

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
IN CONSERVATION OF HERITAGE AREA
IN JOHOR BAHRU CITY CENTRE
-A study of the level of awareness and understanding

RAHAYU BINTI AHMAD

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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RAHAYU BINTI AHMAD

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DEDICATION

Alhamdulillah.

For my Imaam, Hasrul 'Alam bin Mohd Hashim,
my parents,
and my family.

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In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Alhamdulillah.

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ABSTRACT

Land use activities and new skyscrapers in urban areas are jeopardizing the value of heritage area. Despite vigorous programmes and enforcement carried out by Johor Bahru City Council, conservation efforts remain a challenge. This is due to lack of conservation of heritage area awareness and understanding. This study was specifically conducted to evaluate the local public's level of awareness, level of understanding, and experiences and perception that causes lack of public participation in the conservation plan in the perspective of awareness and understanding. This survey was conducted on 142 respondents. Results indicated that the level of awareness and understanding of general conservation concept is high but level of awareness and understanding of the conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre plan is low. Factors like age, gender and educational background have no significant impact on willingness to participate in the conservation programme.

Keywords : public participation, conservation, heritage, awareness, understanding

ABSTRAK

Aktiviti guna tanah dan bangunan pencakar langit yang baru didirikan di kawasan bandar mengancam nilai kawasan warisan. Walaupun program dan penguatkuasaan giat dijalankan oleh Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru, usaha-usaha konservasi tetap mencabar. Ini disebabkan kurangnya kesedaran dan pemahaman tentang konservasi kawasan warisan. Kajian ini dijalankan secara spesifik untuk menilai tahap kesedaran, tahap pemahaman, dan pengalaman serta persepsi orang awam yang menyebabkan kurangnya penyertaan awam dalam pelan konservasi dari perspektif kesedaran dan pemahaman. Soal selidik dijalankan atas 142 orang responden. Hasil kajian menunjukkan tahap kesedaran dan pemahaman tentang konsep konservasi secara umum adalah tinggi namun tahap kesedaran dan pemahaman tentang konservasi kawasan warisan di Pusat Bandaraya Johor Bahru adalah rendah. Faktor-faktor seperti umur, jantina, dan latar belakang pendidikan tidak mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap kesediaan orang awam untuk terlibat dalam program konservasi.

Kata kunci : penyertaan awam, konservasi, warisan, kesedaran, pemahaman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	xii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
1	INTRODUCTION	
	1.1 Public Participation and Conservation	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	2
	1.3 Goal and Objectives	4
	1.4 Research Questions	4
	1.5 Methodology	5
	1.5.1 Study Context	5
	1.5.2 Data Collection	6
	1.3.3 Analysis	6
	1.6 Study Area	6

1.7	Significance of Study	7
1.8	Organization of Study	8
1.9	Research Limitations	9
2	CONCEPT AND HISTORY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, CONSERVATION OF HERITAGE AREA, AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING	
2.1	Introduction	10
2.2	Definition	11
	2.2.1 Definition of Public Participation	11
	2.2.2 Citizen Participation and Public Participation	12
2.3	Importance of Public Participation	13
2.4	Public Participation Theories	15
	2.4.1 Technocratic Decision-Making	15
	2.4.2 Democratic Decision-Making	16
2.5	Comparative Public Participation Experiences	20
	2.5.1 Public Participation in the United States of America	20
	2.5.1.1 Introduction	20
	2.5.1.2 History	20
	2.5.1.3 Strengths and Weaknesses	21
	2.5.2 Public Participation in United Kingdom	22
	2.5.2.1 Introduction	22
	2.5.2.2 History	22
	2.5.2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses	24
	2.5.3 Public Participation in Malaysia	25
	2.5.3.1 Introduction	25
	2.5.3.2 History	25
	2.5.3.3 Planning System in Malaysia Today	26
	2.5.3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses	28

