SEREMBAN URBAN PARK, MALAYSIA: A PREFERENCE STUDY

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Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Landscape Architecture
In the College of Architecture and Urban Studies

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May 09, 2002
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords:
Preferences, Urban Park, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, Malaysia
Unlike the West, where many studies have explored how people’s needs are fulfilled by urban parks, Malaysia has received very little attention from researchers. One reason for this is the fact that Malaysia has only a short public park tradition. Although folk art and stories have chronicled a long history of gardens and other parks, these spaces were only accessible to royal family members and autocrats. In Malaysia, the concept of free public parks is relatively recent, having been introduced by the British colonial government.

This thesis aims to analyze the current demands on urban parks in Malaysia. It specifically studies an urban park in the city of Seremban in the state of Negeri Sembilan, which was built by the British in the early 1900’s. This park is apparently not meeting the needs of the public at large. Even though it is near active public facilities, such as a state mosque, a downtown area, public offices, and a public library, it suffers from a declining number of visitors.

This thesis is based on data obtained from a survey questionnaire that polled public attitudes regarding Seremban Urban Park. The data was analyzed to determine the factors that influence potential park patrons, as well as the preferred activities of those who visit the park.

The research suggests that accessibility, sense of territoriality, activities in the park, the natural environment, and park maintenance influence participants’ decisions to visit the park. In addition, it points out that participants’ preferred park activities include family gatherings and passive socializing activities. The primary implications of this thesis are that urban parks are emerging as important public spaces in Malaysian cities, and that their continuing effectiveness is largely dependent upon a prioritizing of activities and a commitment to maintenance. This research should help landscape architects and planners expand the relationship between urban parks and public life in Malaysian cities.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who provided direction, support and encouragement for me to complete this thesis and the masters program. In particular, I would like to express my special thank you to these special people

Staff at Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, especially Dr. Mustafa Kamal and Mr. Osman Mohd Tahir for your support and help

My classmates for your jokes, critiques and friendship

Teresa Phipps for your patience, help and information

Dean R. Bork for taking extra time to read and critique my thesis

Dr. Quinsan Ciao for providing support and expanding my thinking in developing this thesis.

Dr. Patrick Miller for providing encouragement, excellent critiques, guidance and advice and moral support. Thank you for everything.

Wendy Jacobson for your commitment in spending valuable time to advise, guide and critiques my works for the past two years. Thank you for taking a chance on me.

My family, especially my mother, Mariati Hj. Sirat, my wife, Aniza and son, Faiz Asyraf for your patience, encouragement and love.

For my dad, I will always remember you.

Thank you all!
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