



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***PLACE ATTACHMENT PROCESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK UTILIZATION IN PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA.***

MOULAY AMINE

FRSB 2018 3



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By

MOULAY AMINE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2018

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

Daring students of knowledge, researchers, academicians and scholars who never stop theorizing and practicing comprehensive understanding of knowledge.

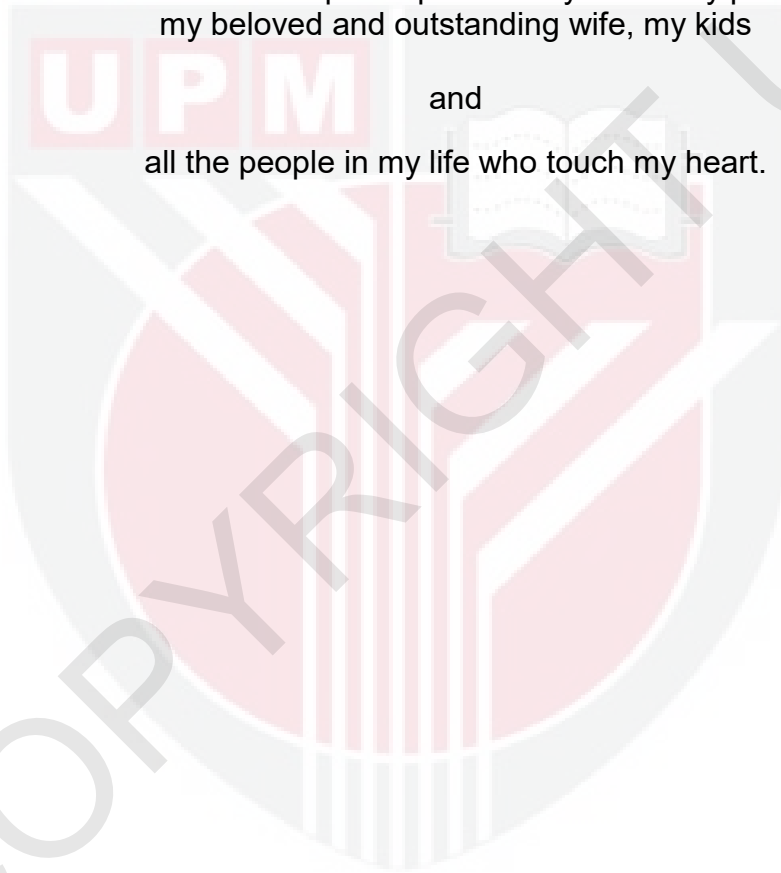
Those who believe that we can make better places in this world

and

Those who have special place in my heart: my parents,
my beloved and outstanding wife, my kids

and

all the people in my life who touch my heart.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**PLACE ATTACHMENT PROCESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK UTILIZATION IN PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA.**

By

MOULAY AMINE

February 2018

Chairman : Associate Professor Norsidah Ujang, PhD
Faculty : Design and Architecture

Developing cities in the world are facing the challenging effect of rapid urbanization on their livability. Therefore, creating livable neighborhood has become a new urban agenda for the coming decades. Public spaces, including neighborhood parks, play a significant function in supporting the social life of a community since they are considered the backbone of the urban park systems. Nonetheless, many of the parks are underutilized. In the past, this issue was mainly considered in terms of physical and social attributes. However, less attention was directed to the psychological attachment process of park users, despite its crucial role in affecting their cognitions and behaviors. Furthermore, most studies on place attachment emphasize on the individual feeling and experiences, and have not placed these ties in the wider, socio-spatial context in which planners and urban designers operate. This is due to the multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional, and multi-paradigmatic nature of research on place attachment. The objective of this study is to explore the influence of the process of place attachment on neighborhood park utilization, reflected in the way individuals and groups relate to a place. This qualitative research inquiry purposively sampled twenty-nine park users living permanently and at least one year in the neighborhood of Precinct 9, in Putrajaya, the federal government administrative center for Malaysia. Through hermeneutic phenomenology, the informants were engaged to reflect their experiences of the park that matter most through probing questions. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main method and supported by field observation method, then analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on the rich parts of the data and get initial themes from the transcript of each informant as an individual case. The second step was to refine the initial themes by turning conceptual connections into abstraction then coming out with more meaningful themes. The refined themes were cross-checked with the

individual transcripts to note further information and deepen analysis, which allowed developing a master list of more concise themes. The last step was the development of an explanatory model supported by different narrative explanations. The findings revealed that the process of park's attachment covering the functional attachment, park's meaning and the emotional attachment, is interrelated. In the context of underutilized parks, the functional attachment was found to be the key concept that helps to attract residents to a neighborhood park. It is also intimately related to residents' contextual and functional needs, expressed mainly through physical activities in the park. In turn, the functional needs were embedded in the residents' motivation to stay healthy. Upon intensely linking all themes on the reason behind the process of park's attachment, the functional, emotional and natural motivations emerged. Residents' motivation to use the park is the larger frame under which the process of place attachment should be developed. It can be concluded that the quality of facilities for physical activities is the most vital factor in enhancing residents' attachment to the neighborhood park, leading to frequent park use. Furthermore, enhancing the process of park's attachment will support stronger place engagement and place dependency that could turn underutilized parks into responsive social places. The research findings provide a holistic view on the process of park's attachment to understand how the park's design may first enhance residents' engagement with their park, and second how the full potential of park use can be reached. The central message of this study is that integrating the psychological aspect of place attachment in the place-making process will help transform values of places into a responsive social environment.