2.6	Public Participation in the Act 172	29
2.7	Challenges of Public Participation	32
2.8	Preconditions to Successful Public Participation	34
2.9	Conservation of Heritage Area	35
2.9.1	Introduction	35
2.9.2	Conservation of Heritage Area in Melaka and George Town	36
2.10	Public Participation in the Perspective of Awarenes and Understanding	37
2.11	Chapter Conclusion	38
3	RESEARCH METHODOLODY	
3.1	Introduction	39
3.2	Methodological Framework	40
3.2.1	Preliminary Study and Site Selection Stage	41
3.2.2	Literature Review Stage	45
3.2.3	Data Collection Stage	46
3.2.4	Data Analysis Stage	52
3.2.5	Conclusion and Recommendation Stage	55
3.3	Chapter Conclusion	56
4	ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	
4.1	Introduction	57
4.2	Location Selected for Survey	57
4.3	Analysis Done and Findings	60
4.3.1	Respondents' Profile	60
4.3.1.1	Respondents' Age and Gender	60
4.3.1.2	Respondents' Highest Education and Gender	65
4.3.1.3	Respondents' Highest Education and Age	66
4.3.2	Awareness	70

4.3.2.1	Awareness of conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru city centre plan by Johor Bahru City Council (MBJB)	70
4.3.2.2	Sources of information	72
4.3.2.3	Sensitivity towards conservation of heritage area	73
4.3.2.4	Involvement in conservation plan	74
4.3.2.5	Importance of Conservation	74
4.3.3	Understanding	75
4.3.3.1	Acknowledgement of conservation of heritage area zoning, zoning features and locations in Johor Bahru City Centre	76
4.3.3.2	Understanding the importance of heritage area conservation	77
4.3.4	Experience and Perception of Public Participation in the context of Awareness and Understanding	82
4.3.5	Respondents Ideas on How to Increase Public Participation	86
4.4	Summary of Relationship Tested	86
4.5	Chapter Conclusion	87
5	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1	Introduction	88
5.2	Achieving Research Objectives	88
5.2.1	Objective 1: To identify the level of awareness about the conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre plan	89
5.2.2	Objective 2: To identify the level of understanding about the conservation of	89

heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre plan	
5.2.3 Objective 3: To identify the experiences and perception that causes lack of public participation in the plan in the perspective of awareness and understanding	90
5.3 Summation of Relationship Analysis	90
5.4 Recommendations	92
5.5 Future Research	93
5.6 Chapter Conclusion	93
REFERENCES	94
Appendix I	100
Appendix II	104

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	The hierarchy of development plans in Malaysia	26
3.1	Population of Johor Bahru	41
4.1	Respondents' age and gender	58
4.2	Respondents' highest education and gender	59
4.3	Respondents' highest education and age	61
4.4	Awareness of the conservation importance	65
4.5	Understanding of conservation zoning, zoning features and locations	66
4.6	Experience and Perception of Public Participation in the context of Awareness and Understanding	73
4.7	Age * Awareness of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre	77
4.8	Gender * Awareness of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre	78
4.9	Highest Education* Awareness of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre	79
4.10	Awareness * Knowledge about conservation zonings	81
4.11	Age * Wanting to be involved in the conservation plan	82
4.12	Gender * Wanting to be involved in the conservation plan	83
4.13	Highest Educational Background * Wanting to be involved in	84

the conservation plan

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1.1	Heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre	7
1.2	Organization of study flowchart	8
2.1	Eight rank on the ladder of citizen participation	17
2.2	Physical planning hierarchy in Malaysia	28
3.1	Flow chart of research methodology	40
3.2	Location of Johor state in Malaysia and location of Johor Bahru in the state of Johor	42
3.3	The route taken by researcher as suggested by the Johor Bahru Heritage Trail	43
3.4	Determining the sample size using the sample size calculator	50
4.1	A building that has been conserved in Tan Hiok Nee Road	58
4.2	Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre has been designated and marked with arch and street signs that	58

