

The Relationship Between KLCC Park Characteristics and Users Feeling

Ashkan Alidi and Nor Atiah Ismail*

Department of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on understanding the effect of the KLCC Park on its visitors' attitudes. Questionnaires were distributed to 90 respondents and their reactions were recorded. In addition, respondent demographics such as gender, ethnic group, occupation, education level and others were also recorded. It was found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents were satisfied with the circulation, safety, recreational, environmental and visual values of the park. Additionally, a majority of participant agreed to a series of statements which suggested that the park impacted their behaviour positively. The respondents were mostly men. Married people outnumbered the other categories, and those within the 30-40 years of age group formed the majority. Most respondents were Muslims who were mainly locals working in the private sector. It was found that the visitors preferred to visit the park in the evening for leisure purposes. A large percentage of them held a tertiary education. The authors conclude that the KLCC Park is a good model to study as it impacts the attitudes of visitors in a positive and healthy manner.

Keywords: Genius loci, KLCC Park, sense of place, visitor attitude

INTRODUCTION

Urban landscapes are critical and play an important role in reflecting the civic and social status of any community. By looking at the landscape of a certain city or town, people are able to determine or make an educated guess on how wealthy or poor that town or city is, as well as to see whether its inhabitants prioritise the environment and the preservation of nature, or vice versa.

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E-mail addresses:

ronin178@gmail.com (Ashkan Alidi)

noratiah72@yahoo.com.sg (Nor Atiah Ismail)

* Corresponding author

Urban landscapes are an important indication as to which political, social or economic factors dominate the governance and values of that particular urban community. It is a reflection of how the society sees itself and portrays the public facade or image that they are willing to let on to the world. Urban landscapes also represent a city's cultural background, history, subcultures and worldview; elements which are significant to show how the community practices its social contracts and respects social life arrangements. More importantly, it is how the community sees itself too.

Landscapes have often been acknowledged as having significant effects on health, both mental and physical, as well as behaviours and societal dynamics. In general, landscaping involves manipulating the visible features of an area including the organic and living elements like flora and fauna, land elements like hills and water bodies, as well as more abstract elements like lighting and the weather. Most often, landscaping is highly dependent on the surrounding factors, varies from one area to another, and from one geographical location to another. It is common knowledge or an accepted practice that landscaping does not introduce foreign elements to a certain place, but retains its natural factors that have been found there since before the landscaping process began. Sometimes, landscaping also tries to accentuate certain aspects of the environment in order to make the place more appealing; a creation of certain ideas to represent the main essence of the community based on its history,

tradition, ideals and aspirations. Although the physical aspect is the main focus of the effort, the soft approach also forms one of the often understated goals of landscaping.

The human model in the behaviour and environmental field involves four types of models; the Human Machine Model; Cognitive, Perception and Motivation Model; Behavioural Model; and Ecological Model. In the risk-oriented approach, any design by architects or landscape designers can directly influence a person's behaviour. The possibility approach states that a person's behaviour is affected only when several factors are correct. Factors like the economy, social and cultural conditions are examples of elements that provide the impetus for certain behaviour changes or adjustments to occur (Ahmadi & Khajeh, 2015).

It has been found that landscapes are perceived by human beings at two distinct levels; the first being what is visually seen in the real world, while the second is that perceived by the mind. Meinig (1979) conducted a study whereby a group of people were brought to different cities and districts and were then evaluated on their perceptions of these places by asking whether they recognized certain elements, compositions and the meanings of these elements. The respondents' answers were evaluated. As a result, 10 types of recognition factors were established as shown in Figure 1.

Jacobs (2011) postulated that the interpretation of physical landscapes was not influenced by physical landscape attributes, but by a complex process in which

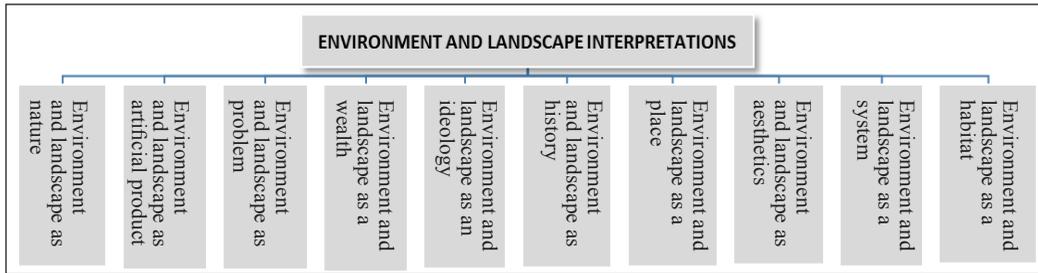


Figure 1. Factors of environmental and landscape interpretation (Meinig, 1979)

information was received and processed in the mind, resulting in a mental landscape. Multiple factors influence this information processing including biological, cultural and individual factors. The study found that families who lived in greener landscapes were more open to socialize with one another in the environment and allowed their children to exercise outdoors compared to families who lived in drier and more desert-like landscapes (Larson et al., 2009). As such, landscapes have been proven to directly affect people’s behaviour, especially when it comes to making decisions about lifestyle choices (Larsen & Harlan, 2006). In addition, a study comparing Julfa and Zeinabiyeh, two cities in the Isfahan district found that the city of Julfa with its better town planning was able to retain its residents, whereas Zeinabiyeh and general messiness in town planning (Ahmadi & Khajeh, 2015) lost its residents to migration due to poor structure, overcrowding. In ancient Rome, the term *Genius Loci* was used to refer to the guardian spirit of a certain place. However, over many centuries, this term has undergone several evolutions and in modern times, has been defined in the field of architecture and landscaping as the