Keywords: neighborhood park, place attachment, park utilization, urban design.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PROSES IKATAN TEMPAT DAN PENGARUHNYA KE ATAS
PENGUNAAN TAMAN KEJIRANAN DI PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Bandar membangun di dunia sedang menghadapi kesan mencabar dari urbanisasi pantas terhadap kebolehhidupannya. Mewujudkan kejiranan yang sesuai untuk didiami telah menjadi agenda bandar baharu untuk dekad yang akan datang. Ruang awam, termasuk taman kejiranan, memainkan peranan penting dalam menyokong kehidupan sosial sesebuah komuniti kerana ianya dianggap sebagai tulang belakang kepada sistem taman bandar. Walau bagaimanapun, banyak dari taman berkenaan kurang digunakan. Pada masa lalu, isu ini sangat diberi perhatian terutamanya dari segi fizikal dan sosial. Namun, kurang perhatian ditujukan kepada proses ikatan psikologi pengguna taman meskipun ianya mempunyai peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi kognisi dan tingkah laku mereka. Tambahan pula, kebanyakan kajian tentang ikatan tempat menekankan perasaan dan pengalaman individu, dan tidak meletakkan hubungan ini dalam konteks sosio-spatial yang lebih luas di mana perancang dan pereka bandar beroperasi. Hal ini disebabkan oleh sifat *multi-faceted*, *multi-disciplinary*, *multi-dimensional*, and *multi-paradigmatic* dalam penyelidikan ikatan tempat. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji pengaruh proses ikatan tempat ke atas penggunaan taman kejiranan dalam kawasan kediaman yang dicerminkan melalui cara individu dan sesuatu kumpulan menghubungkan diri mereka dengan tempat tersebut. Kajian kualitatif ini mengambil sampel dua puluh sembilan orang pengguna taman yang merupakan penduduk tetap dan sekurang-kurangnya tinggal selama satu tahun di kejiranan Presint 9 di Putrajaya, pusat pentadbiran kerajaan persekutuan di Malaysia.

Melalui *hermeneutic phenomenology*, informan yang terlibat diminta untuk menggambarkan pengalaman terpenting yang mereka lalui di taman dengan mengajukan soalan secara berterusan. Data dikumpulkan melalui temubual separa berstruktur mendalam sebagai kaedah utama dan disokong dengan

kaedah pemerhatian lapangan, yang kemudiannya dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. Pendekatan ini membolehkan penyelidik memberikan tumpuan kepada bahagian-bahagian data yang penting dan mendapatkan tema awal dari transkrip setiap informan sebagai kes individu. Langkah kedua adalah untuk memperhalusi tema awal tersebut dengan mengubah hubungkait konseptual kepada abstrak dan kemudian menghasilkan tema yang lebih bermakna. Tema-tema yang telah diperhalusi disemak semula ke atas transkrip individu untuk mencatat maklumat lanjut dan membuat analisis lebih mendalam, yang membolehkan senarai tema utama yang lebih padat untuk dibentuk. Langkah terakhir ialah pembentukan sebuah model eksploratori yang disokong oleh pelbagai penjelasan naratif. Penemuan kajian mendapati bahawa proses ikatan taman yang meliputi ikatan fungsi, makna taman dan ikatan emosi, adalah saling berkaitan. Dalam konteks kurangnya penggunaan taman, didapati bahawa ikatan fungsi adalah konsep utama yang membantu menarik penduduk ke taman kejiranan mereka. Ia juga berkait rapat dengan keperluan penduduk dari segi kontekstual dan fungsi, terutamanya melalui aktiviti fizikal di dalam taman. Dengan demikian, keperluan fungsi terpahat dalam motivasi penduduk untuk kekal sihat. Setelah kesemua tema dihubungkan sebaiknya ke atas sebab di sebalik proses ikatan taman, motivasi fungsi, emosi dan natural telah terpapar. Motivasi penduduk untuk menggunakan taman adalah kerangka yang lebih besar di mana proses ikatan tempat harus dikembangkan. Dapat disimpulkan bahawa kualiti kemudahan untuk kegiatan fizikal adalah faktor yang paling penting dalam meningkatkan ikatan penduduk terhadap taman kejiranan, yang menggalakkan penggunaan taman yang lebih kerap. Tambahan lagi, peningkatan proses ikatan taman akan menyokong penglibatan dan kebergantungan tempat yang lebih kuat yang akan menjadikan taman yang kurang digunakan kepada tempat sosial yang responsif. Dapatan kajian ini memberikan pandangan holistik mengenai proses ikatan taman untuk memahami bagaimana reka bentuk taman dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan penduduk di taman mereka, dan kedua bagaimana potensi penggunaan taman dapat dicapai sepenuhnya. Mesej utama kajian ini ialah mengintegrasikan aspek psikologi ikatan tempat dalam proses pembentukan tempat akan membantu mengubah nilai-nilai tempat menjadi persekitaran sosial yang responsif.

Katakunci: taman kejiranan, ikatan tempat, penggunaan taman, reka bentuk bandar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the chairman of the Supervisory Committee, Associate Professor Dr. Norsidah Ujang for her infinite support and supervision to complete this study. Thank you for being so patient, and helping me improve. Having you as a supervisor since the beginning of my academic journey in Malaysia was a pure blessing. I am eternally grateful for everything I have learnt from you. I would like also to express my sincere thanks to the rest of the supervisory committee: Associate Professor Dr. Suhardi Maulan, and Dr Sumarni Ismail for their thought motivating questions, supportive comments and encouragements which helped to see my study from different perspectives.

