



Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

An Interpretation of Park Users in Kuching and Calgary

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An Interpretation of Park Users in Kuching and Calgary

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DECLARATION

I, Alexander Curnow of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, hereby declare that the work entitled “An Interpretation of Park Users in Kuching and Calgary” is my original work. I have not replicated any other student work or from any other source, expect where due references or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has another person written any part for me. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

In urban sociology, there is little mention of park users compared to city people and street users, indicating a knowledge gap in the public sphere. Who the park users are demands closer study on how people identify along both objectively and subjectively with the space. To investigate this identity, park user experiences and expressed park use were sought out by Questionnaire in 50 parks in Calgary, Canada, and Kuching, Malaysia respectively. Responses were analysed in two stages: first, the results were organized as interpretative observations; and second, these interpretations were refined using descriptive statistics. Results from 232 respondents show that park use is most often expressed in positive terms, taken personally, and involves lower-intensity activity. Also, park users prefer to drive to the park over other means, and their park visit is either the primary goal or else part of a string of non-park activities. More importantly, results indicate that group composition is a focal point in defining park users and their experiences and expression of the park. In addition, it appears that park users bring a ‘mindset’ into the space, and this frame of mind shapes how their visit will turn out. Accessibility to the park is of high importance to park users, followed by physical content and form, isolated park user behaviour, and particularities of individual interpretations of the park space. In other words, park users can be better served by seeking out how they identify with the space, whom they are with, and how they interact with others.

Keywords: Urban space, recreational space, sociology, parks, park users

Interpretasi Pengguna Taman di Kuching dan Calgary

ABSTRAK

Dalam konteks sosiologi bandar, penyelidikan berkenaan pengguna taman adalah terhad jika dibandingkan dengan penyelidikan lain seperti penyelidikan berkenaan penduduk bandar dan pengguna jalan. Ini membuka ruang untuk penyelidikan yang lebih terperinci tentang pengguna taman, terutama dalam konteks hubungkait antara identiti pengguna taman dengan peranan reruang dari sudut objektif dan subjektif. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji identiti pengguna taman, dari perspektif pengalaman pengguna tersebut serta cara-cara penggunaan taman dengan menfokuskan kepada 50 taman-taman di Calgary, Canada, dan 50 taman-taman di Kuching, Malaysia. Data yang dikumpul telah dianalisa melalui dua peringkat: dianalisa dan disusun berdasarkan pemerhatian; dan kemudiannya diinterpretasi secara deskriptif. Dapatan kajian yang diperolehi daripada 232 responden, mendapati bahawa penggunaan taman sering dilihat secara positif; digunakan untuk tujuan peribadi; dan melibatkan aktiviti riadah. Pengguna taman juga didapati lebih suka memandu ke taman berbanding cara lain. Kajian juga mendapati bahawa tujuan ke taman juga adalah sebagai rentetan aktiviti lain yang tidak melibatkan penggunaan taman secara aktif. Kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa komposisi kumpulan adalah satu aspek utama dalam memahami siapakah pengguna taman di samping mempengaruhi pengalaman dan perasaan pengguna taman. Pengguna taman juga didapati mempunyai agenda tersendiri berkenaan keberadaan mereka di taman-taman dan ini mempengaruhi cara-cara mereka menggunakan taman-taman tersebut. Secara keseluruhannya, akses ke taman adalah paling penting, diikuti oleh keadaan fizikal dan susun atur taman, sifat pengguna taman dan perspektif pengguna berkenaan reruang taman. Oleh itu, kepuasan pengguna-pengguna taman meningkat seandainya para pengguna ini lebih difahami, yakni dari

konteks identiti pengguna taman, hubungkait identiti dengan reruang taman, komposisi pengguna dan bagaimana mereka berinteraksi.

Kata kunci: *Ruang bandar, kawasan rekreasi, sosiologi, taman, pengguna taman*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

Park users have been counted, measured, and calculated, but *who* they are remains to be seen clearly. Like anyone else, park users are city-people going to the park, yet their specific characteristics are unknown. There appears to be little in the way of descriptive interpretation of whom the park user might be, precisely, so we are left with generalisations from other fields of study and a patchwork of ideas constructed from other people in other spaces.

For instance, the most helpful research and writing related to this topic included *The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells, 1996), *PLACE* (Cresswell, 2004), *Experiencing Cities* (Hutter, 2012), *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1992), *Concrete Reveries* (Kingwell, 2008), *Public and Private Spaces in the City* (Madanipour, 2003), *The Conscience of the Eye* (Sennett, 1990), *Convivial Urban Spaces* (Shaftoe, 2008) and Whyte's *Rediscovering the Center* (1988) and *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (2001) respectively.

While very helpful, park user knowledge is too narrow in other ways too, as recent readings suggest, such as *Qualitative Interviews on the Formation and Maintenance of Social Networks as Foundation for Quantitative Survey Instruments* (Ohnmacht, 2015), *Park design and user behaviour patterns* (Mahadin, 2016), and *Inequities in Young People's Access to Urban Parks* (Rigolon, 2015). As is discussed in Chapter 2, over-specialisation in method results in a niche of structural functionalist-like, quantitative, behavioural observations, and while very informative in their own right, these precise and exclusive observations come across as monopolising the sociological perspective.

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate who the park users are, how they exist sociologically, what a park is from the users' perspective, how park design and provision might better suit park users, and what characteristics can be approximated regarding park users in the selected case study areas. This informs what assumptions the municipality, as the 'provider' and 'manager' of open space in these cities, may make about the people using public spaces using structured qualitative methods. Thus, in this paper, park user description is enriched by the subjective perspective over voicing purely objective data.

In this research, two cities in two different countries were chosen: Kuching, in Sarawak, Malaysia, and Calgary, in Alberta, Canada. In these cities, there is an opportunity to examine and describe park users to enrich description in a way that emphasises local community over generic international form. For instance, Calgary and Kuching are sometimes referred to as 'secondary' international cities in the face of well-studied metropolitan hubs such as London, Singapore, Vancouver, Hong Kong, and New York¹. New York especially takes precedence, where among countless works Jane Jacobs' wrote *Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1992), and research today continues there full steam (for example, see Mahadin (2016)). Park user understanding has been largely confined to these metropolitan hubs, so a look at smaller cities is warranted.

In this research, the descriptive analysis of the park user is interpreted through questionnaire and observation, supported by descriptive statistics, and communicated by a narrative report writing style that may run counter to the typical discourse. In addition, park users are characterized by a socio-spatial framework that attempts to decode what they are doing and experiencing in the park from their own perspectives.

¹ Secondary cities are defined as important regional urban centres which also usually support capital cities logistically and administratively. For the source and full definition see Roberts & Hohmann (2014).

To improve the readability of this thesis, Figure 1.1 illustrates the major flow of the document and how various sources inform it. On the diagram, the smaller text (such as ‘2.2’ or ‘Park visitors’) indicates what feeds each box as is argued in the thesis or interpreted in the study.

