

CC0001

BUKIT BROWN CEMETERY

Teo Kai Jie (redacted)



FIELD NOTES (1)

SIGHT



Fitness Enthusiasts



Towering Trees



Religious Elements



Residents walking with their hyperactive dogs



Intricate tiles signifying afterlife



Grass Encroaching Graves



Thousands of wildlife species



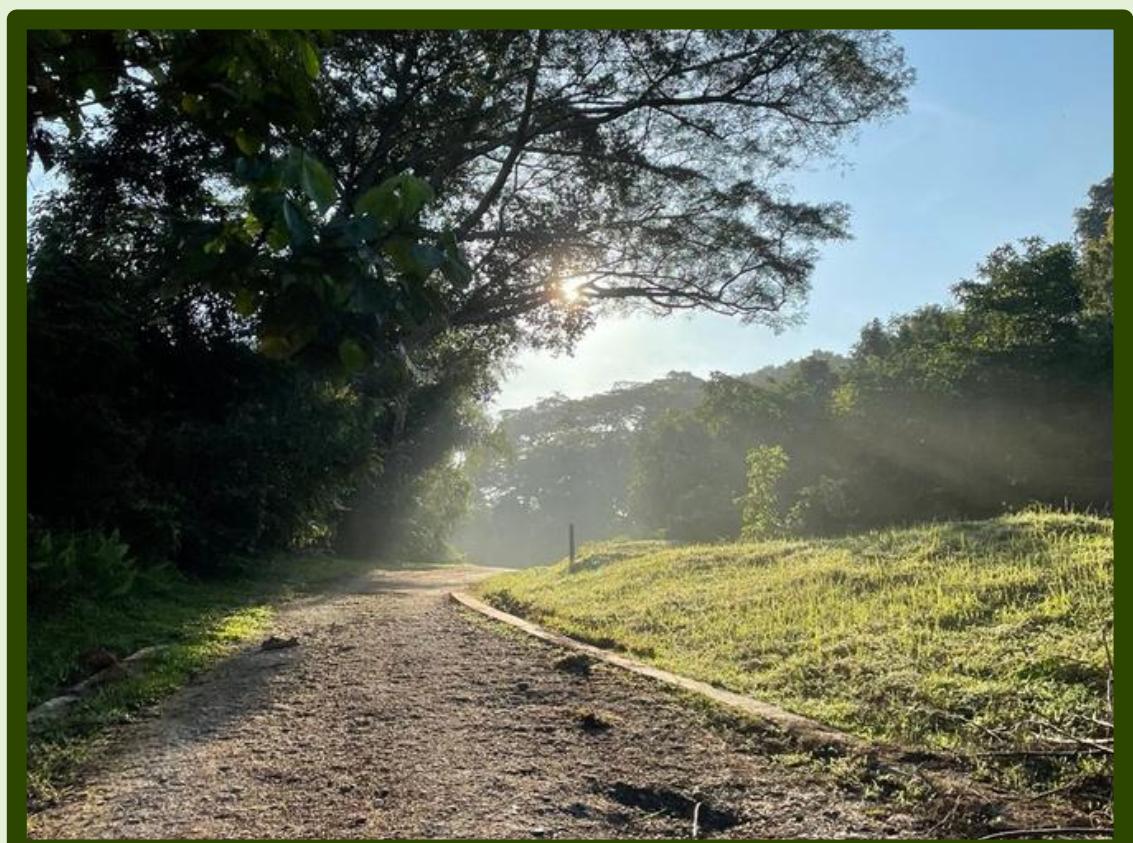
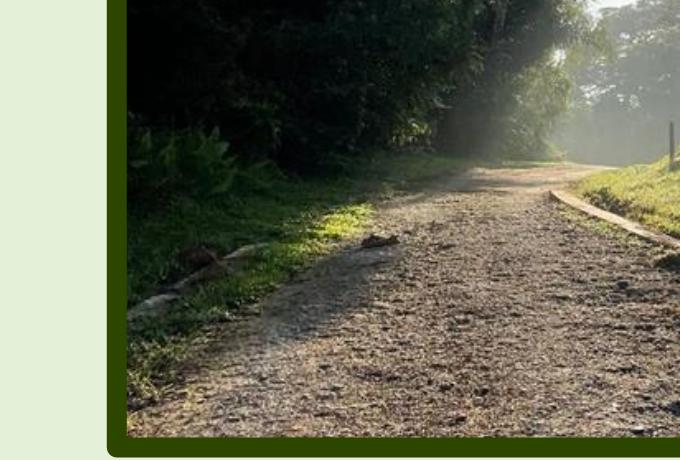
People paying their respects to their ancestors



