User Participation in Public Space in Context of Quality of Life

[1]Atefeh Ayeghi [2]Maryam Goudarzi [2]Hadi Ebadi

[1]*Department of Architecture Universiti, Putra Malaysia*
[2]*Department of Built Environment Univiersiti Technologi Malaysia*

Abstract

Struggling economies, unprecedented political leadership, increasing globalization, and unpredictable natural disasters are revolutionizing our world each year. Urban design must be re-realized as a vital actor in shaping and contributing to the new global quality of life. Public spaces, which allow the interaction of various groups having different activities, behavior, socio-cultural and life style characteristics, have special importance as areas that meet the differing social and physical needs of people. One of the most important problems in public

spaces today is the dissatisfaction of disenfranchised users from various characteristics of the physical and social environment. For those sectors of society who are socially disenfranchised in some way, the use of public space is often an important part of life.   Public spaces offer a refuge that these people may not otherwise have, and are sometimes the only spaces in which they can exist peacefully. These groups often manipulate and personalize public space to satisfy their physical and spiritual needs: their quality of life. Places, which meet basic human needs and allow for different activities, generally lack the quality and attraction that evoke a sense of place and attachment to their users. The concept of spatial quality and the criteria which define quality spaces have increasingly been studied in recent years. Successful public spaces have generally been planned and designed in an integrated way and in various form for different life

styles and users. The role of public space and user participation for the quality improvement of the urban environment has been gaining more importance. The urban public spaces can be seen as a form public voice, and consciousness about the presence of people who are often the unseen majority of the population but who may not be considered in any urban social developments.

Keywords: Participation , Public space , Quality of Life , Users

1. Introduction

Struggling economies, unprecedented political leadership, increasing globalization, and unpredictable natural disasters are revolutionizing our world each year. Urban design must be re-realized as a vital actor in shaping and contributing to the new global quality of life. Public spaces, which allow the interaction of various groups having different activities, behavior,

socio-cultural and life style characteristics, have special importance as areas that meet the differing social and physical needs of people. One of the most important problems in public spaces today is the dissatisfaction of disenfranchised users from various characteristics of the physical and social environment. the presence of bodies of the disenfranchised in public space and the physical occupation of the latter reinvents the public sphere through bodily performance. For those sectors of society who are socially disenfranchised in some way, the use of public space is often an important part of life. Public spaces offer a refuge that these people may not otherwise have, and are sometimes the only spaces in which they can exist peacefully. These groups often manipulate and personalize public space to satisfy their physical and spiritual needs: their quality of life. Places, which meet basic human needs and allow for different activities, generally lack the quality and attraction that evoke a sense of place and attachment to their users. The concept of spatial quality and the criteria which define quality spaces have increasingly been studied in recent years. Successful public spaces have generally been planned and designed in an integrated way and in various form for different life styles and users. The role of public space and user participation for the quality improvement of the urban environment has been gaining more importance. The urban public spaces can be seen as a form public voice, and consciousness about the presence of people who are often the unseen majority of the population but who may not be considered in any urban social developments.

2. Problem Statement

In a world that is predominantly digitally driven and constructed, peoples' lifestyle is significantly changing. The impact of such a phenomenon had over the recent years, influenced the way public open spaces are designed what facilities to be allocated. It has a notable influence on the activities at homes and opens spaces. Today more than ever, thinking about design not only functionally and aesthetically, but also socially and economically, is significant in the context of improving the quality of life. Many urban spaces are design to serve the relatively privileged middle to upper class, it is important to give equal attention to the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum Therefore, there is strong need to analyze informal uses of public spaces by disenfranchised social groups, grappling with social, economic, and political issues surrounding these unique community areas. This may lead to a reconsideration of urban public spaces as multifaceted, entertaining unofficial uses and unconventional social groups in tandem with their intended use.

3. Aim and Objective

The study aims to identify how the informal use of public places by the user participation improves their quality of life. This will be explored through the concept of user participation.

The following objectives are aimed to address the main aim of the study:

- To improve quality of life of the user participation via urban public spaces.

- To explore how user satisfaction can be evaluated through user participation in urban public spaces.

- To encourage user participation during critical design decision making process.

- To enhance the sense of participation and awareness among people of contrasting social standings in urban public spaces.