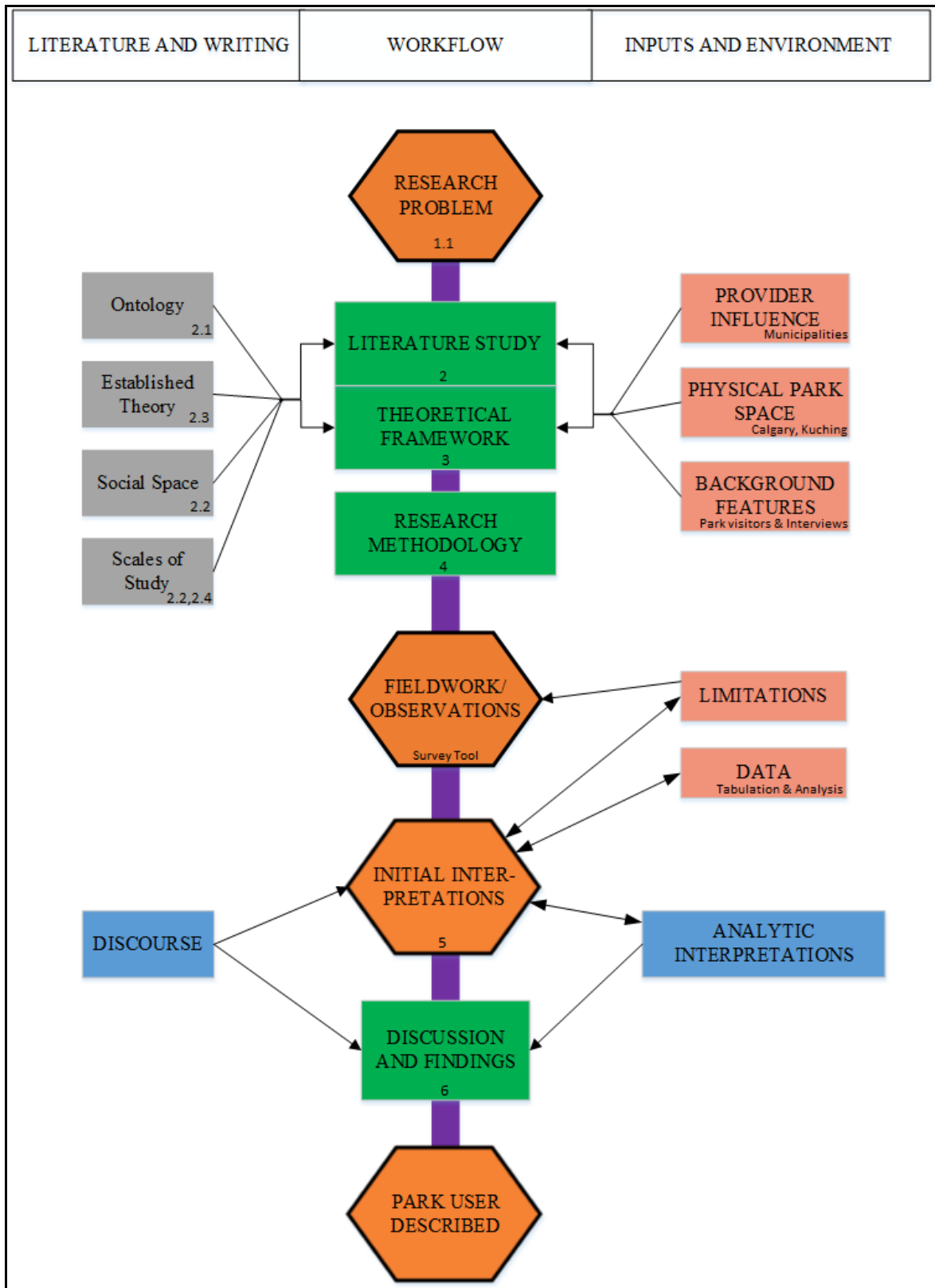


Figure 1.1: Document Flowchart

Source: Author

1.2 Research Assumptions

Here, the Assumptions clarify positionality and help to frame the Research Problem into the structured Research Questions.

1.2.1 Park users

As the first assumption, the ‘park user’ exists practically a priori according to his or her purposeful presence in the park. This assumption is evident when looking at a formal planning document such as the Calgary Open Space Plan (2002) and embodied in any useful park feature (such as a bench or path).

When park and user are separated, ‘user’ here refers to city people going to the park to enjoy the use of the space, while ‘park’ refers to urban public green and recreational open spaces provided by the governing city body for the enjoyment of its citizens.

To communicate park users from their perspective, users are defined not only by their presence in the park, but also sociologically by how they relate to people and experiences in this social space.

In addition, it is important to note that because people change over time and space all answers are tentative and time-sensitive. Hence, for achieving better city planning, park users or people need to be understood or at least framed with more descriptively than by their mere presence in the park. In other words, the assumption here is that park users should be examined according to how they associate in the park social space, and for that a clear ontological standpoint is required.

1.2.2 Ontology

It is also assumed that, fundamentally, people are conscious and material being. This assumption makes us an ‘effective duality’ of matter and mind, contextualized by our experiences and expressions. From a sociological perspective continuing a collection of associated ideas from Kant (2013), Hegel (1977), and then more recently Castells (1996), Madanipour (2003), Kingwell (2008), among others (see Section 2.1, Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 for the full discussion), experiences are received through the structured (i.e. transcendental) input of human senses and kept by the memory, in mind; conversely, expressions are materially-contextualized outputs of the seemingly-lonely conscious mind. The interaction of these two minds or mind-aspects is what we self-identify by.

To clarify, park user identity and how users identify is the most relevant source of information about the park social space. In other words, understanding how people identify or associate with their park is crucial to understanding how a park is both considered and used.

1.2.3 City management

Greater efficiency is needed to manage cities. This assumption is indicated in formalised city planning documents such as the Calgary Municipal Development Plan (2013) or the Landscape Master Plan for Kuching South (Majlis Bandaraya Kuching, 2002), among others (see Section 2.4). Also, it is reasonable to assume that as urban populations increase, become denser, and are forced to employ greater efficiency in spatial management, so too a generalized park user identity changes or ‘updates’.

Whether driven by academic or municipal interests, updated park user understanding is best achieved at the source and informs park concept, design, and provision.

1.2.4 Results

Interpretative description is considered here as the most suitable way to communicate results. Hence, parks are framed as socio-spatial extensions of the collective park user milieu rather than as sites for behavioural interaction. Interpreting this milieu is constructed with minimal normative prescriptions of the park user, and interpretations convey the assumption that minimal frames offer more relevant understanding of the subject at hand while remaining truer to their responses.