Moving/Parked Cars



Horse Riders

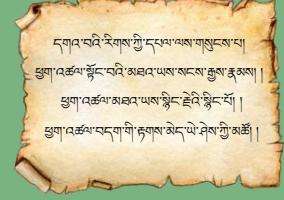


FIELD NOTES (2)



SOUNDS

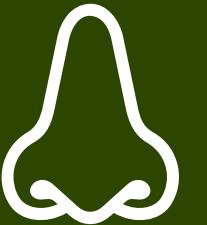
Buddhist chants played on solar-powered speakers



Wind breezing through with leaves flying around



Sounds of nature (e.g. crickets and birds)



SMELL

Burning Offerings from pots



Earthy scent of the cemetery



Prominent Incense Smells



FIELD NOTES - GROUP CLUES

Multi-Purpose Road/Pathways

No security or barricades guard the cemetery because it is abandoned



Tibetan Writing on Leaflets

Contains important Buddhist texts (i.e. verses from sutras, prayers) meant to soothe the environment in the cemetery



Well-painted tiles on graves

Signifies respect and reverence for ancestors in the afterlife

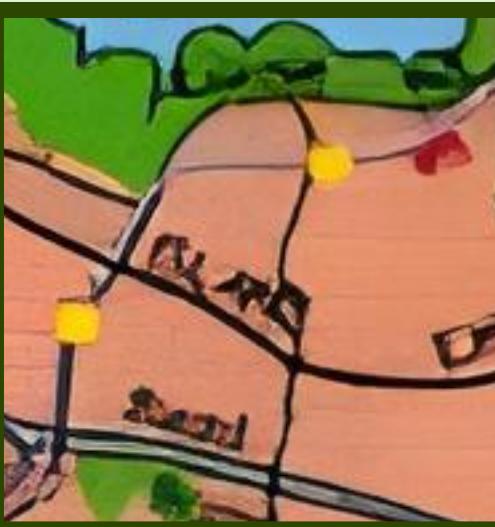
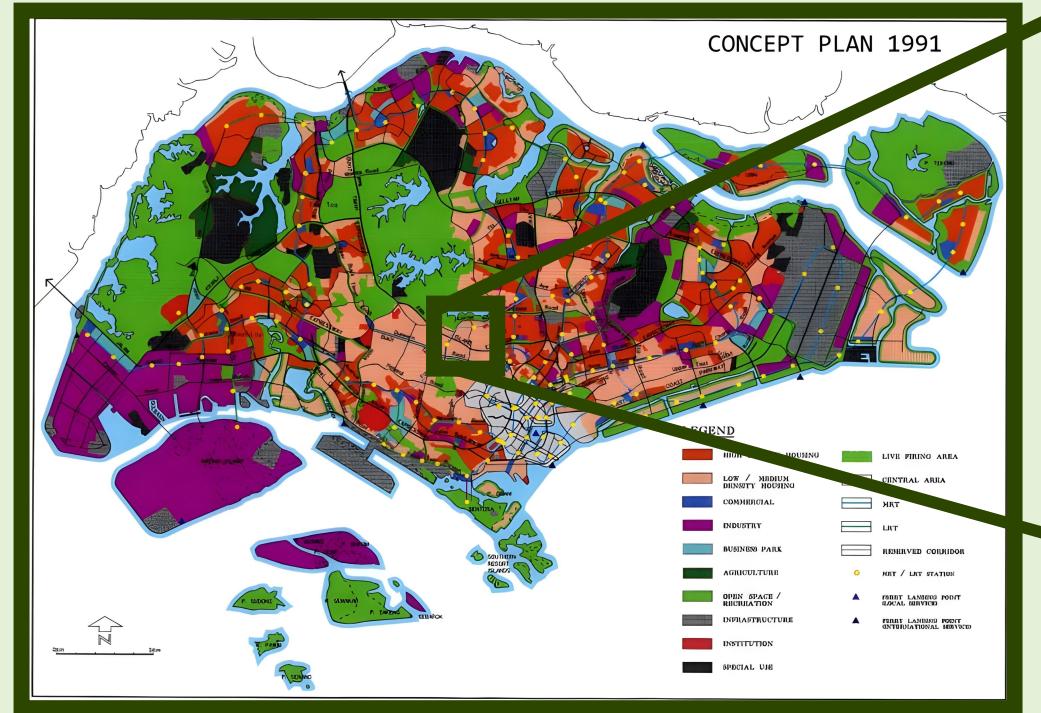