- To explore the social dynamics between various community groups, formal and informal, involved with urban public space planning.

4.Research question

- Recognizing the formidable task of urban designers to address the complex issues relating to designing urban public spaces, the study aims to probe the following question.

- How can the development of urban public space improve quality of life of the socially disenfranchised?

- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding public space?

- How can user participation of the socially disenfranchised in urban public spaces improve their quality of life?

- How may design of urban public spaces privilege or harm the underprivileged sector of urban society?

5. Aim and Objective

Urban public spaces are generally seen as participatory landscapes in which sub-spaces are claimed through feelings and participation. In-depth interviews and contextual inquiries will be suggested methods of getting data regarding user participation activities can be separated into two sections. The first section is a discussion of problems and issues emerging from the social study of the socially disenfranchised in urban areas. It offers a thorough presentation of the daily behavior or 'urban culture' of the underprivileged in city centers.   In the contextual inquiries, significant findings will be found for selected case studies with regard to social communication, relationships, personal perspectives of the specific underprivileged group in particular and he greater community in general. The results will also allow for an overall understanding of urban public spaces can help to improve quality of urban life for the socially disenfranchised.

According to UNDP (1993:21), "Participation means that people are closely involved in economic, social, cultural and political process that affects their lives". Therefore, participation is a process by which the beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of a

development program to enhance prosperity in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values that they cherish. While the past decade has been dominated by efforts to promote a more participatory approach, the concept of participation in development is not entirely new. By the late 1940s, the early initiatives of development assistance and of planned interventions in under developed countries to promote development and change had commenced. However, it was in the 1950s, and particularly in the 1960s, that these initiatives, via the action of process of community development, sought to involve local people in efforts to improve their communities. Community development in the 1960s, built the infrastructure of urban and rural communities; it also developed local skills and abilities and encouraged local people to play a part in and to take some responsibility for supporting and implementing a range of physical infrastructure works. Community development at this time also sought to built community- based organization to serve as vehicles through which local people could get actively involved. It promoted literacy campaigns to enable people to better understand and relate to existing administrative bodies and it sought to generate a sense of cohesiveness and solidarity among community members.

The major aspects that comprise quality of life at FEMSA are:

- Health , Education, Housing , Training , Culture , Recreation

Quality of life is determined by the following that the main focus of the study is on public space.

- Economy
- Culture
- Welfare
- Environment
    - Public life
    - Public space
    - Place making
    - Land use transportation

6. Quality of Life

Quality of life is an issue that would be faced in developing countries, once the daunting task of providing the basic needs have been fulfilled. What is meant by quality in the physical environment of our cities? The word quality here is seen in the context of an environment that is supportive of the day to day needs of its inhabitants, an environment that fulfill the aesthetic

needs of the sensory system and an environment that nourish the psychological needs of the dwellers. The environment that we live today in many towns and cities in Malaysia, which is an environment that is now seeing an increase of street litters, ill maintained buildings, blocked and inadequate drains and traffic congestion (Zainuddin Mohammad 1999). Quality of life in the cities is also significantly reduced when walking in the city becomes a dangerous activity to be able person, let alone the physically handicapped. This is due to poor pedestrian linkages and provision of pedestrian paths, inadequate shade or shelter from the elements for pedestrians and badly maintained pedestrian pathways. The overall design of the place is not responsive to the needs of the users.

7. ANALYSIS

7.1.Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings from this study. The findings are presented and analyzed within the context of the research objectives. It collected from the self-administered survey in the selected park in the neighborhood of Mutiara Rini in Skudai-Johor Bahru. Ineffective distribution of people participation, land use, social interaction and its relation with user participation and quality of life, preference for using open space due to userparticipation, social interaction, community responsibility, safety and it relation to participation, social interaction and finally privacy and its association with quality of life will be analyzed to explore how user participation can affect the open space to improve quality of life. In this chapter, the qualitative and quantitative data are obtained from the completed survey forms the data serves to address with the research aims of this study in confirming a relationship between people, public space and quality of life. Preliminary data analysis is carried out on overall responses, including age and gender and park attended. A more detailed analysis is reserved for the following chapter. The first part of this chapter consists of the results' description of respondents' personal characteristics. This is followed by the second part which comprises the findings of respondents' choice about their selected public space location based on their revealed preferences and also, their satisfaction with the neighborhood public space's physical and social conditions. The third part of this chapter discusses the how people participation improve quality of life in a specific park.