Furthermore, socio-spatial interpretations expressed here as descriptions uphold minimized researcher framing and synthesizing. Description is emphasized over explanation to avoid channeling normative perspectives of ‘social forces’ (e.g. ‘socio-economic’ forces, as pointed out by Latour (2005)) wherever possible. Then, to support description, simple descriptive statistics are used to help inform whether such interpretations are stronger, weaker, or unsupportable.

Despite the academic popularity of expansive quantitative methods, results here are not deduced and quantitatively examined beyond frequency analysis and cross-tabulation analysis in order to keep with the qualitative quality of questionnaire responses. In common research perspectives where deduction is the logical realm of deeper statistical analysis, responses are atomised in an attempt to deconstruct and analyse the building-blocks of knowledge. Yet this logos runs counter to subjective, inductive analysis, and takes results further away from the knowledge sought here.

1.2.5 Writing style

The style of writing here is different from many research papers found in during the literature study. This style is not accidental. Using the standard objective discourse suits the typical

objective research perspective, and therefore unsuitable. Support for this is discussed in more detail in the Literature Chapter in Section 2.5 as a way to try to work with Latour's (2005) assertions that rigidity in academic writing styles and norms become the primary source of the knowledge, subverting data.

Hence, the writing style involves sometimes using the personal pronoun 'I' and a takes a semi-formal tone rather than formal passive or objective voices. The attempt here is not to be merely conversational. Rather, this slight shift away from the objective, all-knowing and disembodied research 'voice' represents an attempt to communicate actual qualitative ideas through stronger, direct, and more honest wording in text. In other words, stronger and weaker interpretations are represented clearly as they are, either strong or weak, and not obscured by technical language and processes that speak to a narrower audience.

Similarly, communication of the respondent voice is not unitary and sterile either. Even though respondents are the essential data source, they are not the only people involved in research. Hence, it follows that the reader should be reminded in the writing, more often, that research is produced by its human researcher. To achieve this, attention is drawn to the researcher where appropriate to indicate the middle-person between source and output.

Using this style is not to take attention away from the park user unit of analysis whatsoever. Instead, regularly admitting the interpretative mechanism, me and where I might have left my mark, offers a fairer representation of who park users are or might be.

In addition, this paper takes on a philosophical tone, especially in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This is a personal style choice, as results of any research should provide some explicit reflection on the operational, ideological philosophies in our daily lives. Personal or academic philosophies hidden in apparently-sterile and objective voice that stick only to the clear facts merely bury assumptions deeper.

1.2.6 Unit of analysis

The last assumption is that individual park users should be the unit of analysis. Here, park users are individuals using the park for recreational purposes and are in the park at that time.

This communicates the notion that people can be categorized as global, individual, and social. This idea seems to be taken for granted in social studies and general sociology textbooks that have gone beyond Functionalism and Conflict Perspective (for example, see Chapter 1 in Glasberg & Neubeck (2005)); also, this idea is more specifically evident in Madanipour's writing on public-private spaces (see Madanipour (2003), and Section 2.2 here). In other words, in comparing park users of Calgary and Kuching, park visitors would share social traits that are either universally-similar, sometimes (spatially or temporally) similar, or are restricted to particular groups, pairs or individuals.

For instance, similarities among park users may indicate how parks may influence the development of certain characteristics, thereby contributing to greater understanding of the social space. Therefore, park user interpretation is enriched by comparing these two distant city-places.

1.3 Research Questions

The formalized Research Questions frame the forthcoming research. The approach begins with Calgary and Kuching treated as distinct, separate cases before these places are contrasted side-by-side.

1. What is a park user?²

Is there, identifiable and describable, a ‘park user’ group?³

2. How does a park user exist?

If (1) shows park users exist, How do ‘park users’ through their expressed activities surrounding park use relate or associate as a ‘group’, and within the individual city context more generally?⁴

3. How does a park exist?

Again, if (1) shows park users exist, How do they relate, interact, identify or associate with the physical ‘park’ vis-à-vis the interpreted space, other park users, and the city in general?

Additionally, Can an experience (and, therefore, manageable space) be inferred of the physical park?⁵

4. How are parks expressed and experienced?

If (1)-(3) are answerable, still considering the cities as separate cases, How are parks expressed and experienced by park users?⁶

² Park refers to public urban open space, green or recreational, provided and managed by the city municipality; User refers to a person that is going to the park to use it in some public, recreational manner.

³ To clarify: Identifiable: Justified by self-identity or associations of the park user with the park space. Significant: Significance is derived here qualitatively, examining park user responses, with a minimum number of park users to ascertain repeating group-like traits. Group: People sharing particular, identified traits related to park use.

⁴ Exist: referring to existence of the group; this is rather than reflective of the mere habit of a city citizen going to the park in numbers. City: As defined by the municipality or group of municipalities, and legitimized by respondents.

⁵ Inferred: Given the assumption that park users, as a group, can be managed by municipal actions regarding user wants/ habits of park use. Physical park: Since a ‘conscious park’ cannot be ‘managed’, but the physical experienced park may be, the physical-spatial offerings *perhaps* encourage a favourable conscious experience and expressive outlet.

⁶ For experience and expression see Glossary. Besides that, separated city analysis helps improve the possibility of a ‘controlled study’ through a side-by-side contrast or comparison. The essence of this ‘control’ is not meant to control user responses, but an attempt to identify shared and/or different city-people traits at a more universal or global scale.

5. What characteristics of park users and park use are shared or distinct between the two selected cities?

If (4) is fully answerable for the discrete cities, and in order to identify either common or differing sociological traits through contrast, What are the shared or differential characteristics that can be claimed between Kuching and Calgary park users?⁷

1.4 Scope and Objectives

This study only focuses on the park users in Kuching, Sarawak (Malaysia) and Calgary, Alberta (Canada) at parks under municipal management. For this, a selection of 50 parks per city, 100 in total are studied. A minimum of 100 questionnaire samples are taken per city (102 in Kuching and 131 in Calgary; details in Section 4.3).

In this context, the units of analysis are individuals using the park for recreational purposes and are in the park at that time, with the responses of park users examined more than the people themselves. Also, the research targets and makes comment only on park users, park use, park spaces, and sociologically-related factors directly connected with this such as municipal management, space design, presence of other people, and the spatial contents and milieu.

Within that scope, the Research Questions are put into the form of the following five major Objectives:

1. To identify ‘park users’ in Calgary and Kuching generally, and then particularly according to place, to answer, ‘What is the Park User?’.

⁷ Contrast: highlighting differences between the cities allows me to identify comparable similarities of park users. Sociological traits/ characteristics: Evidence taken from park users should indicate, with careful analysis and description, the manifestations of the park users’ ‘produced’ social space.

2. To examine, interpret and describe ‘park users’ through characterization of an expressive and experiential identity to answer, ‘How the User Exists’.

3. To describe the ‘park space’ by the insights of the park user, supported by descriptive statistics and researcher observations to answer, ‘What the Park Space Is’.

4. To interpret the experiences and expressions of park users in social context. Also: to interpret how a user-centric park understanding fits into the municipal and space design contexts.