	indicates its historical values	
4.3	The Indian Enclave in Ungku Ampuan Road and Gurdwara Sahib in Trus Road	59
4.4	The streetscape in the designated heritage area	59
4.5	Respondents' age and gender	61
4.6	Respondents highest education and gender	65
4.7	Respondents highest education and age	67
4.8	Awareness of conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru city centre plan by Johor Bahru City Council (MBJB)	70
4.9	Sources of information	71
4.10	Sensitivity towards conservation of heritage area	73
4.11	Involvement in conservation plan	74
4.12	Agreeing that old buildings can show how people lived in the past	77
4.13	Agreeing that old shops can show how people do economic businesses in the past	78
4.14	Agreeing that architecture (like Eclectic, Art Deco, Modern design) can show me our country's development through the different era	78
4.15	Agree that by going to certain areas that are conserved can bring back memories of the past	79
4.16	Agreeing that certain areas that are conserved can make me appreciate and love my country more	79
4.17	Agreeing that the conservation plan will increase number of shoppers to the heritage area	80
4.18	Agreeing that the conservation plan will attract tourists to the heritage area	80
4.19	Agreeing that that both old buildings that are conserved and new skyscrapers can be icons of Johor Bahru city centre	81
4.20	Reason of non-involvement in the conservation plan	83

4.21	Respondents agreement that the general public is aware about the conservation plan	83
4.22	Respondents agreement that the general public understand the conservation plan	84
4.23	Respondents agreement that publicity about the conservation plan is enough to let the public become aware about it	84
4.24	Respondents agreement that publicity about the conservation plan is enough to let the public understand it	85

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MBJB	Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
JPBD	Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solution
RKK	Rancangan Kawasan Khas
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Public Participation and Conservation

Public participation in any urban planning process should be welcomed and sought after by the governing body or any local government that is doing planning for the people. But the level of public participation differs from country to country. Much of public participation is about public perception and their readiness to commitment to participate in the process. Other also include how far government bodies are eager or prepared to get the public involve in such process. Public participation is a process that involves decision making with the purpose of influencing the choices to be made, as well as the responsibility of the government agencies to involve the public in decision making that normally affects various communities (Higgs et al., 2008).

In Malaysia, Act 172, Town and Country Planning Act 1976 secured public participation by stipulating under 2B (1)(c) that the functions of a Director General of Town and Country Planning shall be “to provide information and education to the public regarding town and country planning”. Section 9(1) stated that “when preparing a draft structure plan for the State and finally determining its content for

submission to the Committee, the State Director shall take such steps as will in his opinion secure (a) that publicity is given in the State to the report of the survey under section 7 and to the matters that he proposes to include in the plan; and (b) that persons who may be expected to desire an opportunity of making representations to the State Director in respect of those matters are made aware that they are entitled to, and are given, an opportunity of doing so, and the State Director shall consider every representation made within the prescribed period to him”.

While 16B (1) that “at any time during the preparation or upon the coming into effect of a structure plan or a local plan, a State Director or a local planning authority, on his or its own initiative or as directed by the committee, may submit to the Committee a proposal for the designation of a special area for special and detailed treatment by development, redevelopment, improvement, conservation or management practice, or partly by one and partly by another method, of a whole or part of such special area, and the nature of the treatment proposed”. Conservation is managed as Special Area Plan or *Rancangan Kawasan Khas (RKK)* in the Act 172. According to Jabatan Warisan Negara, Kementerian Pelancongan dan Kebudayaan Malaysia, conservation is a term used for works carried out on heritage buildings, monuments and sites that includes preservation, restoration, repair and rehabilitation, reconstruction and adaptive reuse or any combination of these. These works need monumental efforts from many parties involved. In urban planning, any conservation work would require the participation from the public especially when the intended conservation is about an area that is already gazetted or will be gazetted as heritage area.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to the number of attendance in the publicity of the Draft Special Area Plan of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre, it is very low as described in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 : Number of attendance of publicity of the Draft Special Area Plan of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre

Attendance	Number
Individual / Public	9
Developer / Consultant / NGO	6
Total	15

(Source : Johor Bahru City Council, (MBJB))

The publicity is done from October 1st 2013 to October 31st 2013. In the period of a month, only 15 people came for the publicity. According to MJB officer; Puan Norbaizura binti Mohd Zin, Assistant Director of the Planning Department, MJB also only received two objections to the draft plan and both were submitted by developers or consultants. This proves the lack of public participation the decision-making of the plan.