My wholehearted grateful also goes to my beloved teacher and guide Prof. Dr. Hj. Azimi Hj Hamzah, who continued guiding me even after his retirement. Thank you, Prof. Dr. Hj. Azimi for your consistent sharing of knowledge and experiences. Thank you for your total commitment to knowledge, and mostly for giving me the perfect image of human being. Also, thank you for enlightening me on the details of advanced qualitative research methodology. Last but not least, I want to extend my thanks to all interviewees who genuinely shared their views, understanding, and experiences on the researched subject.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NP	Neighborhood Park
PA	Place Attachment
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the field of urban design, researches principally associate human interaction with places generated by the physical and visual images, whereas few emphasize on its relationships with the psychological and functional aspect of place. Hence, this study explores the psychological process of place attachment on neighborhood park utilization. That is to understand from park users' perspectives how attachment in terms of emotion, meaning and behavior, influences park utilization. To explore the social phenomena of underutilized park, this study adopts a non-positivist paradigm approach. This includes an evolving process between field scenario and literature review. The context of the study is a neighborhood park in the city of Putrajaya. Although the city was planned as a model for other future sustainable and livable cities, several empirical studies highlighted the social phenomenon of underutilized parks, accompanied with a lack of social interaction. Furthermore, this social phenomenon occurs within an apparent comfortable physical and social environment. These qualities have supposedly provided the study with a relevant sample faced with the paradox of underutilized parks in planned residential area.

Following the introduction, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part explains the research background, issues that trigger the research and problem statement. The second part describes the aim and purpose of the research, challenging intellectual and theoretical understanding, plugging gap in knowledge and extending the debate on the integrating concept of place attachment. Furthermore, this part presents the research objectives and the research questions, generated from the research problem, and its ontological and epistemological perspectives. As the research process is inductive with a continual back and forth between literature review and field work, no assumptions were formulated. The third part briefly describes the research approach, the research methodology, and the introduction to the study areas. The third part also covers the scope and limitation of the research and the significance of the study to the development of knowledge in urban design practice and policy-making, and lastly the overall structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Background of the study

Cities and urban design are intimately linked to achieving livability goals. The physical, social, and psychological characteristics of cities should be harmoniously intertwined to enhance the inhabitants' quality of life. The

explosion of the urban population in the world, especially in the Asia and Pacific region is unprecedented (UN-Habitat & ESCAP, 2015). This trend is accompanied with an increasing concern on the quality of the urban environment (Wirth et al., 2016; Pacione, 2003). 50% of the global population lives in urban places, and this trend is estimated to rise to 70% by 2050 (UN report, 2015). Moreover, the UN has predicted that by the year 2030 the number of Asian cities with more than five million people will be four times greater than those in Europe and the US combined. In Peninsular Malaysia, it is expected that by 2020 most of the population will be urbanized (JPBD-NUP, 2017). The increase of urban population means additional concern on the quality and number of public amenities, housing, and infrastructure. This alarming situation constitutes an unprecedented challenge for urban designers, planners, and architects. According to the UN Habitat III Report on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III, 2016), one of the main outcomes of the new urban agenda for the next two decades is to emphasize the provision of public places regarding responsiveness and inclusiveness. In this regards, shared public spaces are crucial for sociability and the foci of the entire community (Ellis & Roberts, 2016; Hagerty et al., 2001). This trend is accompanied by a rising awareness about livability of cities. The concept of livability refers to the 90s debate about the poor quality of spaces and polluted environment (Madanipour et al., 1998; Davis, 1990; Soja, 1989), aiming to improve the quality of urban spaces in the modern cities. The livable city is a city for all, where social and physical elements must collaborate for the well-being and progress of the community. As such, the public realm considered as our common wealth, should be designed as hubs for social life of the community (Ellis and Roberts, 2016; Montgomery, 2013; Hagerty et al., 2001). At the same time, awareness of environmental experience and perception of place is an essential dimension of urban design (Carmona, 2010a,b).

One of the urban design issues concerning the mainstream studies on Asian cities is the development of cities and spaces out of their social and cultural context, using the Western cities as models. In this regards, Miao (2001) argues that East Asian cities are very much in transition, and are struggling to find their own identities. Thus, their cities overlook on the production of space, place, and identity from an Asian perspective, and leads inevitably to urbanization without substance. This scenario occurs because the production of spaces, buildings or public facilities, are none but the physical projection of a given culture. This noncontextual situation might result from different reasons; first, the larger parts of urban forms are the expression of the economic development emerging in response to globalization. Second, the Western colonialism disrupted the historical continuities. The problem continues when the majority of professionals and academicians from the emerging countries, were trained in Western institutions (Perera & Tang, 2013). These reasons might lead to overlooking some crucial dualities in urban forms development, such as global-local and Western-Asian.

One of the crucial physical and social structures that provide a pragmatic and effective way for organizing the urban forms is the residential neighborhood. Although designed as an area of identity where people live and meet most of their daily needs, neighborhoods are being a part of more impersonal and fragmented urban environment, especially in Asian cities (Oranratmanee & Sachakul, 2014; Miao, 2001). Hence, it is important to strengthen the functional and symbolic values of public places, defined as spaces accessible to and used by the public as the focus of community social life, which are meant to serve as social integrators (Moughtin, 2006; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2006; Lynch, 1998). Within neighborhoods' public places, exposure to nature promotes the residents' well-being and improves the social connectedness. People who lived next to green spaces knew more of their neighbors and reported a high level of community attachment (Sullivan et al., 2004; Kuo et al., 1998). It is the personal and shared sense of place that maintains people's relationship with the environment, thus facilitating social interaction and social cohesion (Bounds, 2008). The context of this study is limited to neighborhoods parks, considered the backbone of the park systems, allowing residents from all walks of life to recreate, congregate, relax, and meet others daily and within their residential neighborhood (Kerstin et al., 2014; Kamierzak, 2013).