5. To compare park users of Kuching and Calgary to make plausible interpretative claims about users universally, individually, or otherwise.

1.5 Significance of Study

The significance of this research, beyond traditional for-knowledge sake, comes from highlighting the park user. Insufficient research has been done on this topic, and readings indicate that the park user can be approximated at best from the urban and sociology scholars included in the Literature Review.

Understanding of whom the park user may be, and how they give meaning to parks, is intrinsic to anyone concerned with going to or working with parks, and city-people. By understanding how parks are expressed and experienced, better administrative decisions can be made when building recreational spaces for citizens. Calgary and Kuching presumably invest a great deal of resources and effort into making their cities as livable as possible, and so (potential) significance can be drawn through efforts to continually improve public open spaces there. By understanding more intimately who the park user is we better understand what the park, and the city, really represents.

In effect, as with any expressed social space, we all have a little park user in us. Park users as people and citizens of a place represent a compromise between time and space, between a collective type of person and individual. So, who are we? A potentially-significant answer comes out of this question, as a single pixel in the greater picture.

1.5.1 Municipality

The park user is represented in the efforts of the municipality, and this is crucial to the significance of this paper. It is argued throughout this work that park users, taken as a group with particular characteristics, should be represented in this capacity by city departments serving them. These departments should act as if park users express themselves as they like or will, and that their responses are ipso facto significant in the form of their activities, experiences, and identity.

As the primary builder of public space, the municipality above all must adapt the means to continually understand its park users. As noted by Latour (2005:241), to the detriment of this understanding, the overgeneralizing trends of ‘modern thought’ have been worked too well into atomistic sociology and structural administration (or ‘machinery’). In the park user context, arguably, this would lead to social spaces of blank generic form evident in the abandonment of parks and like spaces (see for instance Cresswell (2004:43-44), and Section 2.3). To broaden understanding at the provider level, the idea that people are conscious-material individuals in various social groups can be mobilised in local, unique and diverse forms.

The forthcoming description of park users herein, hopefully, offers something more representative of the park user for general and municipal uses. More specific (and defensible) significance, for municipal uses, comes from allowing the unit of analysis to self-identify

when seeking to serve a greater number of park users. To avoid normative characterization, investigation is done by asking people about their park visit and waiting for an answer. With these answers in hand, descriptive statistics help communicate findings while results center on this qualitative core, and this is how a city department may represent individuals better.

1.5.2 Park designers

Park users are also represented in urban space design. Whether independent of the municipality or in-house, designers are a crucial facilitator of physical park outcomes, and therefore significance of the study should be shared here too.

As designer decisions clearly determine the outcome of park spaces, it stands to reason that spatial outcomes will either be structurally effective, efficient, and socially successful or ineffective, wasteful, and socially dead. The way to understand park success often comes through the behavioural perspective among other materialist-based theories (see Section 2.3 and Chapter 3). Behaviour is typically measured in numbers of park visits, where park users congregate, and sometimes interview questions augments enumeration (as in the High Line research (Mahadin, 2016)). This then translates into how physical form is designed.

However, behaviourism asserts the ontological position that people are material-monist units of analysis situated firmly in the physical realm. While true as a niche perspective, behaviourism misses the opportunity to establish an understanding of park users from their own perspectives. As argued in the Literature Chapter, people are both material and conscious beings. The significance for designers here comes in asking park users to report on their park experience at face-value, and not only take data as the sole outcome of sociological deductions.

Designing parks through the understanding of subjective data is not done to replace the invaluable knowledge of deduced quantitative social sciences, but to inform and enrich design beyond an otherwise rigid fetishizing of numerical data.

1.6 Chapter Summary

The question ‘who is the park user?’ is best answered with an interpretative description of the park user. For this, characteristics are derived from respondents’ experiences and activities in the park in the form of minimally-framed observations and analysis, and this is pursued in light of sparse and weak park user description from the descriptive qualitative perspective.

Going forward, the unit of analysis and scope are examined in detail in the Literature Chapter in the first three Sections. This informs the Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology chapters respectively.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying and then describing the park user is the explicit goal of the Literature Review Chapter. The literature, targeted to reach a coherent description, must follow from a rigorous, dual subjective-objective understanding on the park user.

The park user is approximated more than explicitly defined by the research and texts found on the subject. It appears that many analyses on park users treat these people strictly as characterless generic city-folk visiting parks. For example, take two relatively-recent urban park theses, one by Leflore on pocket parks (Leflore, 2012) and one by von Kursell on urban park replanning (von Kursell, 1997). In these papers, the opportunity to either propose or capture a park user description was entirely missed in the literature studies⁸ throughout.

Then, in instances such as Siu's detailed doctoral thesis on everyday open space in Hong Kong (Siu, 2001), all the material of a park user description was prepared and within grasp, and the user-oriented approach is advocated, but in the end the park user is given no explicit space for actual existence or descriptive character. This is most apparent in Siu's chapters 8 and 9, where the analysis and conclusion ultimately speak to a top-down approach despite the presence of the park user subject at the fore of the work.

In effect, the park user who has only been described quantitatively, or qualitatively through a strictly statistical deductive lens, has hardly had its qualities described at all. Objective discourse alone offers an overly narrow picture of the unit of analysis.

⁸ While the explicit goal of either work adheres to the planner's perspective, presumably understanding the target users would enrich the ability to provide for them.

To facilitate an alternative perspective, it is essential to take nothing for granted. Rather than revisit exhaustive open and public space planning or over-broad sociological perspectives, literature here is chosen with the primordially and primacy of the park user in mind. For this, the Literature Review looks at what or who the park user is, ontologically, and how these people express their social space. Following that, theories and perspectives on the park user subject are discussed so to lead onto the Research Methodology.

To achieve cohesion and comprehensibility, the structure of this chapter follows five lines of inquiry slightly modified from the Research Questions (Section 1.3).

First, and related to the first two Research Questions: who is the park user? Second, relating to the third Question: what is the park space? Third, on the fourth Question: looking at selected leading theories and perspectives, how are parks be expressed and experienced? Fourth, on the fifth Research Question: how do the case study areas, i.e. Calgary and Kuching, compare in place-related writings? Altogether, the Literature Review establishes the context for the Theoretical Framework as the guiding structure for the Research Methodology and Analysis chapters.

2.1 The Park User

The park user is a social individual in a particular space and time, someone experiencing the physical aspects of the park, and expressing conscious identity. This discussion starts with ontology of being before exploring how we identify with the park through our experiences and expression.

2.1.1 Ontology of Being

As with any study of the conscious, experiencing person, the park user should be understood from an existential viewpoint at the outset.