No street lamps and minimal construction

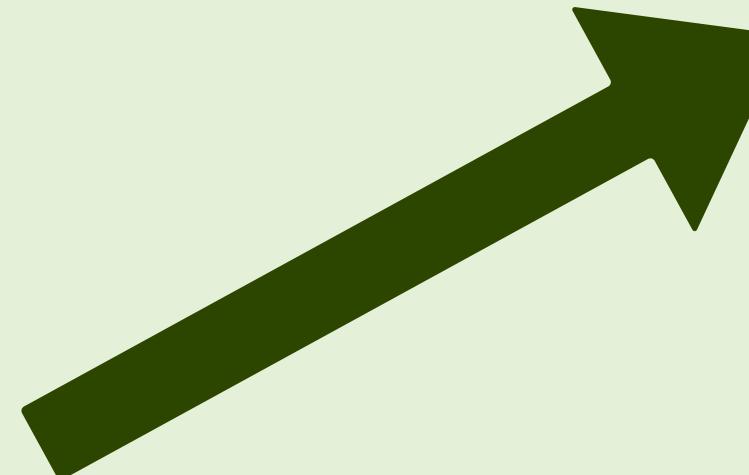
Maintains a respectful atmosphere to protect the spirits roaming in the cemetery



CASE STUDY: CONTROVERSIES AROUND BUKIT BROWN



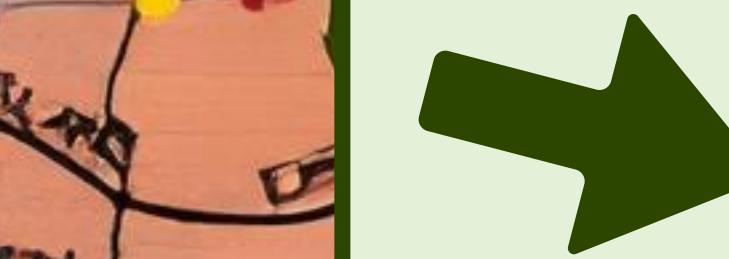
1991 Concept Plan marked Bukit Brown as a residential estate



Construction of Lornie Highway



Activists protesting against the construction of Lornie Highway



RESEARCH QUESTION

How does urbanisation challenge our
spiritual and religious connection to
sacred spaces?

MAIN SOURCE 1



Dr. Alison A. Ormsby

Lecturer of Environmental Studies
University of North Carolina Asheville

Research Summary:

Categorised a list of “sacred natural sites” (SNS) that involves sacred sites situated on natural grounds

Relation to Research Question (RQ)

Posits that **urbanisation** is primarily **harmful**:

“It destroys the tranquility and spirituality of these spaces such as air pollution.”

Fallacies:

Focuses solely on **natural spaces**, excluding religious structures

Assumes that **urbanisation** is primarily **harmful**

Research Sites

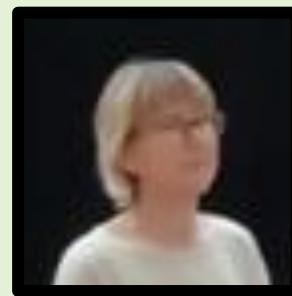


Krakus Mound, Kraków, Poland



Swayambhunath Temple,
Kathmandu, Nepal

MAIN SOURCE 2



Dr. Elżbieta Mydłowska

Assistant Professor

University of Szczecin

Research Summary:

Studied the **importance of religious factors in religious spaces** (e.g. temples and churches):

“Religion plays a significant portion in people’s lives.”

