

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOR PLACEMAKING

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DEDICATION

I am thankful to my supervising architect and lecturers for guiding me in completing this thesis paper. I would like to express my gratitude to my family members, friends and colleagues who have been supporting me throughout my journey of this thesis paper.

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to outline the importance of community participation in a placemaking process. Placemaking is implying human attachment to places that are appealing and fit for their intended uses. Placemaking stresses the importance of community participation and decision-making, this type of engagement builds an important link and attachment between the people and the area where they reside. Despite the understand of the need of public participation, many placemaking process still use a top-down or expert-driven decision making in the process. The research has noted that the public participation in an urban planning and decision making in general can maximize the satisfaction with planning outcomes, project lifespan and possibilities for increasing civic engagement and interest. Some of the researchers also highlighted to the planners to actively involve the local community to recognise the people's right to the city from the beginning. In order to support the research statements, 3 case studies were carried out in the Kuala Lumpur and Penang Island context. The selected case studies were made with comparison with different initiative party and community engagement process. The case study comparison outlined the importance of community engagement during the placemaking process. Placemaking project that had engaged with the local community has resulted to be more sustainable in the long run.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dilakukan bertujuan mengkaji kepentingan penyertaan komuniti tempatan dalam proses *placemaking*. *Placemaking* membayangkan keterikatan manusia ke tempat-tempat yang menarik dan sesuai untuk kegunaan yang diperlui. *Placemaking* menekankan kepentingan penyertaan komuniti dan membuat keputusan, jenis penglibatan ini dapat membina hubungan dan keterikatan penting antara orang dan kawasan tempat mereka tinggal. Walaupun keperluan penyertaan awam dipahami, banyak proses *placemaking* masih menggunakan proses keputusan daripada atas ke bawah dan hanya melibatkan pakar dalam proses tersebut. Penyelidikan telah menyatakan bahawa penyertaan awam dalam perancangan bandar dan membuat keputusan secara umum dapat memaksimumkan kepuasan dengan hasil perancangan, jangka hayat projek dan kemungkinan untuk meningkatkan penglibatan dan minat komuniti. Beberapa penyelidik juga menekankan kepada perancang untuk terlibat secara aktif dengan komuniti tempatan untuk mengiktiraf hak seseorang keatas bandar dari awal. Secara sokongan kepada kenyataan penyelidikan, 3 kes kajian telah dijalankan dalam konteks Kuala Lumpur dan Pulau Pinang. Kes kajian tersebut dibanding dengan proses penglibatan pihak pengiktiraf dan penyertaan komuniti yang berbeza. Perbandingan kajian kes menggariskan kepentingan penglibatan komuniti semasa proses *placemaking*. Projek *placemaking* yang melibatkan komuniti tempatan adalah lebih mampan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DBKL - Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur City Hall)
MBPP - Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang (Penang Island City Council)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Background

As cities get smaller to accommodate the population growth, the design of urban public spaces becomes increasingly important to the quality of urban landscapes, experiences, and social interactions in daily life. According to studies, having sufficient public amenities may significantly raise the quality of life for vulnerable socioeconomic groups notably elderly people and low-income households. In high-density countries like Hong Kong, older citizens' physical and mental health can be improved through public open spaces that provide a comfortable environment and opportunities for social interaction (van Ameijde *et al.*, 2022).

The term 'placemaking' has become more popular in the social sciences, especially urban planning, since the 1970s (John, 2010). Placemaking is a term that developed into being once it was realized that urban design must take into account cultural, social, economic, political, and geographic aspects in addition to the significance of people's activities and perceptions of urban public spaces (Alzahrani *et al.*, 2017). While there are many various meanings of the term, in this article the placemaking is described as the process of creating urban spaces to promote social interaction and pedestrian traffic. Instead of referring to "space," the term refers to "place," which implies a human relationship to places that are pleasant and suitable for their intended uses. MICHALAK (2007) defines "place" as "constituted via repeated social practise," highlighting that a place's value comes from its capacity to inspire activities and social interactions. Al-Kodmany (2013) referred the term "space" as the physical container for activities and items, while referred "place" to a specific area of space that fits people's physiological and psychological needs while also inspiring meaningful and memorable statements about a particular culture, climate, and geography. Placemaking stresses the significance of community participation and

decision-making, claiming that this type of engagement builds an essential link and feeling of identity between the people and the area where they reside (COCOLA, 2018).

Alzahrani *et al.* (2017) mentioned that the placemaking also promotes the theory of developing places that, through enhancing a feeling of place, enhance the link between people and environment. A stronger emphasis on the usage, activities, and perceptions of space allowed for the development of the social element. Effective place-making and its aesthetic qualities have an impact on the sustainability of urban public space, which in turn affects how it is used. Combining "the hard city" of areas and structures with "the soft city" of happenings is the goal of place-making. Therefore, to create successful locations, it is necessary for there to be variety, events, and a physical environment that can support and enhance such tasks and processes.

Even while the necessity of public involvement is recognised, many infrastructure initiatives prefer to adopt a top-down, expert-driven approach to site design and selection. This misalignment of method and participation principles might have negative effects on long-term sustainability and the development of inclusive and flexible spaces (Campbell-Arvai and Lindquist, 2021). The lack of community understanding and being aware of urban development plans, opportunities, and structured development procedures (Geekiyanage *et al.*, 2020).

Protik *et al.* (2018) claimed that most city dwellers are unaware of the tangible effects of community participation in urban development plans. Consultation burnout, caused by a loss of desire in participation amongst the communities, is the second most significant impediment to community participation in sustainable development plans. The second set of challenges to community participation were recognised by Geekiyanage *et al.* (2020) as a lack of resources within community organisations, high rates of wealth inequality among many citizens, poor literacy and numeracy levels, and the dominance of oral culture throughout societies.

1.2 Problem Statement

Community engagement has been notably low especially in an urban context. Social distance and temporary lockdowns have had a significant impact on sociable environments, healthier regions, and altered daily social experience of life in public areas because of the Covid-19 virus outbreak. The urge to restructure the urban environment's tangible and non - tangible urban formations has been one of these shifts. Through placemaking process, could it be possibly strengthening the community engagement and how do we make it successfully?

1.3 Research Goal

The research aimed to outline the importance of community participation in a placemaking process through a comprehensive literature review.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

- (a) To determine issues with low community participation in placemaking process
- (b) To find solutions to strengthen the community participation in placemaking process
- (c) To outline the importance of community participation for placemaking

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