The first point of contact for a conscious being involves the inputs and outputs of daily life: experiences and expression. These paradigms, detected by Kant (2013), Descartes (2003), and Hegel (Miller, 1977) among others, in different ways offer the bases for being as we live it. The corresponding discourses from these philosophers can be described separately as materialism and solipsism. Park users are more than these monisms, however, because on one hand materialists inadvertently redact the fundamental expressed component in the solipsist standpoint. One example is Dennett (1996), among others, who suggests throughout his writing that cogito, or cogitated mind, is merely illusory, producing purely in the mind of the thinker. However, a discussion about real park user experiences cannot subordinate the cogito. On the other hand, solipsists would downplay fundamental material experiences by suggesting the physical park was not really there.

Paradigmatic dually-experienced and expressed being is effectively consciousness contextualized over space and time. The support for this is very present in the immediacy of life itself. The contention is that both material and cogito paradigms separate self-conscious cogito from the ‘material brain’ in efforts that either ignore the material-cogito connectivity or overinflate duality.

To achieve socio-spatial understanding of the conscious park user, characterizing absolutely requires the both aspects of users’ experiential and expressed being, with neither aspect non-subordinated. What has been especially missed by either materialism or solipsism is fundamental social context. The ‘social’ (of say social space) comes right out of the material-cogito inter-change. This constant Hegelian-like motion of association between object and re-recognized certainty is essentially an anthropocentrically unending cogitation

from which the notion of Self emerges⁹; unlike Hegel, however, I am suggesting that the cogito is real in its own right¹⁰, and that the inter-change between material and cogito represents ‘proto-social’ action. Therefore, in a discourse that considers both paradigms, the material and cogito, the message is: ‘we see duality, and therefore it is’¹¹.

In more grounded terms, experienced and expressed being of the park users involve user presence in the park space and time. In this manner, the park user both visits a physical park space as well as ‘projects’ one in his or her mind. For instance, Mark Kingwell (2008:225-230) asserts that the city character includes something more than mere physical goings-on, arguing that the ‘Imaginary City’ is expressed with much more rigour than the actual barebones city. All the fictions, the desires and conscious goings-on create a notion of the city that is quite different than our superficial assumptions or our presumptuous attempts to frame or manage space.

To express this ontology with the help of illustration, consider the three coloured regions in Figure 2.1 as milieus of interaction that involve both expressed and experienced space. These cogitated, conceived, and experienced ‘realms’ imply a kind of distance between the cogito Self and the other. To note, this cogito aspect does not seek to explain the material-brain processes, the latter which take place simultaneously by way of their own substance and are not diminished. Conscious physical beings require both cogito and material aspects of being for fundamental understanding of what constitutes ‘us’. From this,

⁹ See *Phenomenology of Spirit* by Hegel (Miller, 1997).

¹⁰ ‘Real’ here would traditionally demand a ‘substance’. Lacking a pertinent non-material term, what is meant here, more precisely, is that while materiality necessitates its own (material) substance, cogito emerges from nothing except for expressed Self triangulated by experiential context. This is further evident in the respective types of inquiry, namely the deductive and the inductive.

¹¹ I am not afforded the length here to argue dual paradigms of fundamentality, or to lay it out properly to support this ontological stand. The argument is left partial as a given.

social space is both an expressed conscious and experienced space; it is devoid neither of one nor the other. Alternatively, research misses the heart of their unit of analysis when social space is described of solely as either a collection of objects, with or without pseudo-qualitative commentary, as in behavioural perspectives that reduce the conscious agency of the unit to micro-material reactions of the physical body structures and the physical world.

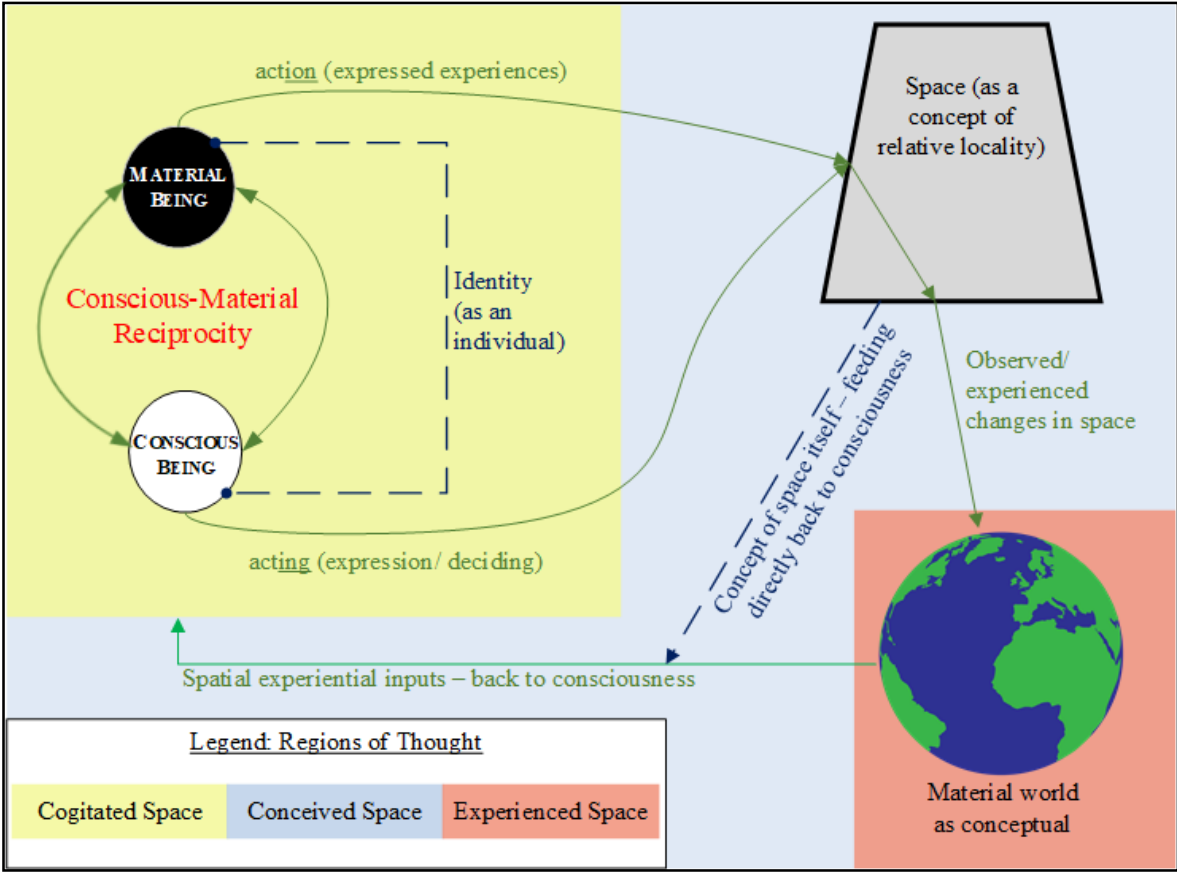


Figure 2.1: Duality in Individual Space Conception

Source: Author

Instead, social space is a concept of relative locality formed by both experiences and active deciding. As shown by Figure 2.1, while the conceiving sometimes feeds the concept of space directly back unto itself, the concept of space is usually coordinated with material

world experiences. Space does not become ‘real’ in the mind, here, through merely physical processes, but has been expressed relative to the consciousness.