Relation to Research Question (RQ)

Posits that **urbanisation** is not entirely **harmful**:

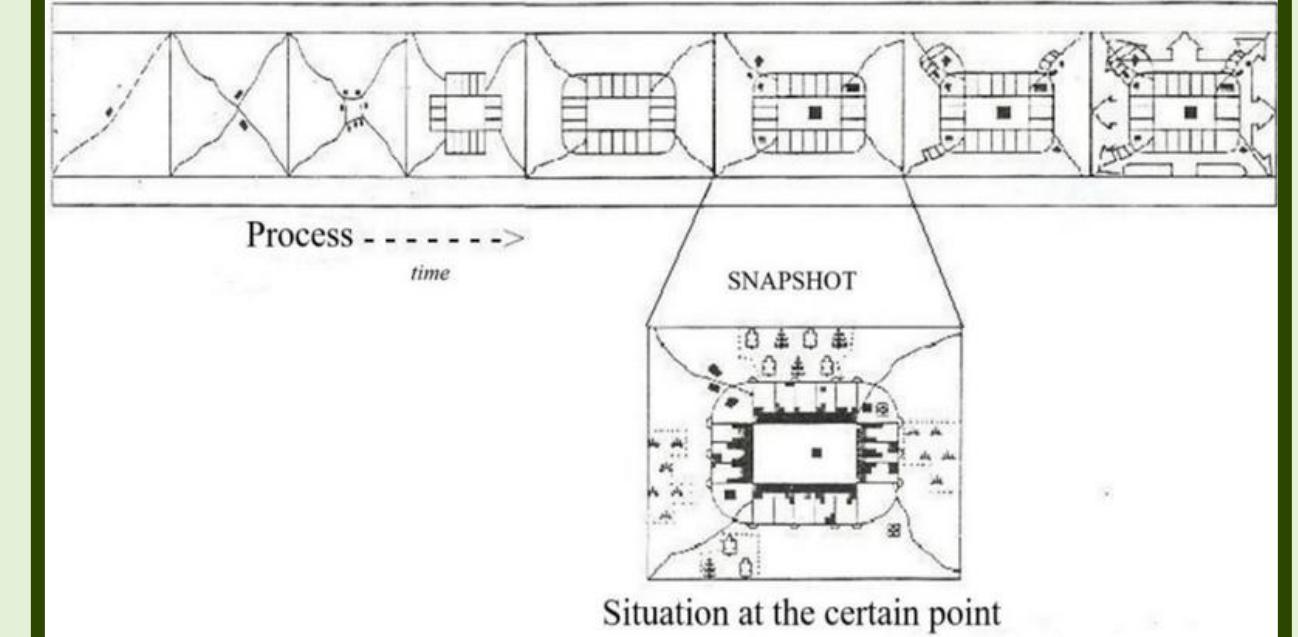
“Religious structures can incorporate well with rising impacts of urbanisation”

Fallacies:

Excludes the mention of **natural sacred spaces**, which were described by Ormsby, along with **lack of quantitative data**.

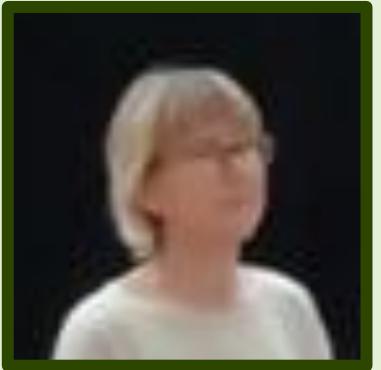
Key Research Method:

Figure 1. Graphical presentation of snapshot method



Snapshot Method:

Investigates a **specific stage** of its development of religious sites



KEY TAKEAWAYS

How they both work together:

