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A STUDY ON THE LOCATION, ACCESSIBILITY AND
USE OF LOCAL PARKS: SELECTED STUDIES OF
THREE LOCAL PARKS IN KUALA LUMPUR

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

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NORHUZAILIN BINTI HUSSAIN

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for the degree of Master of Science in Built Environment

Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design
International Islamic University
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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, many issues have been connected to the parks in residential areas such as not being properly located, lack of facilities, not safe and the most important is poor maintenance. These issues also involve local parks whereby; parks users are not satisfied with the services of local authority. Users complain of lack of facilities, inadequate parking spaces and lack of safety and accessibility problems. It is important for planners, landscape architects, park managers and local authorities to look into these problems due to the increasing demands from the publics. In Kuala Lumpur, the situation is the same and has led to underutilization of local parks. There are 35 local parks in Kuala Lumpur. Of these, 3 parks have been selected for this study. These are: Burung Garuda Local Park, Padang Road Local Park and Senang Ria Local Park. 50 users from Garuda Road Local Park, 40 from Padang Road and 65 from Senang Ria Local Park were randomly selected and interviewed through a questionnaire. The sample covered 3 groups of park users' namely male and female teenagers, adults and the elderly. There are differences in frequency of park use and time spent by park users. Park users at Burung Garuda and Padang Road visit the park once a week but park users at Senang Ria come daily. Park users frequently visit the parks because of the suitable location, easy access and safe environment. Lack of maintenance affects the frequency of park use. There is a relationship between frequency of park use with location, safety and security, maintenance and age of park users. Local parks should be located at suitable locations, be easily accessible and safe. In order for the parks to be used frequently, it is important to understand the park users' needs, desires and demand for the recreational facilities of local parks. Most importantly, local parks should be managed efficiently in order to be in good condition and to avoid being underutilized.

ملخص البحث

٣٥	٣	:		
			“Burung Garuda”	
	٥٠		“Senang Ria”	“Padang Road”
			٦٥	٤٠

APPROVAL PAGE

I have certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Built Environment.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Name: Norhuzailin Hussain

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STUDIES OF THREE LOCAL PARKS IN KUALA LUMPUR**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter introduces the scope of local parks in this research. Local parks play an important role in our society in enhancing social activities and upgrading the quality of urban life. They are the nearest places for the local residents to do their passive and active recreational activities. For the children, it is a place for them to develop their cognitive and skills development through play activities with their playmates. Teenagers can also play together with friends and give opportunity for them engage in beneficial activities besides hanging out aimlessly shopping centers. As Tom (1996: 193), said that teenagers want to be ‘where it happens’: - in central places, where there are lots to do, where they can see and meet other teenagers.

For the adults it is a place to relax and do activities with friends or families and to find tranquility from the daily work routine. The elderly can meet their friends or do activities together or just have conversation to occupy their time. Senior citizens like to see parks that remind them of the world as it was; when they were young and when their parents were young (Tom, 1996: 193). Various activities in local parks will help strengthen the relationships in the neighborhood and also create a safe environment for these communities, where everybody knows their surroundings. However, the frequency of park use is still low amongst Malaysians. With regard to frequency of recreational activities with the family, 20.2 per cent are engaged in recreational activities at least once a week and 46.5 per cent do so once a month (Malaysia Quality Of Life, 2002: 135).

To enhance the frequency of local park usage, it is important for local authorities to make continuous needs assessment for recreational park in order to understand the

current demand. Needs assessment attempts at understanding individual and group behaviors related to recreation and leisure. It accomplishes several things. Through such assessment, recreation planners and managers can become aware of people's underlying motivation, interests, opinions, habits, desires and knowledge regarding recreation and leisure (Torkildsen, 1992: 87).

A local park is a commonly or privately owned area of land, usually with grass, trees, paths, sports fields, playgrounds, picnic areas and other features for recreation and relaxation. Public local parks are part of open spaces that also function as the 'green lung of the city' whereby they provide oxygen to the urban lives. Over the years, open spaces in Malaysia have been gradually developed towards realizing the government's vision of being a garden nation by the year 2005. With that, local parks play an important role in urban planning in Malaysia in enhancing the quality of life.