In short, social space is relative to the individual when approached from the subjective, user-centric perspective. Social space is socially expressed and experienced in *and as* space.

2.1.2 Expression

Expression for park users refers to their activities done as well as the formation of an opinion or interpretation of the physical park scape. This is sometimes conceived as symbolic interactions. As Ali Madanipour (2003:123) points out, symbols are an integral part of social life, as part of the performance we all undertake each day, and this is a performance.

Performance offers a strong example of experiential-expressive interactivity. Symbolic interactions have been described as ‘Real Virtuality’¹², whereby constructed meaning results in social space produced of our individual interpretations. Through this interpretation the park is not merely a site of contents, of say hills and grass, but also the park users’ active projection of everything in and of space. Since social space is also physically-realized in some way, projections are also performed connections of the material-cogito divide¹³.

Describing these connections may be complex, since in social space connections are endless as each space and every park is a performed social world. This performance, each social space, is momentary. For example, if a park user sits on a park bench and peers over to another park across the road, then it is misleading to suggest (strictly) that another social

¹² Real Virtuality as in a virtual yet real world constitutive of a field of symbolic interactions. See *The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells, 1996).

¹³ ‘Divide’ here is meant to describe a *practised* dual-perspective rather than dualism.

world or the same one goes on in that yonder place. For the individual questioned, the space is only *here*. Then, regarding time, the cogito expression of the space may be ‘reminded’ in mental memory or inscribed into the physical space, but the expression is certainly *now*. Social space is here and now.

That said, park user expression must be detectable for practical research purposes. Besides directly asking what the park user is doing, the next simplest summation of this park expression comes in the form of identifying the paths, spaces, and boundaries taken during the visit.

For paths, Hillier (2008:32-33) says that in navigating space we are architecturally-minded, which comprises the ‘least angle’ (in going from one place to another), ‘fewest turns’, and metric ‘shortest path’. This can be seen by looking at a network grid (roads, in this example) and seeing what routes people take. Therefore, asking a park user about their path (going-to, going-between, within, etc.) serves as an effective inquiry into an expression-type that can compare to experience.

Beyond linear movement along paths are two and three-dimensional spaces. Here the human body becomes much more important. Related to the dual-perspective of being, Madanipour (2008:119) argues that the body is a boundary or ‘divider’ between inside and outside. While this ‘divider’ is much more democratic than many normative attempts to explain social interactions, the inside-outside division may only trace back to its source: the meaty body in the solid world. However, arguably, the spatial boundary emerges from the mind/brain convergence, as in the consciousness and its construct, instead. Rather than leaving the cogito out of expression, claiming the physical body as the divider, the division is perceived in the reciprocating material-cogito interaction (as in Figure 2.1). In other words,

the physical-performative body moves through social space¹⁴ with ceaseless impermanence, rather than merely carves its way into the physical realm.

In multi-dimensional social space, an expressed boundary and the contents relative to it can be seen by perceived or practiced spatial purpose. Physical behaviour and experiential practice are clear measures of this for deductive outcomes, but subjective space needs to be measured in a different way. For instance, the expressed spatial boundary is performed in thought (personal space, personal limits), and it is experienced (walls, etc.). In practice, such boundaries in parks involve fences and signboards, plus the endlessly expressed interpretations that qualitatively define those parks as well. There is no restriction as to whether what aspect should be considered.

Not everyone agrees with interpreting space, though. Interpreting space inadvertently becomes ideological. For example, Andersson (2012:160) argues that the tradition of urbanist planning ideology of patterning or zoning ignores all the rich and various spatial in-betweens because according to such ideology a park user would be ‘in’ the park while everything else is ‘out’. Yet arguably, these in/ out boundaries were never merely black and white anyway. They were always the outcome of incessant material-cogito reciprocation, always a product of our innate habit to consider that separateness. Just saying *we are not dual-beings* does not shut down dualism, even if duality is a non-fundamental perspective; in research we meet people where they are: vaguely between reality and ideation.

It follows, then, that in addition to defining physical spatial limits, and considering socio-spatial impermanence, park boundary and contents are a projected milieu of the user as well. So, to work against the alienating or normative urbanist tradition identified by

¹⁴ Or, conversely, space moves around the ‘relative’ subject.

Andersson in a way that admits ideological-like ideation rather than secludes it, and to better understand what park users are doing, we must ask them what the park is to them.

2.1.3 Experience

Experiences are fundamentally physical. This ‘transcendental’ processing of phenomena through the senses provides us with tangible things to measure¹⁵. Without any physical ‘landmarks’ existence would be pure solipsism without reference, and the park user would be lost to say the least. Providing context for conscious expression, experiences report to the brain through the senses; this ‘sense certainty’ (Hegel (in Miller, 1977)) concerns a conscious connection with material representations in mind.

This material perspective intimately involves the collective self and other¹⁶. This self, or ‘me’ aspect, emerges from sense certainty and from a movement; this movement is an association by the continuous exclusion of the physical ‘not-me’ outside. In other words, grounded park user experiences involve simply what we see, how we associate with experiences, and the park user preferences emerging from this.

To clarify, that is not a social theory but observably just what happens. Bruno Latour (2005:99) strongly asserts that, “No experience was more striking than what I saw with my own eyes: the social explanation had vanished into thin air”. Experiences are not social forces or of social forces and not something emerging out of theory itself; this means that the evidence is certainly real, in time, and in space.

Regarding tangible experiences, as Henry Shaftoe (2008:59-62) shows, such movement means that our senses are engaged, and therefore movement connects to worth in

¹⁵ On transcendentalism see for example *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant, 2013).

¹⁶ Signified by lowercase, versus the conscious Self in uppercase.

time spent in a space. Spatial movements involve risk-versus-reward calculations, adaptation, seeking of comfort, adventure and discovery. Incidentally, static, sterile space is nothing. If lacking movement or association therefore, a space of pure experience or expression is dead.

Association and movement are not mere theories but a real park experience. As an example through narrative prose: *Park users are in the park, touching the handrails, sitting on the bench, splashed by the fountain, absorbed in the aroma of fragrant flowering plants, taken aback by the apparently-drunk guy on the grass, alerted to the sounds of birds and of kids, warmed by the sun or frozen by the cold winter air, made cautious by the slippery too-smooth tiling, irritated by car horns nearby, made curious by the chatter between two young mothers, and in love with the book brought to read there*¹⁷.

Every spatial movement and experience read uniquely for each park user, and never the same way in different spaces whether say on the train, in the café, or even in a different park. Park users just happen to have commonalities in preferred experiences, and this is indicated strongly by their expressed presence in similar spaces. In sharing space, park users to some degree can be ‘typed’ and described as such.