- Both advocate on preserving **sacred, natural and religious sites**, like **Bukit Brown Cemetery**



Where they diverge:

Research Focus

Ormsby



Sacred
Natural Sites
(SNS)

Mydłowska



Religious
Structures

Views on Urbanisation

Ormsby



Against

Mydłowska



Accepts

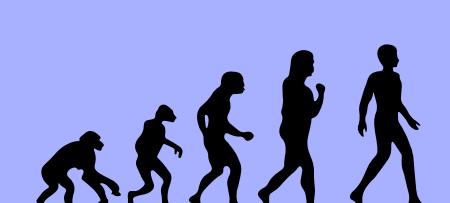
Preservation Strategies

Ormsby



Strict
Conservation

Mydłowska



Integration
and Evolution

PERSONAL TAKEAWAYS

A Living Story of Heritage

More than resting places – they are living stories of our shared past

We must choose what **heritage** to **carry into the future**



Reconnecting with my Chinese Roots

Burning offerings, chants, and tombstones reflect **deep spiritual ties**

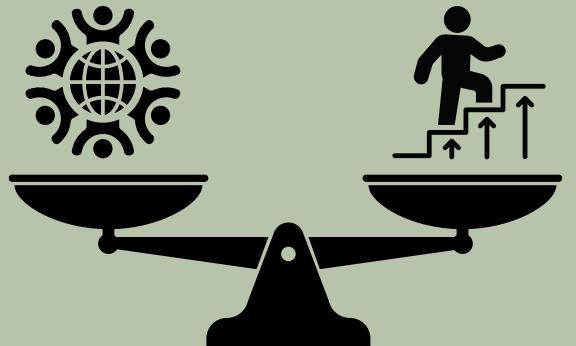
Losing them is **losing** a part of **ourselves**



