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From Ex-landfill to Public Park: Impact on local community's quality of life and living environment

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Abstract

Regarded as a new development urban planning approach in developing countries, brownfield regeneration, particularly the redevelopment of ex-landfills as public parks in Malaysia, leads to the question of this research: could such development benefit the local communities' quality of life and living environment? We selected as study respondents 163 heads of household within a one-kilometer radius of two pilot ex-landfills as public park areas, namely, Worldwide Landfill Park and Kuantan Passive Park. Results show significant differences in respondents' perception, which indicates the positive impact of such redevelopment.

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Keywords: Brownfield regeneration; ex-landfill to a public park; local community's quality of life; living environment

1. Introduction

Customary brownfield regeneration has been implemented in developed countries. However, the increase in

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urban population and scarcity of urban space has increased the importance of implementing brownfield regeneration in the urban planning of developing countries. Malaysia is no exception; it is an emerging country and a member of Group 1 developing countries in Southeast Asia with an urbanization rate exceeding 70% (Liu 2013) and the urban population exceeding 60%. Thus, the need to provide adequate urban space for future development has resulted in the inclusion of brownfield regeneration in the country's National Urban Policy. Through the NUP9 Action Plan, the National Urban Policy specifically instructs urban administrators to plan and prepare programs for brownfield regeneration. In this study, special focus is given to Category B brownfield, which refers to ex-landfills and their redevelopment as public parks. The increasing number of ex-landfills near urban areas, especially urban settlement, and inadequate urban green provision based on planning standards of two acres per 1,000 urban population are explicit justifications for the proposal to redevelop ex-landfills as public parks (National Landscape Department 2010; Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia 2012). Until 2014, only two pilot projects of such redevelopment have been implemented in Malaysia, namely, Worldwide Landfill Park and Kuantan Passive Park. This transformation necessitates impact studies. Therefore, this study is conducted with two research objectives, namely, (i) to identify the communities' perception of their quality of life and (ii) to determine the communities' perception of their living environment due to the impact of living next to public parks transformed from ex-landfill sites.

2. Literature review

The concept of sustainable brownfield regeneration is defined as “the management, rehabilitation, and return to beneficial use of brownfields in such a manner to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations in environmentally sensitive, economically viable, and socially and institutionally robust acceptable ways within the particular regional context” (RESCUE 2005). Brownfield regeneration has been implemented in the physical planning of developed countries, such as the United States, Japan, and European countries. Given that no consensus on the definition of brownfield has been reached (Armin & Hoda 2013), the location of brownfield sites, either in the city center or within the vicinity of the urban area, plays a significant role in determining the importance of brownfield regeneration in physical planning (Doerle 2012).

In the Malaysian context, brownfield is defined as an area that has been developed but abandoned or neglected, an area with a development structure that is already obsolete, or a development area that is not entirely completed and abandoned (Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia 2012). Brownfield could refer to a contaminated area, covering abandoned buildings or buildings that are already completed but not sold in the period of more than 10 years either on government or private land. To facilitate physical planning in Malaysia, the brownfield is divided into six categories based on the types of areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Brownfield categories in Malaysia

Category of brownfield	Types of areas
A	Former mines/quarries
B	Ex-landfill areas full of solid waste/no longer in use permanently
C	Factory/business/housing/institution/areas that have been abandoned for more than 10 years
D	Incomplete and abandoned development projects in the period of development of more than 10 years
E	Buildings/rows of completed blocks but abandoned for more than 10 years
F	Former depot/public transportation stations, infrastructural facilities, and utilities

The expansion of urban areas due to the effect of fast-paced urbanization and urban sprawl in Malaysia has led to Category B brownfield, which refers to area previously located outside the urban vicinity and have become part of the urban built environment. Comparative analyses in 2004 (Ministry of Housing and Local Government 2004) and

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