Characteristic of Attractive Square as Public Space: Putra Square, Putrajaya

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Abstract: This research examines an attractive public space, Malaysian urban living, Putrajaya. A review was carried out to identify characteristic of place that enrichment of space to generate social integration and pleasure between communities. There are various understandings of the concept of public space. They range from a space of democratic expression for all (Politics) to the space between buildings, that foster human interaction and is based on rigorous design principles (Architecture and Urban Design). For this purpose new squares and parks were seen as an opportunity to develop new places, revitalize shabbier districts, as well as to upgrade the traditional and colonial public spaces. Series of public spaces in Putrajaya are striking in their compromising modernity with hard surfaces and steely constructivist open spaces. The article focuses on extract literature findings, the analysis and site observation in the studied case in on most attractive Public Square, Putra Square in Putrajaya. The study revealed that Putra Square is unique and attractive place for public in the community. Therefore, this paper reviews the characteristics of attraction square as public space.

This study also implied that the square and it surrounding area convey various architectural categories of meaning which lead to the image formation of public square. This paper will first present an integrative model of understanding the slippery concept of ‘public space’ and then it will discuss on the physical dimension and present an objective way of measuring the ‘publicness’ of a public place from an urban design point of view.

Key-Words: Public space, Attractive Square, Public square, Urban living

1 Introduction
Putra Square is a Public Place which is located at Precinct 1, Putrajaya, Malaysia. This 300 metres circular structure with light and water features provides the centerpiece for precinct 1. The square is unique in its setting and concept of designed to be the nation's leading centre for staging national events and formal parades.

Putra Square is bounded by Perdana Putra, Masjid Putra, Putra Bridge and the Promenade. The square is a master piece conceptualized to constitute a most impressive showcase of Putrajaya's unique architectural form.

According to John Ruskin, he state that to measure of any great civilization is its cities and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares. Therefore, a review was carried out to identify characteristic Putra Square as Public Square which can generate social integration and pleasure between communities. Putra Square also can be described as hard surfaced outdoor public spaces. Putra Square also can be defined as a public square with room for pedestrians and community to spend their time there.

By definition, public place according to section 2 of the Local Government Act, 1976 means: “any open space, parking place, garden, recreation and pleasure ground or square, whether enclosed or not, set apart or appropriated for the use of the public or to which the public shall at any time have access”.

Under section 48 of the Street, Drainage and Building Act, 1974 "public place" means: “any street, park, garden, promenade, fountain, traffic island or circus, playground, river bank, whether above or below high water mark, place of a public resort or any place to which the public have access”.

For the purpose of this short paper, public space can be described as the space that is open to all, owned by all and used by all members of the public, no matter how we choose to define ‘the public’.

2 Theory and literature studies of Public Space
Basically, there are lots of definitions about the public space. Therefore, literature studied based on theory
and opinions are done to find the characteristic of public space. According to (Lang, 2005), public space generally has physical and functional conditions which influence social interaction, comfort and security which attract people to the settings. The physical and functional qualities of public spaces are related to physical amenities, the activities the accessibility conditions, and the surrounding land-use that support the activities there. This support by (Urban Landscape Architect, 1997) where studies have shown that public spaces that are dynamic and highly visited by people are setting where people are able to engage passively with the environment by looking at others, offers many sitting spaces, are accessible for people, contain public art and natural features such as water fountains, waterfalls.

On the other hand, (Yusrafarah, 2009) state that great public spaces are the living room of the city. Which is people come together to enjoy the city and each other. According to (Yusrafarah, 2009) also, combination of beautiful architecture with great public space creates the most beautiful places to live. Where places that express a life of richness and tradition, and act as a setting for life to happen. The relationship between the public spaces to significant building is symbolic as well as functional and in the other way around too.

The development of positive public spaces requires active community participation; a clear redesign program based on people needs; an appropriate management programs to coordinate attractive events and activities in the public space and active public uses in the surrounding area. The main goal is people’s satisfaction in Public spaces (Pierce, 1978).

Dynamic public spaces are essential component for the urbanites to have their recreational activities and social interactions. Streets, squares and parks of a city are open public spaces that form a city fabric and its character. Such spaces are often considered as green nucleus, void or breathing space of the city beside gives form to the ebb and flow of human exchange. Greater appreciation on public place has been expanded whereby the physical and social functions are elements that afforded pleasure, safety and care urban users (Lynch, 1960; Carmona et.al, 2003; N.Z. Harun).

In other perspective, public space is the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds with a symbiotic relationship between the complexities of the urban structures (Carr et.al, 1992).

What is more public space is not only a place of joyful social celebration but at the same time it can be a ground for heartbroken communion, civic discussion and a place to exercise the right of assembly and free speech which is essential to participatory democracy and the good life (Child, 2004).

3 Method and Approach

This research is done by literature studies of meaning of public space, changing of public space, successful of public space/square and etc. Theory and perspectives of public space also included in this research to be reference.

For this purpose, content analysis and site observation of the area of Putra Square is done, besides feeling the ambience of it from the view of daily users, not forgetting the local and international tourists.

4 Discussion: Case study Putra Square

![Figure1. Overall view Putra Square, Putrajaya](Source: Tourism Malaysia, Ministry of Tourism)

Public space may be viewed as the city’s skeleton. They are the underlying structure from which neighbourhoods, institutional complexes and business canters depended on (Heckscher and Robinson, 1977).