“Heritage awareness is an important component of conservation. One of the basic causes for damage of heritage is due to lack of awareness to the public at large and a non-involvement of people in the process of conservation”, (Shankar and Swamy, 2013). Damer and Hague (1971) stated that the conflict between planners and the public at large is due to public’s ignorance of planning matters and further explained that “such ignorance can be eradicated by the education of the public”.

Arstein (1969) also suggested that participation should begin with education before citizens can become involved in the next stage of the process. Citizens need to be educated prior to their involvement because without education, the objectives of participation may not be achieved.

Marzuki et. al. (2012) noted that in Malaysia majority of the public do not know their rights and usually feel that their participation is not necessary. Limited awareness and educational background also leads to ineffective public participation. Therefore, the role of public in the decision-making process must be highlighted and given more publicity to create awareness while continuous programmes of educating the public to foster understanding must be forged on. Specifically for this study, the responsibility of creating awareness and foster understanding of conservation of

heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre lies on the Johor Bahru City Council or Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru (MBJB).

As shown in the very low number of attendance to the publicity of the Draft Special Area Plan of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre, it is then important to study the public's level of awareness and understanding of the conservation plan. And seeks to indentify the the experiences and perception that causes lack of public participation in the plan in the perspective of awareness and understanding.

1.3 Goal and Objectives

The goal of the study is to determine the level of public's awareness and understanding of conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre plan. Based on the goal underlined, the objectives of this study are as follow:

- i. to identify the level of awareness about the plan,
- ii. to identify the level of understanding about the plan, and
- iii. to identify the experiences and perception that causes lack of public participation in the plan in the perspective of awareness and understanding.

1.4 Research Questions

This research aims to answer these questions:

- i. What is the public's level of awareness about conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru city centre plan?

- ii. What is the public's level of understanding about conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru city centre plan?
- iii. What are the public's experiences and perception that causes lack of public participation in the plan in the perspective of awareness and understanding?

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Study Context

The study is about public participation in conservation of heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre. Johor Bahru is formerly known as Iskandar Puteri has great universal quality in terms of planning, urban development, diverse community, and socio-economic. The uniqueness of Johor Bahru as the heritage includes the architecture buildings, its historical background and the roles of Johor Sultanate in the morphology process of the city, and its importance internationally in terms of history and geography. The study will focus on the designated heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre.

This specific location is chosen as a study area as it has been designated by MBB as the heritage area. Draft plan has already being developed and conservation efforts are underway. It is then appropriate to choose this location as the study area. The location is also chosen due to close proximity for researcher and limited time of study.

1.5.2 Data Collection

Data will be collected through primary and secondary data sources:

- i. primary data sources : questionnaire survey and observation
- ii. secondary data source : literature review

The research instrument used; questionnaire, is consisted of questions that aimed to collect information, preferences, and opinions from respondents. The number of respondents is 142; respondents needed are 133 as calculated in the propotion of Johor Bahru City Centre population (using Sample Size Calculator from the Creative Research Systems website). It is comprised of respondents' profile and their views of public participation in conservation of heritage area plan in Johor Bahru. Observation is done by researcher's visits to the site.

1.5.3 Analysis

The analysis of data using questionnaire survey involves analyzing each question in the questionnaire. There are 36 questions and they will be presented using frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, cross-tab analysis, inferential analysis. For this purpose, researcher will use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and Microsoft Excel.

1.6 Study Area

This study is only covering the designated conservation area in Johor Bahru City Centre as the figure below indicates. It includes Zone 1- heritage zone, Zone 2- transition zone, and Zone 3-transformation and infill zone.



Figure 1.1: Heritage area in Johor Bahru City Centre. (Source: Draf Rancangan Kawasan Khas Konservasi, Garis Panduan, dan Glosari Kawasan Warisan Pusat Bandaraya Johor Bahru)

1.7 Significance of Study

This research is a much needed study in understanding public participation in conservation of a heritage area. The success of conservation lies heavily on the people involved and in this case, the Johor Bahru citizens. Looking on a broader perspective, public commitment and engagement in any planning process helps authorities to understand public needs and wants because the main purpose of urban planning is to benefit the public.

