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ORGANISED BY

Landscape Architecture Seminar (LAN653) Semester October 2023 – Feb 2024 Bachelor Degree in Landscape Architecture UiTM Seri Iskandar Campus

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UNDERSTANDING CHANGES DESIGN OF PUBLIC PARK AFTER COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to various aspects of urban life, including public parks. Public parks, as essential urban green spaces, have undergone transformations in design and spatial character to adapt to the new normal of social distancing measures. This research aims to explore and understand the changes in the design and spatial character of public parks during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the role of social distancing measures. The study will involve a review of existing literature on public park design, spatial character, and the impact of COVID-19 on urban spaces. This research will use qualitative research method through observation and Open-Ended Interview of public parks users to examine the changes in design elements and spatial configuration, aswell as their implications on social distancing measures. The findings of this research will provide insights into how public park design and spatial character have been adapted during the pandemic, and their potential long-term impacts on urban planning and design. The study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between public park design, spatial character, and social distancing measures in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: *design changes, spatial character, social distancing, public park, COVID-19 pandemic*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the way we live, work, and interact with each other. The need for social distancing and other safety measures has affected every aspect of public life, including the design and use of public spacessuch as parks. Public parks are an essential component of urban infrastructure, providing space for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction. However, the pandemic has forced designers and planners to reconsider the design and management of public parks to ensure the safety and well-being of park users. This research aims to explore the changes in the design and spatial character of public parks during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on how social distancing measures have influenced the design character of public parks.

This research aims to understand how changes in park design can contribute to addressing social and health issues related to the pandemic. The objective of this research is to identify the spatial characteristic of public park before pandemic, to explore the spatial characteristics of public park after pandemic and to propose newdesign guideline of public park for future development implementation. By examining the spatial character and design elements of public parks.

This research is significant in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Landscape Architecture Agenda 2030 (LAA). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of creating inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities and communities, and public parks play a crucial role in achieving these goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to public spaces, particularly in public parks. As a result, the design and spatialcharacter of public parks need to be reconsidered to ensure compliance with social distancing measures. This research will investigate the changes in the design and spatial character of public parks during the pandemic and their impact on promoting social cohesion and community engagement. The study is aligned with the SDGs, particularly with Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, by addressing the health risksassociated with the pandemic, and with Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, by contributing to the development of sustainable urban environments. Furthermore, this research aligns with the 'Malaysia Madani' initiative, which aims tocreate sustainable and livable urban environments that promote community well-being and social inclusion. LAA 2030 also recognizes the vital role of public parks inpromoting health and well-being, community engagement, and environmental sustainability. The findings of this research will contribute to the ongoing efforts to create public parks that are resilient, adaptable, and responsive to the changing needs of urban communities during the pandemic and beyon

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact globally and in Malaysia. Internationally, it has caused a health crisis with millions of infections and deaths, leading to economic disruptions, travel restrictions, and supply chain disruptions. Social dynamics have shifted, with remote work and online interactions becoming thenorm. In Malaysia, the pandemic has strained healthcare resources, resulted in economic challenges, and severely affected the tourism sector. Education and workhave been transformed, with online learning and remote work arrangements. Social interactions and community activities have been impacted due to physical distancingmeasures and restrictions on gatherings. Both internationally and in locally, efforts are underway to mitigate the effects and promote recovery. The COVID-19 pandemichas brought about a significant change in public park design and usage, especially inrelation to social distancing measures. The design of public parks plays a crucial rolein maintaining social distancing protocols and ensuring the safety and well-being of park users. This section reviews relevant literature on the design characteristics of public parks during the pandemic.

2.1 Role of Public Parks in the Pandemics

As previous research in promoting physical and mental well-being, especially duringtimes of crisis. Studies suggest that parks have a positive impact on mental health and can reduce stress levels (Soga, et al., 2020). However, during the pandemic, public parks have become even more essential as they provide a safe outdoor space for exercise, recreation, and relaxation. Furthermore, amid the ongoing pandemic, public parks have assumed increased significance as they offer a secure outdoor environment for engaging in exercise, leisure activities, and unwinding. (Volenec, et al., 2021). Despite reduced visitation frequency among residents, even a weekly visitto parks can yield beneficial effects, aiding in overall health improvement and fulfilling individuals' social interaction needs. (Xie, et al., 2020)