Conventional urban planning and commercial provision of facilities have ensured that the city centre is the focus of development while the district is the focus of local parks and amenities, such as libraries and community centers and the local area is the focus of social leisure (Malcolm, 1976: 10). Owing to densely populated neighborhoods in the city, open spaces are needed as social and recreational spaces. According to Gold (1988), an effective recreational experience in cities calls for opportunities to experience freedom, diversity, self-expression, challenge and enrichment. Servicing such opportunities provides much of the justification for providing open spaces within cities. In this context, an open space is a basic element in the structure and function of the built environment in meeting human needs. This will be elaborate in the background issues.

1.1 BACKGROUND ISSUES

Currently, Kuala Lumpur has about 3,200 acres of green spaces and recreational areas. There are now 2.4 acres open spaces per 1,000 people compared to 1.5 acres per 1,000 people in 1980 (Goh, 2002: 44). It is a good indication that shows that Malaysian

government is really concerned about providing open spaces for recreational purposes by upgrading the quality of life of the population and the environment.

Bouy (1999), found several issues regarding the quality of open spaces and recreational areas in Malaysia. This includes the fact that open spaces are not strategically located in housing areas and it is difficult for the parents to keep an eye on their children at the playground. Poor drainage systems in open spaces and locations at flood prone areas, which become waterlogged especially during the rainy season, are other issues that cause users to be unable to use the places. In addition, the facilities provided in the open space are not well maintained and the broken equipments can be dangerous for the users. There were complains regarding broken walk paths (brick slabs) which can be dangerous to walkers and joggers and also to the old and young in the Subang Jaya neighborhood park (USJ 2/4 Resident, New Straits Times, 2003). Research conducted by Nor Kalsum (2000), also identified a number of causes that led to unsafe open spaces in residential areas in Ipoh. The factors include the unsafe location of the open space near roads with busy commercial activities surrounding it.

Many complaints regarding the quality of open spaces in Malaysia appear regularly in newspapers; for example, a specific complaint regarding the deteriorating condition of the Lake Garden of Seremban. As one observer comments, “The Lake Garden no longer brings a smile. I am ashamed and hurt when my children say that it is not as nice as I had described” (Goh, 2002: 48-49). By the end of the 1990’s, Seremban Urban Park was suffering from a lack of use, lack of care and most notably, physical deterioration.

Local authorities have spent hundreds of thousands of ringgit to build parks, children’s playgrounds and recreational facilities in this country. Unfortunately, the maintenance of these facilities has been very poor that they are not only useless, but also become objects of danger to those who use them (Goh, 2002: 57). It is important to understand the relationship of public spaces with people in order to fully utilize recreational area. Do the services provided by the local authority satisfy the park users’ needs and demands?

According to Salidah (1998), there were issues related to the recreational planning that account for the failure of Ayer Keroh Lake Garden, Melaka. The recreational facilities were not attractive and park users cannot use them effectively.

Park users were not able to use the existing facilities because of poor and improper park maintenance. The neglect in maintenance of public open spaces and parks sometimes leads to more than the loss of use of the facilities. It leads to a diminishing number of visitors (Goh, 2002, p. 58).

Accessibility is one of the issues faced by the park users in recreational area in Forest Park in Sungai Rambai, Perak. According to Ahmad Jamaludin (2000), the access road to the park was in bad condition, with murky, dirty pools of stagnant water as well as being narrow, with vehicles only able to pass through one at a time.