Table 1. Respondents' gender

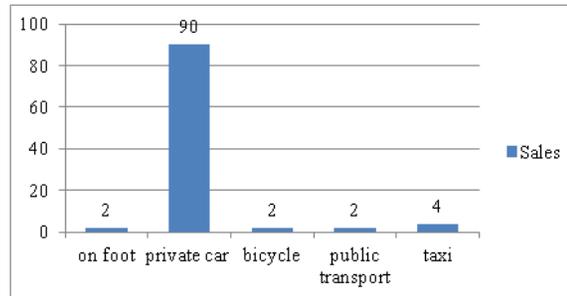| Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	27	52
Female	23	48
Total	50	100

Figure1. Difficulties during accessing the park
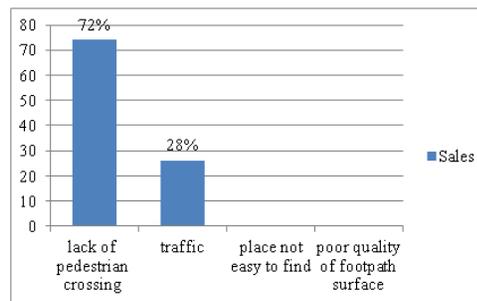
Figure 2. People's travel mode

Table 1. Respondents' age distribution

Age group	Frequency	Percent (%)
15-20	4	13
21-30	28	54
31-40	16	28
Over40	2	5
Total	50	100

Table 2. Respondents' residency

Residency	Frequency	Percent
Outside the park	26	52
Nearby the area	24	48
Total	50	100
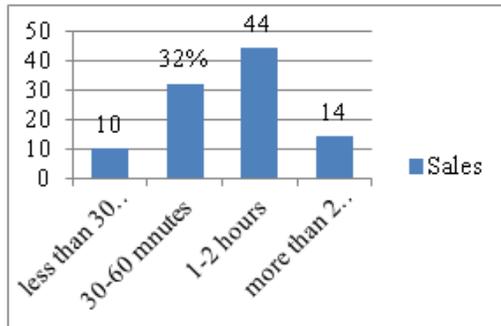
Figure 3. The times that people stay in the park
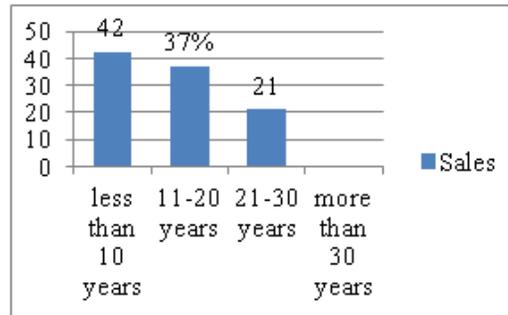

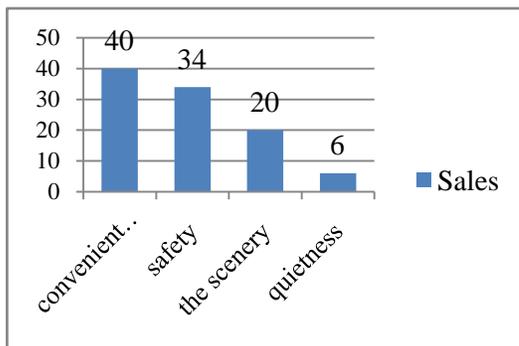Figure 4. Respondents' length of residency

Figure 5. Respondents' perception about
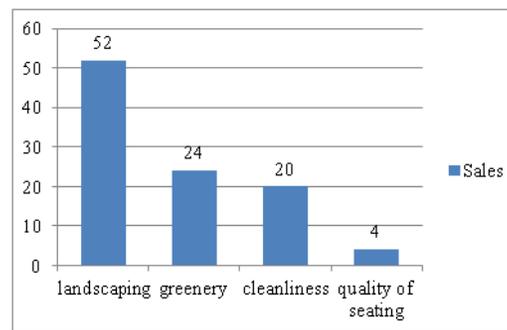the qualitative aspect of spot in the park