Balancing Preservation and Progress

Creative ways exist for sacred spaces to **coexist with modern life**

It's about **harmony**: **honouring the past** while **building the future**



My Commitment Forward

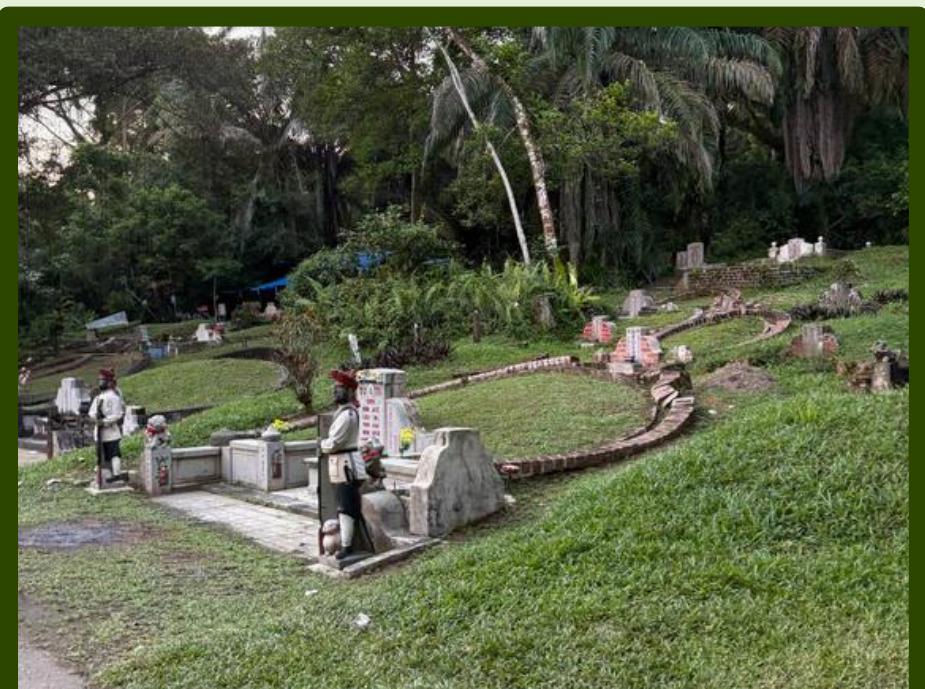
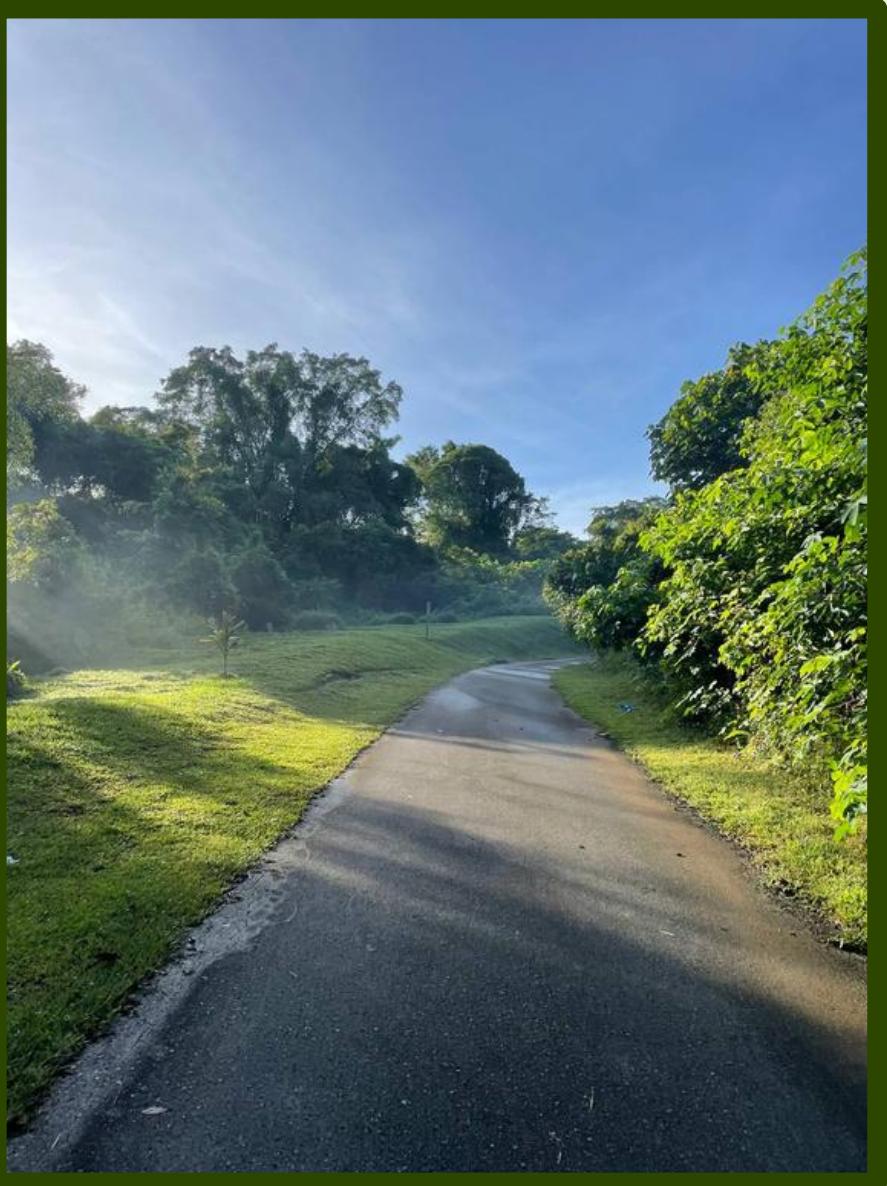
Urgent need to safeguard heritage meaningfully

We must **respect** and **weave** these spaces into our city's story



START THINKING BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

- **Space** for sacred sites like Bukit Brown are **running out** in Singapore
- We must explore **modern, creative ways** to **preserve heritage** and **spirituality**
- Bukit Brown is the **largest Chinese cemetery outside China** - a heritage gem in our small nation
- **Understand its significance**, especially as Chinese heritage shapes much of Singapore's Identity



References

- 1.Ormsby, A. A. (2021). Diverse values and benefits of urban sacred natural sites. *Trees, Forests and People*, 5, 100116. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666719321000753>
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**THANK
YOU**