According to Rosliza (2002), park users were not satisfied with the facilities and services provided by the local authority. From her survey in two different neighborhood parks in Taman Setapak Jaya and Taman Seri Gombak, she found that 97.5 percent of park users complained that there was lack of playing facilities; 70 percent complained about the polluted pond, 40 percent complained about the inadequacy of parking spaces, 30 percent pointed out that the area was muddy and slippery after heavy rain because the ground was not properly paved. There were also complaints about safety problems in terms of inappropriate location of lighting facilities and accessibility to the parks. All these lead to the problem statement.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Previously mentioned issues, clearly showed the dissatisfaction of park users regarding the services by Local Authorities in Malaysia. Although there are neighborhood and local parks, children's playgrounds, soccer fields, public swimming pools and tennis courts in all strategic zones, they are not distributed evenly according to population distribution (Draft Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan: 13-4). There are other factors that lead to the underutilization of local parks and children playgrounds. Underutilization of children playgrounds, soccer fields and sports facilities are due to inadequate maintenance, vandalism and poor accessibility (Draft Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan: 3-7). This research is based on a hypothesis as described next.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

There is a relationship between frequency of park use with the location of parks, park users' age, and safety condition of park facilities, park users' convenience and the maintenance of local parks. The following is the aim of this research.

1.4 AIM

This research is to study the pattern of park use by park users for active or passive recreational purposes, recreational spaces used and their expectation of the local parks and factors that lead to underutilization of these parks. Next are the objectives of this research.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the relationship between the demographic variables and the park utilization;
2. Identify factors leading to underutilization of local parks; and
3. To recommend policies for the improvement of local park environment based on park users' requirements and perceptions.

The objectives of this research are based on the scope of the research.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The research focuses on the location and use of local parks by local residents. The selected parks in the city of Kuala Lumpur were – (a) Burung Garuda Local Park (BGLP) located in Bukit Maluri, a residential area in the Edinburgh area; (b) Padang Road Local Park (PRLP) located in Jinjang Utara area; and (c) Senang Ria Local Park (SRLP) located in Bukit Indah area.

The normal time usage of local parks is considered, though seasonal variables like school holidays could not be considered due to the limitations of time and budget for this research.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Acknowledging limitations is not a sign of weakness or failure. It is a sign of mature research that is confident about the suitability of its chosen approach for the topic of the research, recognizing, as well, that there are certain questions or issues that the research approach leaves unanswered or not addressed (Denscombe: 126). This research is based on daytime park users only and does not cover non-users. The research also does not attempt to relate local park with other parks in the hierarchy of park facilities provided in Kuala Lumpur.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The research is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1, briefly describes the background issues related to urban parks in Malaysia, problem statement, hypothesis, aim, objectives, study organization, scope and limitation of the research.

Chapter 2, is divided into 3 parts which are Part A, B and C. Part A is a literature review on the theory of Garden Cities and City Beautiful Movement. Also previous studies related to urban parks in Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur. Part B, includes history of urban parks in Malaysia and current status of the local parks in Kuala Lumpur is also reviewed. Part C describes the research of local parks including site location, background of the selected parks and the existing condition of the parks also been explained.

Chapter 3, is regarding the research methodology. It explains about the research design, pilot study, field survey and questionnaire design. The questionnaire, site observation and informal focus groups interviews are conducted for the purpose of validating the research.

Chapter 4, is on the result of the research. Chapter 5, explain the analysis of the results of this research. Chapter 6 concludes the research with the response to hypothesis and potentials of future research.

The following Chapter 2 will describe the Literature review of this research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

PART A

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are three parts in the literature review. Part A: theory and the empirical study related to use of parks; Part B: The study area, that is Kuala Lumpur City and Part C: The description of selected local parks.

The theoretical study describes the planning of open spaces as well as “city beautiful movement” that led to the Garden City Concept. The empirical study includes previous research regarding parks in Malaysia and overseas. The next section will look into the definitions of parks.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.2.1 Parks

Parks as everybody knows is a place to rest our body and soul and also a place for doing various types of recreational and leisure activities. According to Olmsted (1997: 308), a park is a space of ground used for public or private recreation, differing from a garden in its spaciousness and the broad, simple, and natural character of its scenery and from a “wood” in the more scattered arrangement of its trees and greater expanse of its glades and consequently of its landscapes.

The use in America of the word park as a general designation for gardens, green courts and all sorts of public places is an exaggeration of a French application of the word to the more private or kept grounds of a chateau connected with a forest (Olmsted, 1997: 313). By 1928, in the United States, the term “park” had come to mean “any areas of land or water set aside for outdoor recreational purposes, active or passive and part at least of this recreation is expected to come from appearance” (Jamil, 2002: 4).