atmosphere or character of a certain place. In the 18th century, this term was first used to describe the aesthetic feel of a garden, and had also been used by romantic era poets and writers to describe the abstract inspirations or feelings that helped to shape the design of a garden. This external visual interpretation of a town’s façade actually allows people to create an abstract emotional reaction towards it, almost to the point of interacting with the aesthetic aspect of that location of city. Over the course of time, these emotional reactions of the local community will form the perception of the city’s past, whether true or perceived, and in the current times will mesh together to form a sort of collective communal culture of a place which is also called the ‘sense’ of the place. This ‘sense’, in essence, is what the concept of a ‘*Genius Loci*’ is (Jiven & Larkham, 2003).

METHODS

The research area of this study is the KLCC Park which is a landscaped garden area in between the Suria Shopping Mall and the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre both located within the KLCC complex. It encompasses many features including a

mosque, a children's playground, a splash pond, bicycle paths, jogging tracks and walking paths.

It is an open space that provides opportunities for leisure and social activities, as well as showcases the Malaysian flora and fauna to the visitors. The KLCC Park is also a space that focuses on the preservation of natural elements and serves as a poignant portrayal of local culture, art and practices (Ayeghi & Ujang, 2014). The KLCC Park actually covers over 50% of the entire KLCC complex, and was designed so that there would be a green lung visible in the area for the benefit of the community and businesses in the surrounding areas.

Most respondents were in the age range of 20 to 40. Additionally, most of them possessed tertiary education. It is noted that a majority of them are locals who are pretty stable in life, as seen by the large percentage of married people. Also, the fact that most of these people work in the public sector gives the impression that they are involved with the commercial businesses around the KLCC Park.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A majority of respondents preferred to visit the park in the evening due to the fact that it is one of the cooler times, and thus they are not exposed to the direct intense heat of the sun. Many also mentioned that they come for leisure activities as opposed to resting after shopping and work. This fact points to the pull or attraction of the park itself which does not rely on the shopping aspect;

instead, this indicates that they visit for the sole purpose of recreation.

The questionnaire asked on their general level of satisfaction towards the park's accessibility which was recorded to be positive. Only a handful of them had expressed dissatisfaction towards accessibility to the park by car and by the disabled. A high majority expressed confidence about the safety of the park, even at night. In terms of environmental value, a small amount of respondents was not satisfied with the amount of vegetation and climate at the park.

However, some people polled in this study either agreed or strongly agreed that some improvements were needed in the park, for example the provision of public transportation and pedestrian walkways. A small number of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the air was fresh and that the park was an escape from city noises. This indicates that there are still those who believe that the park does not provide adequate shelter from the stress and pollution of city life. To further the discussion, Table 1 lists some ideas that point to a general direction of the study.

In summary, an overwhelming majority of visitors to the KLCC Park were positively influenced by it, and they felt encouraged to make it a place of relaxation away from the rest of Kuala Lumpur that was busier and noisier. They also enjoyed and were satisfied with the amenities and features of the park, regardless if they were locals or tourists.

Table 1
Satisfaction levels of visitors to KLCC Park

| | Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Moderately satisfied | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|---|-------------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Circulation Value | | | | | |
| Accessibility to the site (by vehicle) | 0 | 6 | 27 | 42 | 30 |
| Accessibility to the site (by walking) | 0 | 0 | 33 | 39 | 18 |
| Accessibility for the disabled | 0 | 3 | 12 | 54 | 21 |
| Comfort level of the pedestrian Walkway | 0 | 0 | 15 | 51 | 24 |
| Safety Value | | | | | |
| People safety in relation to crime | 0 | 0 | 3 | 45 | 42 |
| Recreational Value | | | | | |
| Recreational facilities available at the area | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 54 |
| Attractive Features available at the (symphony fountain, weeding pool and so on) | 0 | 0 | 9 | 33 | 48 |
| Environmental Value | | | | | |
| Environmental quality of this area | 0 | 3 | 21 | 39 | 27 |
| Climatic comfort of this area | 0 | 6 | 21 | 42 | 21 |
| Plants quantity of this area | | 3 | 21 | 39 | 27 |
| Plants quality of this area | 0 | 0 | 27 | 36 | 27 |
| Water elements quantity at this area | 0 | 0 | 12 | 42 | 36 |
| Water elements quality at this area | 0 | 0 | 9 | 42 | 39 |
| Visual Value | | | | | |
| The condition of amenities in this area (children's playground, jogging track shelters and surrounding buildings and so on) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 78 |

CONCLUSION

The KLCC Park therefore, is an interesting model to prove how park design can influence visitors' attitudes in a positive and healthy manner. This study also provides an idea of how visitors to the KLCC Park actually think and feel about the

place generally. This provides the park maintenance crew and designers a glimpse on how visitors perceive their product's end result and how they can improve on it in the future.

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