Within Malaysia, one of the planning principles outlined by the Department of Urban and Country Planning (JBPD) under the Community Facilities Planning Guidelines (JBPD, 2006) is to encourage social interaction within community. The aim is to benefit and service local population toward sustainable living. In addition, the National Landscape Policy (NLP, 2011) realizes the Nation's strategy towards Vision 2020, through focusing on the well-being of the citizen by providing adequate landscape spaces for recreation and social interaction among Malaysian multi-cultural society. Besides, the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), is committed to support and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. To do so, the plan is focusing on people and how to improve their well-being (Malaysian Economic Planning Unit, 2015). Therefore a livable city should aim at fostering social interaction, enhancing the quality of public places as social spaces; creating opportunities for contact and proximity (Carmona, 2014). These components are core to the Malaysian development process. Putrajaya, as the federal administrative center of Malaysia, is a leading city in terms of reflecting the nation's ambitious modernized agenda (Morris et al., 2016; Moser, 2010). The concept of livability is clearly expressed in the city's structure plan through the designation of nearly 40% of its area (4 931 ha) for green and public open spaces (Morris et al., 2015; Siong, 2005).

The real significance of public open spaces lies in their ability to facilitate interaction between people and their environment. However, lack of social interaction as being the shared experiences among residents (Bukodi et al., 2015; Hari & Kujala, 2009), leads to a variety of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression (Knyazev et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2012;

Heimberg et al., 1992), and may lead to increased interethnic tensions (Heizmann & Böhnke, 2016; Peters et al., 2010). On the other hand, places with strong attachment and meaning for residents tend to attract social activities like meetings, greeting exchange, and conversation, thus contribute to social cohesion (Gehl & Svarre, 2013; Gehl, 2011). Neighborhood parks as fundamental places within neighborhoods' social networks are crucial places for socialization and exchange between residents. They are excellent means to strengthen bonding among residents by connecting them with their immediate living spaces (Kashef, 2016; Karuppannan & Sivam, 2012). They positively affect resident's quality of life by encouraging physical activities, social interaction, and providing escape areas and enjoyment of nature (Brown et al., 2013).

However, despite being regarded as fundamental social spaces in city planning, neighborhood parks in the context of planned residential areas are not fully utilized to the benefits of the users (Moulay et al., 2017; Azmi & Karim, 2012; Neutens et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2010; Moser, 2010). Such conditions deprive residents of the opportunity to socialize, which is considered a crucial human need (Ellis & Roberts, 2016; Kazmierczak, 2013). Furthermore, within developing Southeast Asian countries, the public open spaces are not sensitive to the local social and cultural context. Following the western model and adopting top-down initiatives for the planning process (Miao, 2013). This situation is a serious obstacle to the Malaysian government agenda of providing livable neighborhoods for its citizens (JPBD-NUP, 2017). This scenario may deprive neighborhood residents of suitable places for possible socialization, disrupt the environmental stimulus and decrease residents' bonding to their public places. The bonding of people to places is the core of the place attachment concept which is central to the human experience (Lewicka, 2011b; Giuliani, 2003; Altman & Low, 1992). Thus, it is an urge to understand the process of place attachment and its influence on park utilization within neighborhoods.

Place Attachment can be defined as the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment (Lewicka, 2011a; Manzo, 2005), and through this process, emotion, feeling, and dependence are developed. This research argues that the residents' park utilization patterns are deeply influenced by the emotional and functional aspect of the park settings, which create a sense of dependence and belonging. Inappropriate and un-contextual planning of these public open places, place attachment is slowly diminished, which influences negatively the liveliness of the parks through a loss of meaning, value and personal association (Octay & Bala Alkan, 2015; Ujang & Zakariya, 2014; Massey, 1994). Besides, fewer concerns were given to understand the process of developing an affective bonding between people and specific places including emotion, meaning, and behavior (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014; McCunn & Gifford, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Based on reviews of numerous empirical and theoretical writings on place attachment, Lewicka (2011a) argued that the process of attachment is less explored. Besides, while most of the findings benefit urban designers in

making parks and public spaces more visually and physically functional, the impact of these qualities on users' psychological sense and well-being has not been adequately explored in the previous researches.

This research approaches the underutilized park issue by employing place-based concepts and principles. Place bonding is central to the human experience because it denotes human need to form meaningful connections between one another, groups, objects, and places. These relationships situate and secure the residents in broader social and physical environment, connect them to the past, and influence future behaviors (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). The concept is particularly relevant when dealing with issues of urban development, community building and testing theories of community decline and disorganization (Foster et al, 2016; Casakin & Bernardo, 2012; Trentelman, 2009; Giuliani & Feldman, 1993). It is often related to parks, green places, and natural areas. The attachment concept may serve to develop and promote a responsible environmental behavior of the citizens through their psychological (emotion and feeling) and functional (dependence) domain of environmental experience. The place attachment theory can be used in different aspects of social life such as encouraging healthy community, developing community identity, engaging communities and improving and supporting community attachment (Buta et al, 2014; Inglis et al, 2008). Thus, place attachment is indeed a valuable concept that may help to mitigate the issue of underutilized parks.

Within this framework, the research focuses on place attachment dimensions in examining the psychological and functional aspects of place and its influence on the park users' attachment. The understanding could be referred to in transforming the less explored psychological values of a place from park users' perspectives and experiences into an explicit, responsive, and inclusive landscape design. The significance of such research remains on the fact that people do not attach to their next door neighbor as much as how they can read the public spaces that surround them. It deepens their meaning and helps to develop a sense of attachment towards public places (Carmona, 2015; Carmona et al, 2010; Blokland, 2009). Urban design is about making places for people's happiness and well-being (Carmona, 2014; Montgomery, 2013). Thus, it is necessary to have an insight into the human-place relationship reflected in place attachment process. The challenge is to integrate different viewpoints and approaches due to the multi-dimensional concept of place attachment (Manzo, & Devine-Wright, 2014; Giuliani & Fledman, 1993).