2.2 Design characteristic of public park.

The study offers valuable insights into the socio-spatial ramifications of measures implemented to contain the epidemic, as well as the emergence of new lifestyle concepts that integrate work and personal life within novel spatial environments (Mansuroğlu, et. al., 2021). For pedestrians, it is necessary to distinguish between entrance and exit. This design feature allows for a smoother flow of visitors, ensuringa more enjoyable and comfortable experience for park visitors (Siossian, 2020). Theinvolvement of local communities in the management and maintenance

of public parks is essential for promoting a sense of ownership, fostering community cohesion,

and ensuring the sustainable use of park resources. Studies have highlighted the importance of community engagement in public park management during the pandemic, including the development of community-based initiatives to promote parkuse and support park maintenance (Krasny & Tidball, 2020). Planting in public parksduring the pandemic has been recognized as beneficial, especially in terms of providing psychological stress relief. The public has shown a preference for formal planting, and evidence suggests that older individuals, in particular, desire colorful formal plantings. Features such as systematic or regular patterns and a clear, legible, and tidy image associated with formal bedding plantings have been found to contribute to stress relief by creating a calm, peaceful, and safe atmosphere. By incorporating such planting designs in public parks, individuals can experience a soothing and reassuring environment, which is especially valuable during times of crisis like the pandemic (Nam & Dempsey, 2019).

2.3 Pandemic change the design & spatial features of public park.

Public park design influences social distancing and user safety during pandemics. Research examines how park design and organization relate to user behavior duringCOVID-19 (Sun, et al., 2020). During the COVID- 19 pandemic, landscape architects play a vital role in designing open and green spaces, as well as planning urban green space systems. Design strategies like seating arrangements, natural barriers, and hand sanitizing stations can facilitate social distancing in public parks. Spatial characteristics, including physical barriers like hedges and fences, should be considered in park design to ensure safe spaces and avoid overcrowding (Mansuroğlu, et. al., 2021). In addition, ensuring social distancingand limiting close proximity among park users is crucial. Designing parks with well- placed benches, seating areas, and other furniture can facilitate social distancing measures and reduce the risk of overcrowding (Linnell, et al., 2022).



This picture examples situation at Public Parks before Covid-19 Pandemic Source : Utusan Malaysia, retrieved on 25 January 2019



This picture examples situation at Public Parks after Covid-19 Pandemic Source : Berita Harian, retrieved on 10 Mei 2021

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Approach

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the changes in public park design after the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative research allows for exploring the experiences, perspectives, and suggestions of park visitors regarding park modifications for ensuring safety and well-being. By using open-ended interviews, this approach facilitates in-depth discussions and the generation of rich and detailed insights.

3.2 Respondents

The participants in this study are public people who frequently visit public parks. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants who have a regular habit of visiting Taman Tasik Titiwangsa. The selection criteria include individuals of diverse ages, genders, and backgrounds to capture a wide range of perspectives. Approximately 5-10 respondents will be recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

3.3 Site Selection

The research will be conducted at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, which serves as the study site for examining the changes in public park design. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa is chosen due to its popularity and accessibility, attracting a significant number of visitors. The site offers various amenities and recreational activities, providing valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of park users.

3.4 Data Collection

Data will be collected through open-ended interviews conducted with the selected respondents at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa. The interviews will be conducted face-to-face, following an interview guide that includes questions related to the frequency of park visits, main activities engaged in, reasons for park preference, and suggestionsfor modifying park design during future crises. The interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture.

The methodology outlined above, incorporating a qualitative approach, openended interviews with respondents, and the selection of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa as the study site, aims to explore the changes in public park design and safety measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings will provide valuable insights for enhancing park design and ensuring the well-being of park visitors in future crises.

4.0 FINDINGS

Based on the responses, it can be observed that the majority of participants visit thepublic park on a weekly basis. This suggests a regular habit of park visitation amongthe respondents, indicating the significance of the park in their routines and leisure activities. The main activities mentioned by the participants during their visits to the public parkinclude walking around, cycling, and horse riding. This indicates that the park offers a variety of recreational opportunities that cater to different preferences and interests.

Participants expressed several reasons for their preference for this particular public park. The strategic location of the park was highlighted as a key factor, indicating its accessibility and convenience. The park's aesthetic appeal and beauty were also mentioned, suggesting that the visual environment plays a role in attracting visitors. Additionally, the availability of a wide range of activities and user-friendly features were cited as reasons for the park's popularity among the respondents.

In response to the question about modifying park design in the event of a recurrenceof COVID-19 or other disasters, participants have suggested various measures as reported in the Table 1 below. The inclusion of seat setting interspersed with plants and adhering to social distancing guidelines can provide a safer seating arrangement. The need for more open spaceswas emphasized, which allows for better circulation and reduces the risk of overcrowding. Separate

entrances and exits can help manage visitor flow and minimize congestion. Tagging paths within the park can guide visitors while maintaining physical distancing.

The implementation of a periodic spray system for sanitization purposes and the incorporation of more shading trees and functional planting were also recommended.

