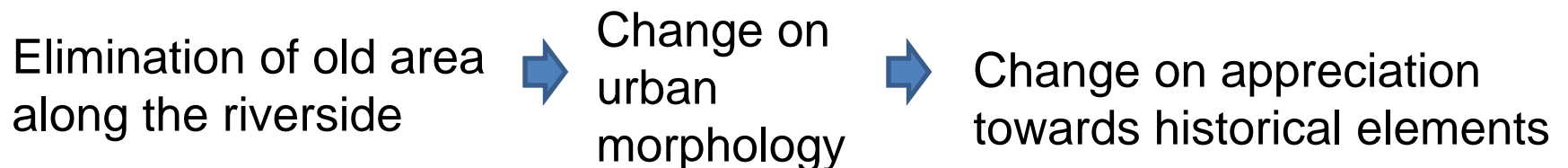The cultural landscape
of river city deals with
modernity

Local concerns

The richness of Asian cities; features, form and space arrangement

Palembang identity is threatened by the lost of its historical elements

Elimination of old area along the riverside ➡ Change on urban morphology ➡ Change on appreciation towards historical elements
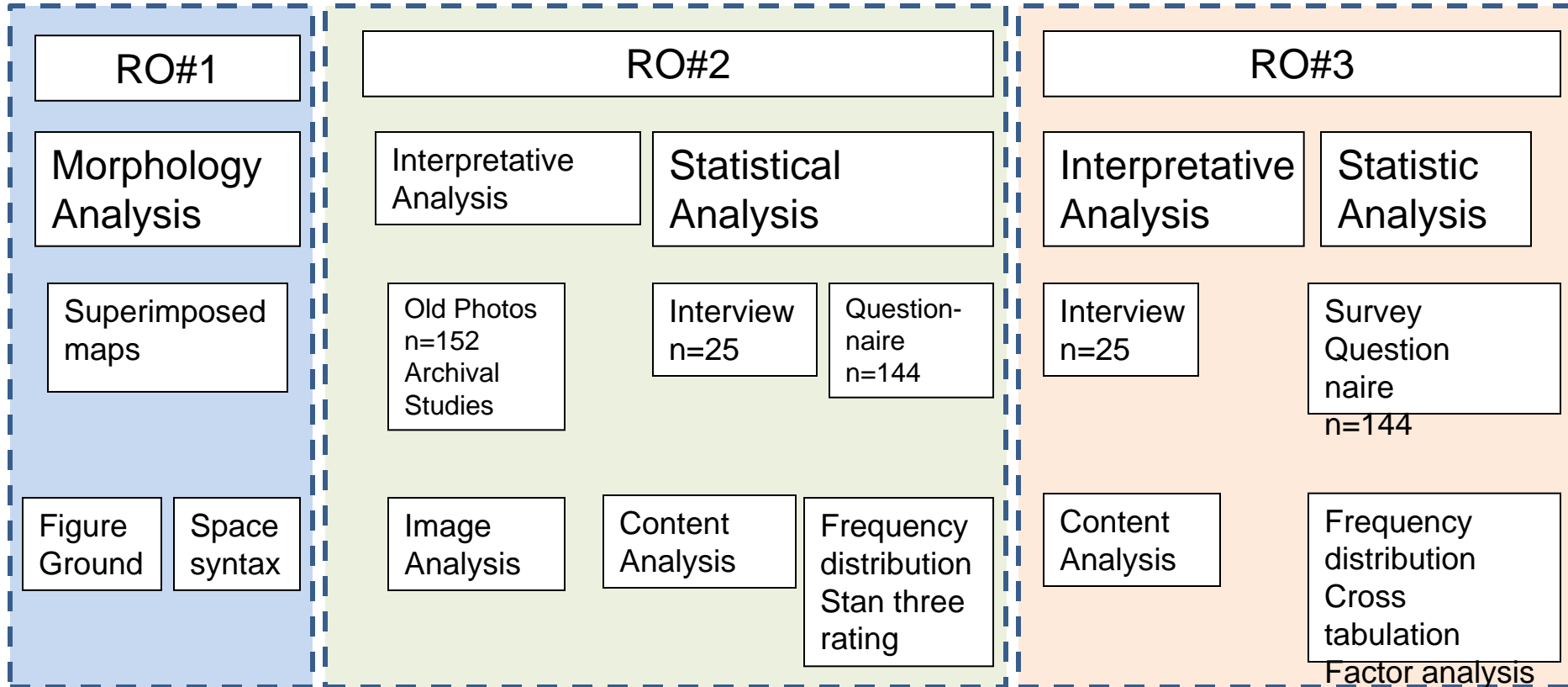
What is a research design and methodology?

- It is the way in which you will structure your research and the specific methods you will use.

- Define the parameters, unit of analysis, situatedness or context, method how to elicit and analyse data, triangulation of results from more than one method, and how to display the results.