Park also can be used as an educational place for all ages to understand nature and wildlife. According to Cook (1972), the park is only a blessing and a means of education, in proportion as it gives an opportunity to men, women, and children to become unconsciously familiar with the large traits of earth and sky. A park is a place of rest and recreation for mind and body and while nature soothes and tranquillizes the mind, and thus gives the body that repose it needs, a number of petty objects, merely curious or pleasing, distracts the thoughts and frets the nerves (Cook, 1972: 81). Parks function to satisfy the needs of different age groups either for passive or active recreational activities and various purposes such as relaxing, nature appreciation, educational and so forth. The authors above lead the word parks to activity such as recreation.

2.2.2 Recreation

Recreation is what happens to people in terms of self-image, achievement, or satisfaction and can occur at any time and in many places (Gold, 1980: 32). Recreation is the essence of any experience through which the individual directly gains personal enjoyment and satisfaction (Butler, 1976: 10). Recreation is a form of activity done at leisure time. That activity is chosen and well planned by an individual, so that he or she gains use of leisure time which is well built in terms of physical and mental development (Wan Sabri, 1983: 3).

In Islam, a Muslim is permitted as well as encouraged to participate in useful forms of recreation and play. Relaxation and amusement are permitted things in Islam as long as the aim is useful and the means are useful and lawful (www.Islamonline.net). There are other opinions on recreations that relate to the development of cities. This will be explained next.

2.3 CITIES AND PARKS

Historically, the Renaissance in Europe brought interesting changes in leisure patterns and park planning. In the 1500s and 1600s many modern types of facilities began to emerge – aviaries, fish ponds, summer homes, the weekend hideaway and others (Jubenville, 1976: 27). A feeling for antiques developed and bits of ancient ruins and replicas thereof were frequently used. Water displays, including canals and ponds and most elaborate fountains (often with statues with water pouring from the ‘eyes, breasts, mouth and ears’) all became part of one garden; or other outdoor theatres were introduced as facilities for certain games

such as tennis courts, archery targets, playgrounds of various kinds, racecourses, and later (after the English influence), bowling-greens (Doell, 1979: 32).

Parks were established in America as a result of cholera epidemics and functioned as a healing place from the natural resources such as the fresh air and the natural smell from the woods. Parks also functioned as pleasure grounds in the city besides solving the social problems through their design and planning. For example, Frederick Law Olmsted solved the bad image of the Central Park in New York, United State of America that was occupied by homeless people at night by having security patrol.

Olmsted felt that the city provided too much linear and finite experience of cause and effect, so he did not want to stimulate that part of the brain. He wanted instead what he called a class of countervailing conditions, that is, he wanted the user to appreciate music, color, and movement through space, all of which we now view as linked to the right side of the brain (Cranz, 1997: 119). He planned and designed the Central Park from his experience visiting the first free accessible public park in England, which was the Birkenhead Park.

Olmsted believed that the large urban park was especially important for the poorer citizens, who had no immediate prospect of leaving their tenements for villas along parkways or in suburban villages or of leaving the city for a vacation at the seashore or in the mountains (Beveridge, 1995: 49). The purpose of the park was mainly to give benefits to the society to appreciate the pastoral landscape, which gave character to the park.

In his design, he considered the importance of scenery in his park and do not simply imitate the nature. He composed the hard and soft landscape harmoniously with the site character. Any statuary or structures provided were considered in his design not to be destructive of the landscape. He planned the park to meet the human needs. Olmsted believed in screening to hide incongruent elements of the landscape and to create an illusion of unlimited open space (without built environment development) even in high-density urban areas (Jubenville, 1976: 35).

The role that Olmsted felt to be uniquely his own was the education and protection of the public in the use of park. To promote this cause, he established a force of park keepers as soon as he became architect-in-chief (Beveridge, 1995: 70). The park was organized into three departments, with superintending officers. It consisted of patrol keepers, post keepers and extra keepers in order to attend the