Park user preferences are the first opportunity for the municipal park builder or designer to act. Presuming that park users or city people are a primary concern for park building, the park experience should be well-felt. For example, for ‘healthy and convivial character’, Shaftoe (2008:92-121, as inspired by Whyte) points out that park space provision must concern seating, vantage points, shelter and protection, eating and drinking, ‘leaning pauses’ (such as a sculpture), and comfort breaks (especially toilets). Shaftoe enriches this experience is by emphasizing the joys of watching, adventure and relief.

¹⁷ Partly inspired by the writing of Whyte (2001) in the description of small urban spaces.

Having connected the park user to preferences, needs, and wants, the municipal park builder is ‘idealistically responsible’ for building space to its greatest potential for healthy and convivial socio-spatial experiences, and done so for greater numbers of park users or city-people. In order to achieve this, literature (especially see Zukin (1999), Shaftoe (2008), and Whyte (2001), among others) suggests that more freedom and heterogeneity in open space is generally healthier and more convivial than extensive restrictions on use.

Through connecting healthy and convivial experiences with the physical park space (as follows in Section 2.2), Tim Cresswell (2004) suggests that spaces are ‘emplaced’. Critical for the dual-perspective explored here, emplacement offers some expressive potential for the park user to attribute ‘place’ to a park. When a park user emplaces a park space, this is another way of describing park user identity.

2.1.4 Identity

While associations in or of social space are ceaseless, active, and momentary, this form of ‘identity’ offers a brief snapshot of the park user for descriptive purposes while able to consider both expressions and experiences of space. Generally-speaking, identifying with the park means associative creating of a memorable sense of place that preserves it, uniquely, through experiences (Kriken, 2012:9). Naturally this includes negative experiences too.

To affirm the position formed here, identification is more than individual human business straightforwardly added up inside literal space; instead, it involves a somewhat collective interpretative stage of people who interact, agree, and disagree with one another in a hybrid social-physical park space.

Characterizing a wider range of park-related experiences and expression through understanding user identity is important to see how a park user ‘type’ can be described

according to their interests. From this information a park space can be designed, built, and studied.

2.2 The Park Space

If the park user merely used space, then an inventory study and some general local principles would do. However, park users behave as they like and require much greater attention. For this reason, a park user may be better termed as an ‘actor’¹⁸ instead to represent the part a park visitor plays, especially as a performer of social activity and as the unit of analysis.

Effectively, the acting park user not only uses a park space but also makes the social space what it is through emplaced context. To understand what works better or worse in space, Section 2.2 here presents common concepts and spatial scales most appropriate to the park and park user in four parts, namely, public space, open space, neighbourhoods and community spaces, and city spaces or places.

2.2.1 Public space

Ali Madanipour (2003:6) stands out in the discussion of the public-private divide, emphasizing relationships of ‘individual-societal’ and ‘self-other’ dichotomies. A park rests somewhere along the gradient between two ideals: the lonely private Darwinist-like space where one individual is set against any other; and then the communal, inclusive and universal space that by necessity erases individuality entirely. Therefore, a good assumption follows that a park shall serve fewer park users when it is increasingly private, and conversely, it serves an actualized nobody when absolutely public.

¹⁸ Following Latour (2005).

The answer to ‘how public’ a space should be rests at neither extreme. Recalling that, for the park user, the expressive-experiential reciprocation in social space never actually separates, the public-private divide is a clear representation of types of associations according to either integration or dispersion. As emphasized throughout by Whyte (2001), Jacobs (1992), and many others, public space is commonly considered to be an area wherein people integrate socially to the general benefit of urban life. Hence, parks should be more public than private, but not absolutely public either.

Additional to integration, space is temporal too. Zukin (1999:44) points out that great public spaces became great only over time. This simple, precise point implies layers of contextualization resulting from expressing and experiencing space, of the park and the city, over the years. In this way, park social spaces are ‘spacetime’.

To investigate this temporal thread a little further, seeking describable space, perhaps a public space is more precisely expressed as a fused ‘some-^{where}_{times}’. For example, Borja (in Haas, 2008:320) said that, “Sometimes the public space is a square, sometimes a park, sometimes a boulevard, sometimes a few square meters around a fountain, or in front of a library or a museum, or an outdoor café colonizing the sidewalks”. What emerges from this is the notion that social spacetime is relative to particular interests for the park user, and therefore, public park spaces are describable as more representative for greater numbers of users at the expense of individuality, or vice versa.

Related to how representative a park space may be of its users, spaces may be described by their effectiveness. First, concerning the ineffective, Madanipour (2003) writes throughout against the fragmentation or despatialization of public space, asserting that more and effective public space is better than allowing for more private space development. In

any spatial improvement effort, care must be taken that interests of the few do not exclude those of the many.

This concern is not unwarranted. Zukin points out that public spaces are being privatized especially in management by businesses or quasi-public authority, and in supposedly-public space operations too. All this segregates users (Zukin, 1999:28-29). If privatization leads to spatial fragmentation, then the ‘good’ and healthy character of public open space is in decline.

In a simple example from personal observation, Calgary parks have ‘opening hours’ backed up by police car presence and enforcement, and at least one downtown park even has a list of ‘Passive Recreation’ rules¹⁹. This decline of public spatial health conforms to Zukin’s claim of the pro-functionality and homogenising of space. In this sense, the prescription is that improving heterogeneity invites a higher quality of ‘stranger interaction’, perhaps as strangers becoming friends. Healthy socio-spatial associations are enlivened in integrative public parks.

Integration requires inclusiveness but also a connection with something personal and private. In other words, while public, parks should still evoke a personal-private interest in general. For instance, public space whether successful, effective, healthy, or otherwise, can be more or less educative or entertaining; these are two potentially-beneficial public space ideals, as Light and Smith (1998) have indicated. As in the Calgary observation noted, informational placards, guided tours, Shakespeare in the Park, and music concerts come to mind.

To further understanding of successful integration, inclusivity represents spatial effectiveness through context. As Ercan & Memlük point out recently, public space

¹⁹ Century Gardens in Calgary, Canada. NB: Not included as one of the parks studied.

inclusivity changes and evolves depending on time, “as well as the local and global contexts within which the public space is set and bounded” (Ercan & Memlük, 2015:216-217). Context and time are essential aspects of spatial effectiveness, yet spaces are hardly bounded by external forces. Instead, as spaces are composed largely by human agency, they collectively shaped by users, primarily, and secondarily in other ways.

Ercan & Memlük also point directly to the spatial, community scale as being most relevant for this understanding (discussed in Section 2.2.3). In the same place, they argue for an in-depth qualitative understanding of park spaces (Ercan & Memlük, 2015:218). This supports the forthcoming Theoretical Framework Chapter as understanding community neighbourhood parks heightens the call for fundamental qualitative methods.