Mitigating the issue of underutilized parks is more urgent within Asia Pacific realm because of the urban expansion and the rapid population growth experienced in the last decades. Between 1980 to 2010 the region's cities grew by approximately one billion people, and the United Nations projections show they will add a further billion by 2040 (UN report, 2015). Besides, the region is characterized by specific local climate, culture, and lifestyle (Miao,

2013) which demand contextual and local urban solution. In the context of newly developed towns in Malaysia, more than three-quarter of the population will live in urban area by 2020 (Department of Statistics, 2015). Besides, the gathering of people does not occur in squares and piazzas as in the western countries. Most crowds are found on the street where social interaction takes place such as “pasar malam” or night market, “pekan sehari” or one day market. This local context might give a challenge for planned neighborhood parks to fulfill their social and functional role (Lai et al, 2013; Shamsuddin, 2011). Thus, studies on the psychological aspect of place allow the researcher to regard neighborhood park as a milieu embedded in people’s social and cultural lives rather than merely as a physical form.

The context of this study is a neighborhood park in the city of Putrajaya Malaysia. The area was chosen to explore “why” the social phenomenon of underutilized parks persists within an apparent livable neighborhood (Moulay & Ujang, 2016, Ujang, 2014; Azmi and Karim, 2012; Neutens et al., 2012; Moser, 2010; Peters et al., 2010). By understanding the process of attachment, the significant factors influencing place attachment should be brought to the surface in making public spaces more meaningful and responsive to human needs for bonding and attachment.

1.3 Problem statement

The rapid urbanization experienced in many Asian countries has increased awareness about the protection, improvement, and diversification of the functions of public places. Public places are often regarded as the common denominator for a better social life (Carmona, 2015; Montgomery, 2013). Urban parks provide social and ecological benefits such as, promoting livability of places (Ramzy, 2015; Brown et al., 2013), community health (Wolf & Wohlfart, 2014; Ren et al., 2012), escape from the stress of city life, and enhance community wellbeing (Simões Aelbrecht, 2016; Latinopoulos et al., 2016).

In that regards, the Malaysian government through its Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia, in his National Urbanization Policy (JPBD-NUP, 2017). It aims to “create a conducive livable urban environment with identity” “through developing and improving the social amenities” in terms of “housing, education, recreation and health facilities” (p.14, 21). In respect of the provision of recreational areas, the National Landscape Policy NLP (2011) provides guidelines for responsive public places and parks as well as accentuating the Malaysian unique landscape identity. Moreover, to reflect a pragmatic and a leading experience, the Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak did an important announcement in the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit 2009. He engaged to develop the new federal government administrative

center of Malaysia, the city of “Putrajaya” as a pioneer green technology and livable township that encourages human interaction back with nature, as a showcase for the development of other townships (PPJ, 2017).

The tremendous Malaysian government’s effort in developing a livable city through the Putrajaya experience would have been a strong response to tackle the bitter assessment which the National Urbanization Policy (JBPD-NUP, 2017, p25) sums up on its 2006 report. The report addresses issues and challenges, about the lack of emphasis on urban design: “the significance of urban design in creating a livable environment with character has been duly neglected” (p.25). Paradoxically, in many cases, the parks are not fully utilized to the benefits of the users (Riper & Kyle, 2014; Karuppannan & Sivam, 2012; Byomkech et al., 2012; Moser, 2010), despite their strong symbolism and apparent well-planned spaces. Findings indicate that social interactions in public spaces within new residential areas are not at a satisfactory level (Krellenberg et al., 2014; Neutens et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2010), despite being planned to foster social activities. In the Malaysian context, still sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical activity among the population are predominant (NHMS, 2015). Only 31.4 % are engaged in recreational activities at least once a week according to the fifth and latest report on Malaysian quality of life released in December 2013 (Abu Bakar et al., 2016; MWI, 2013 p.9).

Although Putrajaya city is in its physical sense well-planned in terms of accessibility, proximity, aesthetic, legibility, comfort, quality, activities, facilities, and maintenance, (Moulay & Ujang, 2016; Ujang et al., 2015; Abd Aziz & Rasidi, 2013; Putrajaya Corporation, 2002). The city is also apparently socially comfortable in terms of short commuting distance between home and workplace, perceived safety and compact mixed-use within mixed-income neighborhoods (Musa et al., 2016; Aris Anuar et al., 2012; Moser, 2010; Omar, 2006). However, the issue of underutilization of recreational parks persists (Moulay et al, 2017; Azmi and Karim; 2012; Neutens et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2010; Moser, 2010). The contradiction demands for an in-depth account of the phenomenon based on the psychological framework that might reveal the factors that contribute to the lack of utilization. Place meanings and attachment framework allow the psychological aspect of place to be examined and understood.

According to the leading authors in the field of urban design, and public places such as Jan Gehl, Matthew Carmona, Christopher Alexander, Clare Cooper Marcus and William Whyte, the issue of underutilization of public spaces can be approached based on three main segments. The physical segment (Md Sakip et al., 2015; Schultz et al, 2014; Karuppannan & Sivam, 2012), the socio-cultural segment (Ka’zmierczak, 2013; Cohen et al, 2012; Tachieva, 2010; Miao, 2001), and the psychological segment (Riper & Kyle, 2014; Firouzmakan & Daneshpour, 2014). In that regards, the city of Putrajaya is a conducive environment to understand further the issue of

underutilized parks. This is because the city affords an apparent ideal of physical and socio-cultural environment, thus, the focus should be more emphasized on the remaining segment which is the psychological aspect of parks. The concept of underutilized parks refers to parks that are not fully utilized to the benefits of users and where the available facilities are not being used to their fullest potential (Carmona, 2015, Alexander et al., 1977). This issue is due to the lack of appropriate facilities or the fact that these facilities are not fitting with the real expectations of users, reflecting both a lack of responsiveness and inclusiveness (Gehl, 2011; Peters et al., 2010).

In that regards, the success of livable cities such as Melbourne, Vienna, Vancouver, Toronto and others is contributed by the fact that planners concern themselves with the physics as well as the psychology of public place. They understood sooner that residents' behavior is deeply influenced by design (Othman et al., 2013; Holden & Scerri, 2013; Kamalipour et al., 2012). The psychological aspect of place is reflected by the concept of place attachment, defined as the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment (Manzo, 2005; Lewicka, 2011a).