This study will benefit several parties that have relationship with the plan, directly or indirectly. The findings of this study will also be of use in contributing to the efforts of the government in getting the public to be involved in government's

planning. It might also be important to professional and non-professional groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and planning education. Planning, not only for the people but with the people.

1.8 Organization of Study

To achieve the study objectives drawn, the study is divided into five stages; identification of the specific subject and related issues, literature review, data collection through interview, questionnaire and other methods, data analysis, and result presentation and recommendations.

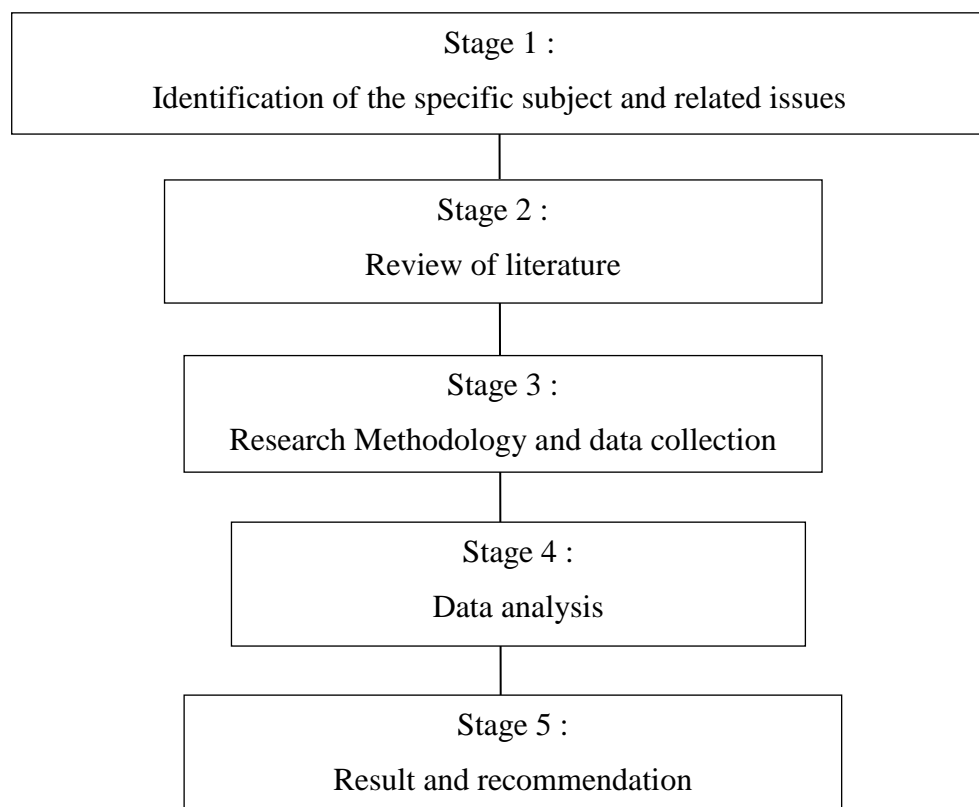


Figure 1.2 :Organization of study flowchart

Stage 1 identifies the specific subject of the study and its related issues. Based on the issues and problems, the goal and objectives of the study are drawn. Stage 2 involves literature review of the subject chosen where understanding of public participation is searched for and the Special Area Plan of Conservation of Heritage Area in Johor Bahru City Centre is studied. Stage 3 is about the method of research studied and data collection. Data is collected through site visits, questionnaire survey, and observations. Stage 4 is the analyzing of data. It is focusing on analyzing and synthesizing the data collected in the previous stage and Stage 5 is where the output of analysis is concluded. The results are summarized for future recommendations.

1.9 Research Limitations

Three areas of limitations have been identified in this study. They are location, time and respondents. Location wise, this study is only done in the designated area as shown in Figure 1.1. Researcher is aware of the area boundary and collected the data within the area. Duration of study can be a constraint in collecting data and other resources thus time is managed and observed by using a Gantt chart as to make sure researcher is on schedule. And survey will only consider visitors and passerby within the study area. Researcher will only target Malaysian citizens and aging eighteen (18) and above.

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