Research Methodology

Research Method

RO#1

Morphology Analysis

Superimposed maps

Figure Ground | Space syntax

RO#2

Interpretative Analysis | Statistical Analysis

Old Photos n=152 Archival Studies | Interview n=25 | Question-naire n=144

Image Analysis | Content Analysis | Frequency distribution Stan three rating

RO#3

Interpretative Analysis | Statistic Analysis

Interview n=25 | Survey Question naire n=144
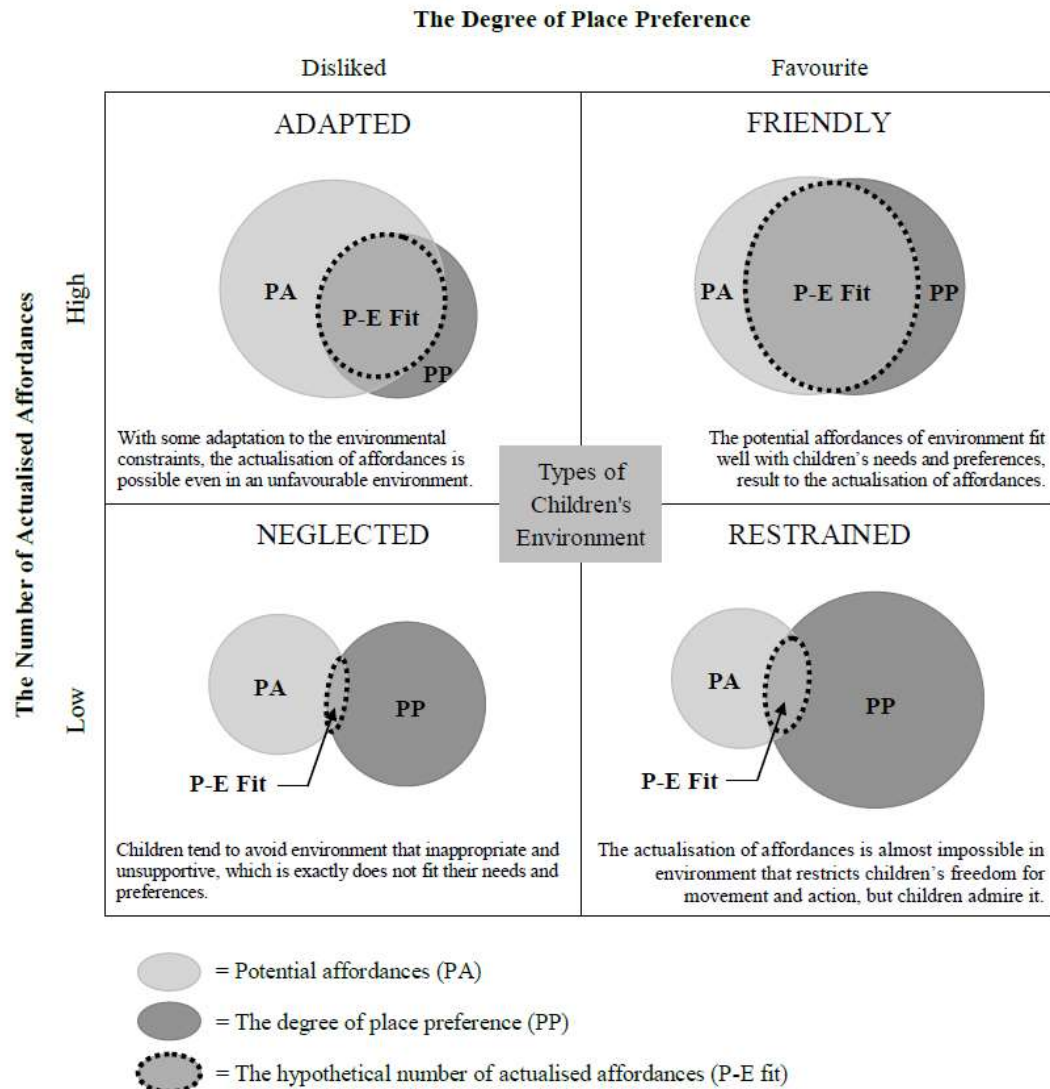
Content Analysis | Frequency distribution Cross tabulation Factor analysis

Research Significance

- The contribution of your study both in practical and theoretical adds-on.

Significance

The Degree of Place Preference

Disliked — Favourite

High / Low — The Number of Actualised Affordances

ADAPTED

PA — P-E Fit — PP

With some adaptation to the environmental constraints, the actualisation of affordances is possible even in an unfavourable environment.

FRIENDLY

PA — P-E Fit — PP

The potential affordances of environment fit well with children's needs and preferences, result to the actualisation of affordances.

Types of Children's Environment

NEGLECTED

PA — PP

P-E Fit

Children tend to avoid environment that inappropriate and unsupportive, which is exactly does not fit their needs and preferences.

RESTRAINED

PA — PP

P-E Fit

The actualisation of affordances is almost impossible in environment that restricts children's freedom for movement and action, but children admire it.

= Potential affordances (PA)

= The degree of place preference (PP)

= The hypothetical number of actualised affordances (P-E fit)

The hypothetical types of children's environment

❑ The varying environmental situations of the model are interpreted on the basis of the **degree of P-E fit between the potential affordances** of the environment and **children's place preferences**.

❑ The degree of P-E fit then determined **the number of actualised affordances** and **children's environmental learning** in the school grounds.

❑ **The higher the degree of P-E fit** between the environmental affordances and children's preferences, **the greater the actualisation of affordances** and **children's environmental learning**.

Novelty and Originality of a PhD Thesis

- Carrying out an empirical work that has not been done before
- Making a synthesis that has not been made before
- Making a new interpretation of known materials
- Bringing new evidence to bear on old use
- Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies
- Adding new knowledge to the current pool of knowledge

Timeline

- An outline of the timescale of the research, indicating how long different tasks are envisaged to take, and the sequence of the project in the time available