To reach the full potential of attachments between places and people, the community planner has to translate the place attachment attributes to social capital and collective action at the community level (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). In that regards, the issue of underutilized parks was mainly approached through the impact of the physical attributes (Moulay & Ujang, 2016; Kazmierczak, 2013; Lel  vri  r, 2013; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Yeung, 1996). However, few emphasized on the psychological and functional aspect of place in terms of emotion, meaning and behavior, which are embedded in place attachment (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014; Ujang, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Furthermore, despite decades of advancements in place attachment theory, from the concept development up to the concept application stage, some aspects of the phenomenon remain overlooked from the discourse.

The body of knowledge about place attachment, mostly emphasizes on the individual feeling and experiences, and has not placed these ties in the wider, socio-capital context in which planners operate. Conversely, the community of planners emphasizes participation and empowerment but did not pay attention to emotional connections to place (Manzo, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Moreover, the concept of place attachment is more used on the negative affect and experience such as, mobility (Lewicka, 2011a; Gustafon, 2009b, 2001a), wars and forced displacements, poverty, stigma (Fullilove & Wallace, 2011; Manzo, 2008; Billig, 2006). However, far too little attention has been paid to the positive effect and experience of place attachment in the residential settings (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014; Manzo, 2011). Thus, the aim of this study is to use the "integrating concept of place attachment" (Altman & Low, 1992, p.4) to understand the process of place attachment in the context of neighborhood park utilization.

1.4 Research Questions:

Main RQ:

How does the process of place attachment influence neighborhood park utilization within a residential area?

Sub RQs:

- 1- Why do residents use neighborhood parks? (*functional needs: conative*)
- 2- How neighborhood park triggers meanings to the users? (*meaning: cognitive*)
- 3- How users are emotionally attached to their neighborhood park? (*emotional bond: affective*)
- 4- What are the benefits that satisfy the park users? (*users' satisfaction*)

1.5 Research Objectives:

Main RO:

To explore the influence of the process of place attachment on neighborhood park utilization within a residential area.

Sub ROs:

- 1- To examine the residents' functional needs towards their neighborhood park.
- 2- To understand how neighborhood park triggers meanings to the users
- 3- To examine the users' emotional bonds towards neighborhood parks.
- 4- To examine the particular needs that satisfy the park users.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study examines the influence of place attachment on the neighborhood park utilization. It focuses on how the emotional and the functional dimensions of attachment can affect the way residents use the park for social interaction and the meanings attached to the experience. Thus, the study contains specific scope and limitations, as described below:

a- Place attachment from urban design perspective:

The concept of place attachment (PA) is a broad and multidimensional concept developed extensively in the field of environment psychology. Environmental psychologists basically focus on relations between PA and territoriality, sense of community, place identity and sentiments towards places. They use to measure the negative relationships between PA and mobility and positive relationship between PA and life satisfaction. On the other hand, the concept of PA was adopted in several other fields of studies such as humanistic geographers and sociologists. They focus mainly on love towards place, how people remain still attached to places despite hostile surrounding environment. They emphasize subjective place experience, deep emotional ties, and individually constructed place meaning. However, the present study explores the concept of PA from urban design perspective. The aim is to translate the place attachments attributes to social capital. Thus, under the urban design objective to create better places for more livable and sustainable cities, this study explores how the process of PA can encourage residents to engage more with their neighborhood park. Because the more residents are outdoors, the more often they socialize and engage with their public open spaces (Gehl, 2011). Furthermore, this research is about how to improve residents' attachment towards their neighborhood park. It is not about how to create attachment towards neighborhood park.

b- Emotion and dependence:

The concept of place attachment encompasses the psychological and functional aspects of human bond with their environment. It reflects the desire to keep a sense of closeness to a particular place, reflecting both psychological (emotion and feeling) and functional (dependence) domain of environmental experience. This study aims to understand from residents' perspectives and experiences what influence their engagement towards neighborhood parks. Also to understand what is the key concept in the process of place attachment that helps to attract residents to their neighborhood park.

c- Neighborhood parks:

Public places as an important area for meeting and gathering include several kinds of open spaces. This study focuses on Neighborhood Park which is the most important social space for the development of social ties and resident's connectedness within a residential area (Neal, 2003). They are considered the backbone of the park systems, allowing residents from all walks of life to recreate, congregate, relax, and meet others daily and within their residential neighborhood (Kazmierczak, 2013).

d- Planned residential neighborhood :

This study was conducted within a planned residential neighborhood rather than an unplanned one for two main reasons. First, the global rapid urban growth, especially in Asian cities, is based on planned city infrastructure. Second, as place attachment grows with time in the mind of users, it is more problematic in new and planned urban areas rather than old and unplanned urban areas. When several generations have lived in the same place (old unplanned urban areas), their public places are more integrated into their daily life. Thus, within new urban residential areas, the need to strengthen residents' bonding to their public places is crucial.

e- The city of Putrajaya:

The context of the study is the city of Putrajaya, the new federal government administrative center for Malaysia. The city is chosen because it was comprehensively planned as a green and livable city. The city is the largest urban development project on a greenfield site, considered as a crucial development catalyst and was planned as a model for other future sustainable cities in the country (Musa et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2015). Additionally, several studies on Putrajaya highlighted the issue of underutilized parks even when considering their apparent well-design spaces (Moser, 2010; Siong, 2005).

From a non-positivist paradigm and to gain in-depth understanding of the issue of underutilized parks, one neighborhood park was selected as the studied area. The studied park has complete public facilities and advantageous physical and social environment for living. The context of the study is selected within Precinct 9 of Putrajaya. The area consists of high-rise apartments, semi-detached housing, and detached housing residential area. This choice is due to the uniqueness of the physical and social environment. What Yin (2011) calls the "instrumental case study". However, due to the specific administrative nature of the city of Putrajaya, with a majority of Malay resident, it would be difficult to apply the findings to other cities in Malaysia.