Based on the literature review, there are several characters that can determine the characteristic of attractive square. In the meanwhile, characters that can be found within Putra Square as an attractive public place are divided to categories as follows:

- Location and the context
- Facilities and amenities
- The character of the space
- Optional activities
- Landscape
- Connection in between people and its surrounding
- Relationship between social and cultural context to public space
- Accessibility
4.1 Location and the context
The contextual environment, the physical surroundings and spatial settings, such as landscape, spatial structure and architecture, also constitute identity of space and community. Memories connected to places arise from the context and its uniqueness.

Putra Square is bounded by Perdana Putra, Masjid Putra, Putra Bridge and the Promenade. Figure 2 show the location of Putra Square and the surrounding context from the plan view. From this we can see Putra Square is designed as a central point to the surrounding building.

From the literature study, (Yusrafarah, 2009) in an open public space people need ‘anchors’”, to which they can attach themselves, either physically or symbolically, by sitting at, learning to, standing by or looking at.

4.2 Facilities and amenities

4.2.1 Parking
Recent studies by Yusrafara(2009) suggest that a more efficient urban form/development may multinucleated urban regions, where many small, dense nodes are linked together by transportation infrastructure. It should be a place to work with easy transportation of vehicular and public transport.

Services and uses related to transportation are featured around Putra Square. Figure 3 shows the parking area in Putra Square. The red hatch area show a parking area in Putra Square.

4.2.2 Benches
Optional activities are activities such as promenading or relaxing on a park bench. It also include social and symbolic activities. Social activities refer to the social life and interaction between people.

4.2.3 Logistics
Logistics amenities in Putra Square show a variety of design, to meet both functional and aesthetical value. Management structure of Putrajaya plays an important role to keep the square working too. Scheduled maintenance from time to time is being done to ensure smooth operation of the park to the public.

4.3 Character of Space
A strong focus of public space such Putra Square is monumental buildings could determine the use of all space surrounding it.
4.3.1 Political View
The figure 5 shows the Putra Square and be able to see Perdana Putra which is the main administrative offices of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister.

4.3.2 Religious View
The figure 6 shows the Putra Square with the Putra mosque with a unique pink dome which is built from rose-tinted granite.

4.4 Optional Activities
There are different types of activities that serve for different purposes. Putra Square has a multi function spaces or activities. For example, there is a place for picnic and relaxing. This place is large and the air is nice. The light is still sufficient so anyone can enjoy their meal here.

The function requirement for public space extend beyond its basic function as a place for transition spaces between Putra Mosque, Perdana Putra and the Promenade but at the same time promote various activities such as gathering, recreational for the users.

Many people come here to exercise. Some people jogging, cycling and some play badminton with their kids, some relaxing and just sit there quietly and see other people enjoying them self.

There are lots of people went there with their family or their boy/girlfriends to enjoy the environment and the nice view.

The permanent use of a square is as public space for all kind of daily life. Temporary activities occur with celebrations, festivals and other public occasions and meetings. Activities that take place in public vary in nature and purpose. There is a distinction between functional and optional activities, which are activities with different purposes. The figure shows the summary of the activities in Putra Square.

4.5 Landscape
Landscape plays an important role as one of the design elements for a square. For water features, square provides water elements in the center of square. Water elements help in generating cold air within the complex.
Fazilah, 2009 in her studies state that, the analysis also revealed that seating places, public clocks, plants and water features are perceived as important interior landscape elements at the public spaces provided while artificial plants and business entities are perceived as less important than other interior landscape elements involved in this study.

4.6 Connection between people and its surrounding
It is normally a junction of transfer points with lots of activities for public as a best sociable place. Square as public space enables people to connect with others, to affiliate in some ways with others especially friend and community.

Connections to street and sidewalks are essential. Spaces in the direct adjacent to sidewalks and with multiple entries and exits are popular because their easy access and the flow people passing by to watch.

Litman (2003) adds that streets form a major part of the public realm where people are given a chance to interact with their community, thus, walk able streets contribute to positive perceptions of community liveability.

4.7 Relationship between social and cultural context to public space
The social and cultural context must not be ignored in the planning and design a public spaces. The understanding and impressions of space differs depending on whether one is visiting, working or living in it.

Urban design combines a concern with the visual form and function of development with its fit in its surroundings and wider context. The concept of the public realm, achieving a sense of place and the public significance of new development, is vital within the urban design perspective. Matters such as community safety, accessibility, sustainability, quality of life and protecting the heritage legacy, are key concerns within the public realm and are significant elements within the urban design agenda.

4.8 Accessibility
By definition, public spaces are “an area or place that is open and accessible to all citizens, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level”. Public spaces are so important in the development of a country, and should be an essential part of a person’s life.

The life and the activities that take place in space determine how space is used and for what purpose, or function, it serves. Main factor that influence the use of public space and the relationship between public and private life, are space form, location, physical and spatial structure and the culture and nature of the community.

5 Conclusion
In conclusion, public space should address people’s need and architects’ role is to understand the role of those places. Most people go to public space for specific reasons; some involve immediate need such as getting a drink, having lunch in sunny area, or to rest (Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007).

A public space consists of different features which include public parks and recreational ground, outdoor public assembly spot, neighbouring spaces between building and urban public access spaces such as cafes, retail bazaars, theme parks, streets and square and plaza.

A space’s function and the activities that take place within it depend on its form. The facilities are parking space, beautiful view, adequate seating, and landscape area. For example in Putra Square, even though the square is no need by many users, the square is has a good characteristics, design elements to serve its function which will make it a successful square.

Based on findings, characteristic attractive public space that found in Putra Square:
i) Location and the context and Facilities and amenities such as the character of the space.
ii) Design element such as landscape, connection in between people and its surrounding, relationship
between social and cultural context to public space, and accessibility

References:


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