Figure 6. Respondents' perception about the
quantitative aspect of spot in the park

Table 4. Respondents' answer about having difficulties during access to the park

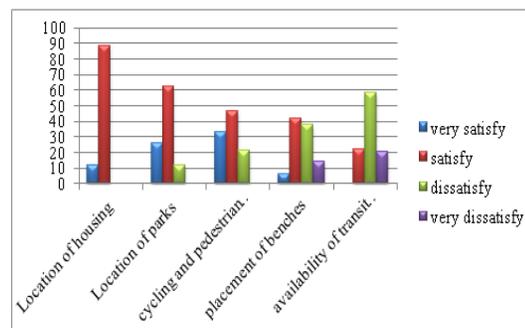| Having difficulties	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	26
No	37	74
Total	50	100

Figure 7. Respondents' opinion about Improving the park as a good public space
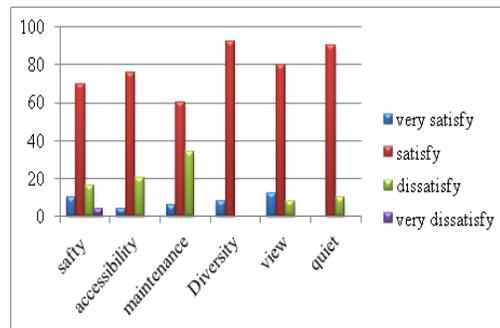
Figure 8. Respondents perception about Visual quality aspects of their specific environment

8.CONCLUSION

A. Introduction

This chapter produces the conclusion of this research. The final chapter will provide an outline of the results that were obtained from the case studies. Following the research findings there will be certain recommendations provided in an attempt to solve any issues that have arisen from the analysis of the case studies. The means for achieving these ends have, in both cases, been through physical presence in public and especially urban spaces. In this way, the bodies of the disenfranchised weave their way through and against the mainstream, thereby ensuring that marginality remains not on geo social peripheries but rather as a visible feature of the everyday life in public space. Finally there will be a section of concluding remarks to give an overall conclusion to the thesis. In fact, this research wants to make clearer, which effective attributes with user participation in public space can improve quality of life.

Summary of Findings

Open space is all life space. It is a public place close to where people community or interact space adjacent to buildings and streets which used by local residents. It is a place for the city dwellers everyday lives work and play. Open space plays a vital role in the quality of our urban lives which contribute to a healthier, more sociable and livable community. As it can be seen there are many important elements that need to be implemented for a park to be transformed from a dull and inactive piece of open space to an active and more communicating space. Incorporating elements such as; good accessibility, parking provisions for cars and bicycles, facilities for physical activity, amenities, performance different arts, weekly program, mix use space, quality playing surfaces, surveillance and lighting will assist in encouraging local residents use the parks for physical, recreational or social activity.

1) The Key Standards for Quality of Life

Through the research of available literature on open space planning and healthy planning, and seeking opinions of the individuals interviewed for the thesis a criteria was developed as to

how to know the quality of neighborhood park. This criteria is comprised of ten key standards and is known as they include as follows:

1- Accessibility

2- Amenities Facilities for physical activity

3- Parking provisions for cars and bicycles

4- performance different arts

5- Safety

6- Mix use

7- weekly program

8- People participating

9- lighting

2) *A Recommendation for Participating in Public Space in Mutiara Rini Park*

The diversity and complexity of cities contribute to the many challenges that arise in the field of urban design. The topic of open space is a complex and interesting one; social participating in particular requires attention. The most obvious issue in much open space neighborhoods is that they lack social and spatial integration with their surrounding areas; successful integration goes beyond the social mixing of public space in a neighborhood. Integration is a complex term comprising many aspects. It is important to begin to disentangle the complicated issue of integration, in an effort to recommend integrative public space in Mutiara Rini Park. There is no simple answer to the question: what is a successful public space? What can certainly be concluded is that segregated communities do not work; the isolation of public space is not a good planning method and should no longer be practiced. Mutiara Rini Park is a neighborhoods that will undergo a revitalization process in an effort to remediate past planning mistakes that were driven by many theoretical notions.