Overall, the responses highlight the importance of considering safety and wellbeingin public park design. The suggestions provided by the respondents offer valuable insights into potential modifications that can be made to the park's layout, amenities, and management to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors during crisessuch as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seating Setting	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9
Temporary Moveable	/								
Distance according to standard			/						
Placing signage to remind visitors about maintaining a safe distance while seated									/
Intersped with plants				/	/	/			
Materials that are resistant to the virus can be easily sanitized							/	/	
Entry Systems									
Separate between inbond and outbond	/	/	/					/	/
Be more wider			/					/	
Implementing temperature screening				/	/				
Instructions for visitors to follow safety protocols						/			
Path	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9
Tagging on the road	/	/	/				/	/	/
Widening pathways				/					
Frequeny of cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces such as handrails					/	/			
vegetation Support	1								

Table 1: Responses on modification of park design and characteristics

More shading areas	/	/				/		/	/
Separate zones			/	/			/		
plantings to help guide									
visitors and maintain									
safe distances									
Functional planting					/				
Sanitation Station									
Sanitary spray system	/	/	/				/	/	
Regularly cleaning				/		/			
and disinfection									
commonly touhed									
surfaces									
Cleaning staff					/		/		/
dedicated to									
maintaining									
cleanliness and									
hygiene									
Open Space									
More open space	/								
Expanding the size		/	/	/			/	/	/
Creating designated					/	/			
zones for different									
activities to avoid									
overcrowding									

Intersped with plants:

Interspersing seating areas with plants is a design strategy that has both aesthetic and practical benefits. Integrating greenery into the seating setting can create a more inviting and pleasant atmosphere for visitors.

Separate between inbound and outbound entry systems:

Implementing separate entry and exit points helps to minimize the interaction between incoming and outgoing visitors. This reduces congestion and lowers the risk of virus transmission. Designating clear paths for entry and exit also makes it easier for visitors to navigate the space safely.

Tagging on the road:

In the context of the seating setting and path improvements, "tagging on the road" could involve the use of various markings, signs, or symbols on the ground or road surface to serve different purposes

More shading areas:

Providing shading areas is essential for outdoor spaces. It helps visitors stay comfortable during their visit and encourages them to adhere to safety guidelines

while avoiding crowded indoor spaces.

Sanitary spray system:

A sanitary spray system can be installed to regularly disinfect outdoor areas automatically. This can be particularly useful in large open spaces where manual cleaning may be challenging.

Expanding the size :

Expanding the seating setting or open space benefits by accommodating more visitors, enabling social distancing, enhancing comfort, event flexibility, improved traffic flow, accessibility, greenery incorporation, and ensuring safety with buffer zones for certain activities.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the insights gained from the participants' feedback have provided valuable guidance for enhancing public park design to prioritize safety, well-being, and the overall park experience. The diverse suggestions put forward reflect a collective understanding of the importance of crowd management and hygiene measures in the context of crisis situations, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

One key recommendation is the incorporation of plant-integrated seating arrangements, which not only provide functional seating options but also enhance theaesthetic appeal of the park. These green seating spaces can serve as natural focal points, inviting visitors to relax and enjoy the surrounding greenery while maintainingsafe distances from others. Additionally, the suggestion to introduce flexible seating options addresses the need for adaptability and versatility in park design, accommodating different user preferences and group sizes.

Creating more open spaces within the park has emerged as another crucial consideration. The strategic placement of open areas allows for better circulation andreduces congestion, ensuring that visitors can comfortably navigate through the parkwhile adhering to physical distancing guidelines. By maximizing the use of open spaces, the park can accommodate a greater number of visitors while minimizing therisk of overcrowding.

To manage visitor flow effectively, the recommendation to implement separate entrances and exits has been proposed. This approach helps regulate the movement of park visitors, ensuring a smooth and organized experience. Additionally, incorporating touchless entry systems and sanitization stations promotes hygiene practices and instills a sense of confidence among park users, knowing that necessary measures are in place to protect their health and well-being.

The suggestion to tag paths and designate separate zones for different activities emphasizes the importance of promoting physical distancing while encouraging diverse forms of exercise and recreation. Clear signage and designated areas for activities such as walking, jogging, cycling, and picnicking enable visitors to engage in their preferred activities while respecting the space and boundaries of others. Thisapproach enhances safety, reduces potential conflicts, and fosters a harmonious environment for all park users.

Furthermore, the emphasis on vegetation as a key element in park design underscores its multifaceted role. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, greenery provides shade, contributes to air quality improvement, and acts as a natural divider, delineating different sections of the park. By integrating a variety of plant species, park designers can create visually captivating landscapes that offer a sense of serenity and connection with nature.

Incorporating these valuable suggestions into future park designs will not only enhance the safety and satisfaction of park visitors but also foster a resilient and inclusive environment for the post-pandemic era. By prioritizing the well-being and needs of park users, we can ensure that public parks continue to serve as vital spaces for recreation, social interaction, and communion with nature. Together, let us create parks that inspire and rejuvenate, providing solace and respite while nurturing a strong bond between people and their natural surroundings.

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