1.7 Conceptional (Co) and operational (Op) definitions (Def) of the key concepts

Place attachment:

Co-Def: the affective bond or link between people and specific places.

Op-Def: people's engagement and dependence towards their public place in terms of frequency and length of stay.

Underutilized parks:

Co-Def: parks that are not fully utilized to the benefits of users

Op-Def: the park's facilities are not fully utilized, and the number of residents using the park is very low during weekdays, weekends and public holidays.

Functional attachment:

Co-Def: is referred to as "place dependence" which reflects the behavioral commitment towards a place and can be negative or positive.

Op-Def: Attachment towards a place due to the fulfilment of necessary activities rather than optional ones.

Functional needs:

Co-Def: necessary needs that are practical and useful rather than optional and attractive.

Op-Def: the primary and most important activities that residents come to fulfil in the public place.

Emotional attachment:

Co-Def: is the emotional bond towards a place, created through a process of interaction and experience with place.

Op-Def: is the affective emotions towards the place, which reflect the pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and causing attraction or repulsion towards the place.

Functional motivation:

Co-Def: the primary intention to perform a behavior

Op-Def: the main cognitive reason behind the will to use a place

1.8 Trustworthiness of the findings

In this study, to understand the functional and emotional influences of place attachment on park utilization, a qualitative methodology is applied, which is suitable to understand a place as a center of meaning. That is conative, cognitive and affective bonds towards place. The three elements provide deeper explanation for "why" the social phenomenon occurs, rather than describing and quantifying the strength of bonds towards a place (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). Therefore, In-depth semi-structured interviews and systematic field observation were adopted as methods of exploration, which allow fulfilling the main research objective. For further reliability, the research will include evidence in the analytical report, use thick description and well express the key aspects.

Data gathered in this study is validated through several processes. These include triangulation between the different methods; audit trail which is the records of every step in the research in order to allow reader to audit the events influences and actions of the researcher; to consider negative cases and constant comparison between finding of the different methods employed in the research. Finally, the findings of this study were compared with the established theories and similar research findings for External Validation.

1.9 Significance of the study

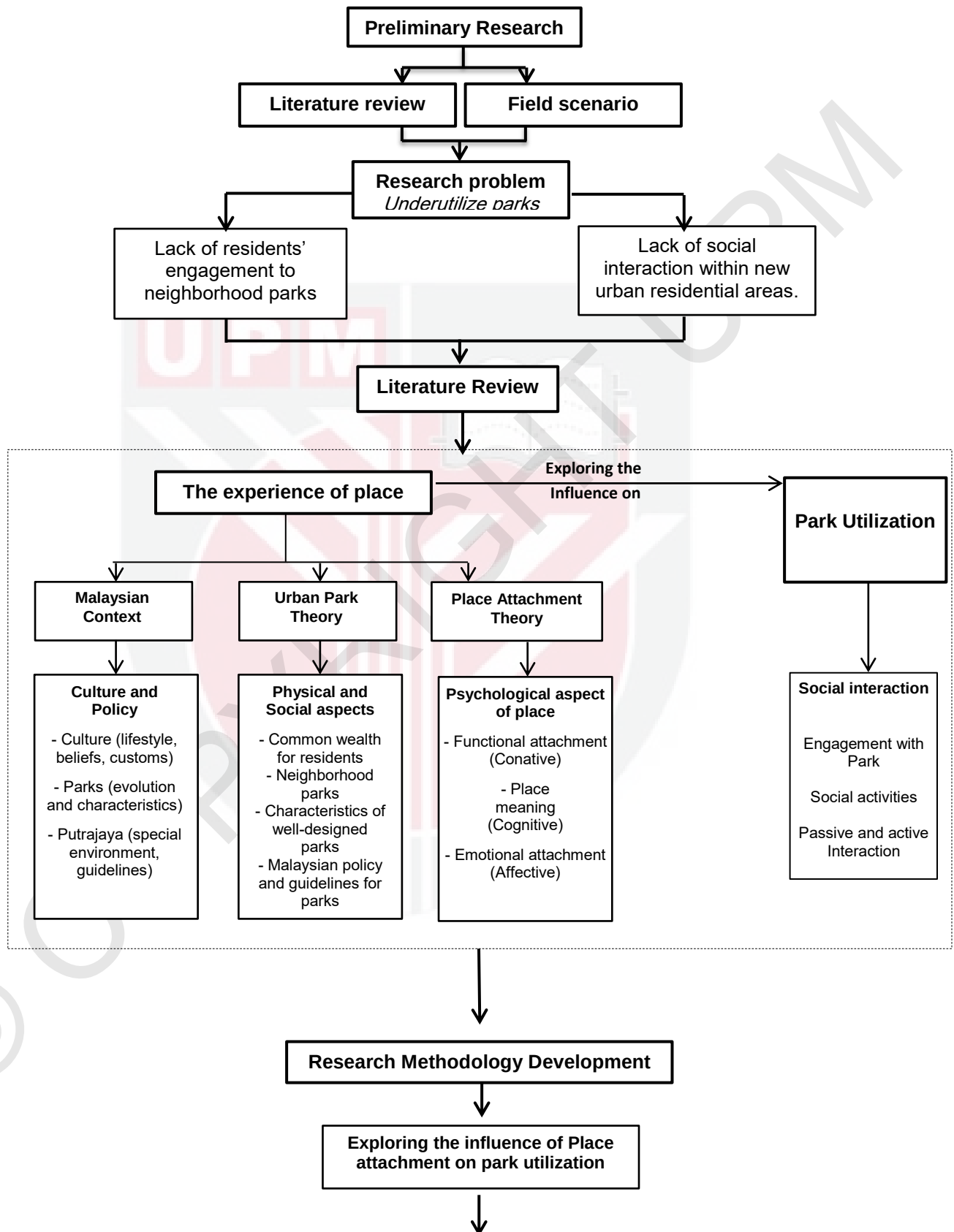
The present research is important to improve the livability of neighborhoods and the residents' quality of life. The findings provide pragmatic answers to promote the role of public places such as neighborhood parks in modern society. It proposes contextual solutions that fit with the real expectations of residents that satisfy their contextual needs. Furthermore, it highlights the real constraints that may hinder residents' engagement with their neighborhood parks. The research is significant to the development of a functional and meaningful public space where people find purpose and meaning that can motivate frequent engagement. Thus, this study will provide an added value in three main areas:

1- Participating in Malaysian policy development through providing further elements in terms of responsive neighborhood parks' design in the city of Putrajaya. This, in turn, will promote livable neighborhoods and provide an added value towards the government engagement in the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit 2009. That is to develop the city of Putrajaya in a pioneer livable township, playing the role of model city for further urban development in Malaysia. Moreover, the research outcome is a step further towards fulfilling the UN-Habitat III Report on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III, 2016). The established new urban agenda for the two coming decades is to emphasize on enhancing the provision of public places in terms of responsiveness and inclusiveness.

2- Contributing to a new body of knowledge in terms of proposing comprehensive theoretical model of place attachment that is more suitable to the field of urban design. Several models have been established by humanistic geographers, sociologists, and environmental psychologists; the need is to develop a model for urban design studies since the Place Attachment framework is seen as a missing component in most studies on public spaces, particularly in the Asian context.

3- Improving practice in terms of raising awareness among to environmental planning and design researchers, on the importance and value of place attachment process for enhancing the meaning and attraction towards public places. The research approach adds to the existing physical and social – oriented framework of designing public places, the psychological key concept to provide responsive and inclusive public places.

1.10 Summary of the Research Design



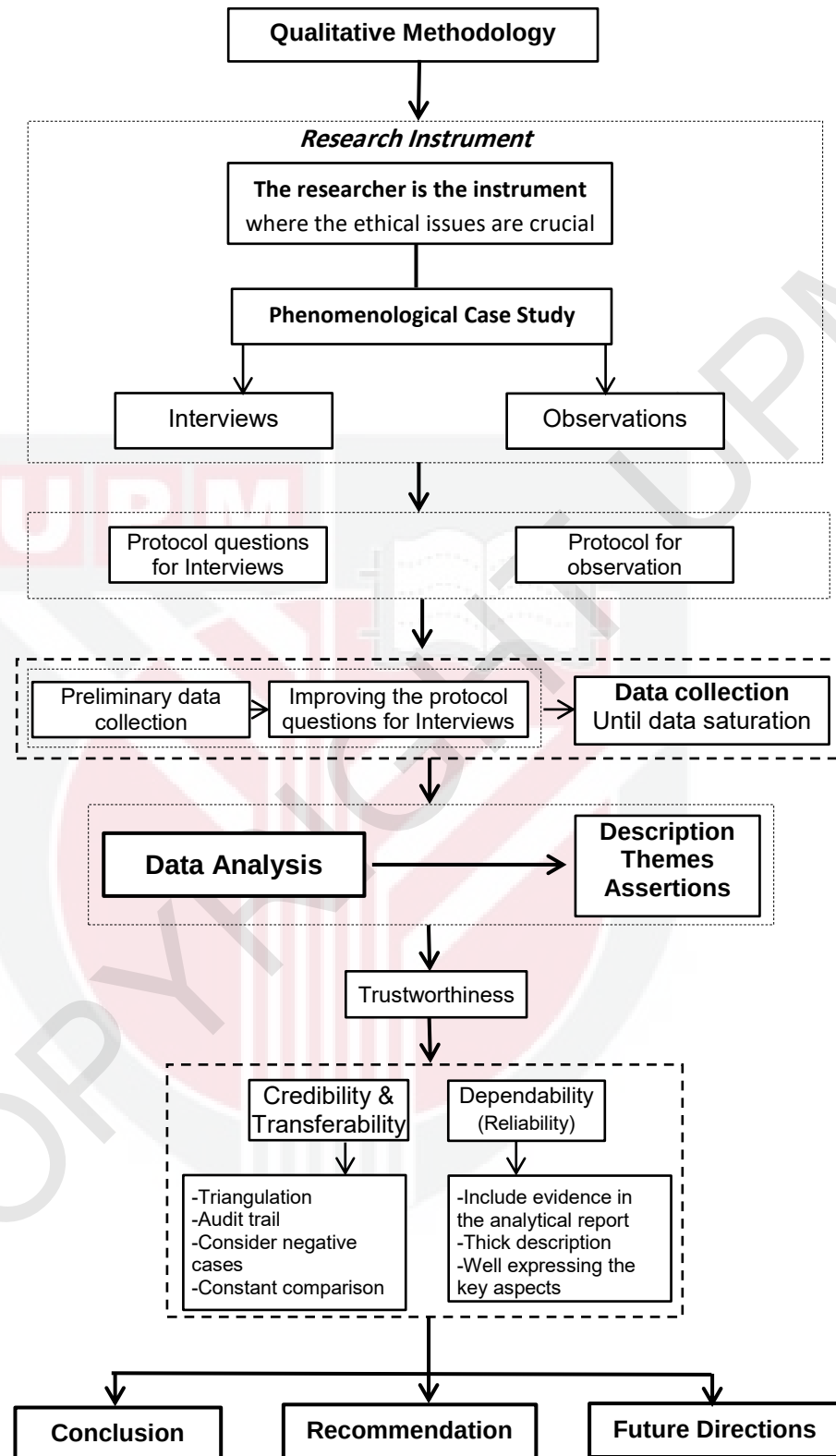


Figure 1.1: Research framework
(Source : Author)

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