The creation of flexible, multi-purpose and well programmed public space is vital in this neighborhood. It can be considered as a focal point and an area of interaction, promoting togetherness in the community, and can function to serve many populations. The recommendations for integrative people participation in public space in Mutiara Rini Park came out of personal observations that were conducted in three forms: taking pictures of the physical features of the neighborhood and noting activities being enjoyed; attending a public meeting that was informative of the revitalization plan; and participating in a workshop that revolved around the topic of proposed public space for the area Mutiara Rini Park should consist of a large park in the centre of the neighborhood that is easily accessible by walking and by public transit. It should contain ramps that cater to aging populations as well as to

individuals with disabilities. Programmed space is a well-like idea in this neighborhood, and since soccer and basketball were the two most noticed sports being enjoyed, an appropriate field and court should be located somewhere in the space. Ample seating should be offered for individuals who simply enjoy relaxing outdoors. It was observed that individuals using the space like running, as well as walking their pets, therefore, these activities should be supported in the park space.   A track or a trail that is wide enough for people to run or walk on is something that can easily be incorporated into a space, and can enhance an area by adding a function. The inclusion of an outdoor community garden is a vital component desired by the residents in this neighborhood. This currently exists in a small park in Mutiara Rini Park, and should be present in a large, central park as well. The image depicts a potential plan for integrative public space in Mutiara Rini Park.   The variety of these components not only support the notion of integrative public space, but also support well-rounded, good planning practices, which promote a healthy public neighborhood for everyone, which are proposed integrative public space for Mutiara Rini Park to enhance quality of life.

References

ABBOTT, J. 1995. Community participation and its relationship to community development. Community Development Journal, 30, 158-168.

CROMPTON, J. L. 2001. The impact of parks on property values: A review of the empirical evidence. Journal of Leisure Research, 33, 1-31.

PARRA, D. C., MCKENZIE, T. L., RIBEIRO, I. C., HINO, A. A. F., DREISINGER, M., CONIGLIO, K., MUNK, M., BROWNSON, R. C., PRATT, M. & HOEHNER, C. M. 2010. Assessing physical activity in public parks in Brazil using systematic observation. American Journal of Public Health, 100, 1420.

BENNETT, N., LEMELIN, R. & ELLIS, S. Year. Aboriginal and local perspectives on the community benefits of conservation: A case study of a proposed Canadian National Park and the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation. In, 2010. Geography Research Forum.

BONAIUTO, M., FORNARA, F. & BONNES, M. 2003. Indexes of perceived residential environment quality and neighbourhood attachment in urban environments: a confirmation study on the city of Rome. Landscape and urban planning, 65, 41-52.

NEHME, G. CREATING ACTIVE PARKS: A CASE STUDY OF CENTRAL WEST SYDNEY.

BUNSCHOTEN, R. 2002. Public spaces, Black Dog Pub Ltd.

CARMONA, M. & TIESDELL, S. 2007. Urban design reader, Architectural Press Amsterdam.

SASSI, E. & MOLTENI, E. DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY OF THE

ELDERLY.

CHAWLA, L. 2008. Participation and the ecology of environmental awareness and action. Participation and Learning. Springer.

BRACHT, N. & TSOUROS, A. 1990. Principles and strategies of effective community participation. Health promotion international, 5, 199-208.

CLARKE, P., AILSHIRE, J. A., BADER, M., MORENOFF, J. D. & HOUSE, J. S. 2008. Mobility disability and the urban built environment. American Journal of Epidemiology, 168, 506-513.

COEN, S. E. & ROSS, N. A. 2006. Exploring the material basis for health: characteristics of parks in Montreal neighborhoods with contrasting health outcomes. Health & place, 12, 361-371.

CONRADSON, D. 2005. Landscape, care and the relational self: therapeutic encounters in rural England. Health & place, 11, 337-348.

DASHORA, L. 2009. Visualization of urban quality of life at neighbourhood level in Enschede. Master dissertation, The Netherland: International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation.

HELFFERICH, C. 2010. Die Qualität qualitativer Daten: Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

PEACE, S. 2013. Social Interactions in Public Spaces and Places: A Conceptual Overview. Environmental Gerontology: Making Meaningful Places in Old Age, 25.

INNES, M. & JONES, V. 2006. Neighbourhood security and urban change. London: Joseph Rowntree