In summary of public space understanding, the preferred spot along the public-private gradient that municipal parks occupy is certainly towards more public, yet not ‘so public’ that it lacks identifiable character. However, the balancing point is difficult to find as the privatization of public parks has become a real concern; hence, for park users it is necessary to observe in them or in their park spaces how integrative or fragmented their experiences are.

2.2.2 Open space

Open space differs from public space in that the former invites more phenomena and senses into its judgement than the latter. Openness is reflected in how the park looks and feels for the park user rather than in interactions between strangers or with the public interest. Here, the contents are emphasized as a spatial-experiential quality.

Lynch (1972:44) argues that a park or a ‘healthy open space’ is often associated with predetermined contents of land. Experiences. Vegetation and water are most remarked upon with pleasure and joy, Lynch says. Even a paved plaza in most cases looks and feels better

with vegetation and water. To add though, I would argue that ‘greening’ and ‘bluing’ of cities is not a turn towards something ‘better’ but a return to the full and necessary content of our lands. From this perspective, more parks, green roofs, and greenways are not outcomes of an advanced city and rather the prerequisites of living with the earth.

Moving on from content to form, open space should not merely be taken as uncovered, unbuilt land. On one hand, this implies a ‘blank canvas’ for interpretation and expression through participatory park use, notably in cases such as landscaping or community planting. On the other hand, however, it may convey a conflicting purpose of the municipality by them defining it in this way. A lack of explicit spatial protection may contribute an easier influence by non-park user groups, such as through rezoning to make taxes off land sales and development²⁰.

Taken differently, the character of open space in the city context can be described as a ‘place’ when users and actors are involved. For one, Cresswell (2004:11) aptly points out that ‘Our Place’ is not a quality belonging to space or things but of perspective through valuating the space as more or less important. Yet, despite how much park users value parks, these spaces appear to get some ‘character potential’ through city development too. This happens whether park users were involved as participants in the process or not.

Hence, open space development, however, demands caution. If a municipality directly constructs symbolic spatial meaning rather than interprets it directly from users, Zukin (1999:292) warns that cities may become cultural industries that use or convert symbolic power into material power through the builder and provider.

²⁰ This concern was directly reflected by park users at Harvest Hills Lake Park (HH44). Public golf courses in their neighbourhood were to be converted into land to build and sell condos. Park users felt strongly that their concerns were going unheard, and their voices muted by municipal-only interests.

For instance, ‘park land’ as an intrinsically natural space is often reconceived as ‘open space’. This appears to be an exercise of political intent. The (symbolic) point of ‘our land’ and ‘our environment’ has been modified to disintegrate the collective perspective of the citizen through the use of clinical, liquid terms that can be changed, bought and sold through so-called sustainable development. ‘Open space’ is a liquid term in the same way; it sounds a little like ‘open for business’.

Essentially, as supported in the aforementioned works by Jacobs, White, and others, totalitarian parks devoid of their integrative, interactive grassroot inputs shall fail to offer successful open space in the long run. Like rules posted in public space, as mentioned, defensive fixtures in space, such as seating with armrests to halt people from sleeping there, are the hallmarks of managing or training people into acceptable types of use. Over time, spaces conceived this way are rendered dead. Hence, the effective open space is generally integrative through proactive, participatory park user involvement rather than through slowly-privatising, prescriptive, or political space totalitarianism.

Altogether, just as relevant for public space, open park space should be built to resist corporatizing interests at large. These interests sap individuals through neighbourhood and community scales.

2.2.3 Neighbourhood and community

The city and its parks are more than a set of public urban open spaces. As Lofland (1973:3) puts it in the beginning of *World of Strangers*, “A city is many things. It is a geographical and social location”. Communities and neighbourhoods are two very commonly-investigated social spaces. Neighbourhoods are more localized places than the city at large so are given more attention here than communities.

For residents, their neighbourhood and city appear to be the most relevant scales, as indicated by Jacobs (1992:120-121) when she says that neighbourhoods may be best viewed either as small street neighbourhoods, or else as the city-wide whole. Neighbourhoods of people, rather than theoretical political city ones, are better-represented. Therefore, locals should have more say over the resources deployed in their areas, and this would hold true for park users and their spaces too.

As to what constitutes a neighbourhood, besides buildings and humans in proximity, residents express a particular proximal social space. In this way, park or neighbourhood spaces are never static because social space and people are conjointly generative of the park they visit. If this generative expression of social space is ignored, such as by filling people into pre-built social spaces, then failure is assured.

This normative failure can be seen even in some recent socio-spatial perspectives. For example, according to Porter and Howell (2012:39-40), communities represent an actual shape that changes over time through expansion, contraction and social linkages. Similarly, recent research on a Psychological Sense of Community claims, “Research suggests that urban areas suffer from social problems,” (Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev, 2015:389), as if areas can tangibly suffer rather than suffer in a manner of speaking. In either text, social space is seemingly taken as real at the expense of park user spatial expression. Emphasizing that the community has an *actual* physical shape seems to put undue pressure on relative social shape, as if people represent a secondary support system to meet ‘spatial actuality’.

More precisely, referring to Howell & Porter, it is even more doubtful (epistemologically-speaking) that contractions and expansions lead to changes in personal linkages. Personal interactions interrelated with spatial composition are hardly separated systems supplying a top-level spatial medium to work with. The subtle but important

difference is in the flow of the ‘process’. In other words, a planner from this perspective might think her or his plans create park users down to the neighbourhood scale. In more grounded terms, it is like saying ‘build it and they will be-come park users’.

Even though modern spatial planning may try (accidentally, at best) to make the people serve as park users or neighbourhood residents, time always reveals any deadness of space and hence exposes the failure to understand what social space represents: people generating neighbourhoods, parks, and cities.

Moving on, the Psychological Sense of Community article rightly identifies that proximity to the park is important because residents in proximity are more connected with their spaces than those outside. Thus, it follows that park providers nurture community engagement through a park ownership concept (Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev, 2015:390-395). Furthermore, evidence does not seem to indicate that intensity of engagement intensifies or improves at the city-scale or larger, leaving the neighbourhood-scale unchallenged.

Therefore accordingly, parks need to be built *with* the community or neighbourhood rather than merely for it. Participatory engagement extends park user expression into park design or building, and thus it follows that if carefully done, such engagement shall encourage a closer identity of park users in the space, rendering it more effective.

On the flip side of participation, as seen in research on a park in Ankara, the lack of involvement by the public in the park is claimed to reduce improvements in inclusivity. Therefore, such community works must be locally relevant, and parks should not be authoritatively prescribed or controlled by limited-interest groups (Ercan & Memlük, 2015:216-217). In other words, spatial health strengthens or diminishes depending how much the park space has been enriched by the community as a broader non-exclusive whole,

and then how far the municipality, builders, and elitist groups of park users control the park space go to narrow it.

All-in-all, to strive for improved socio-spatial health, municipal approaches to park provision must include the neighbourhood as a critical source for understanding²¹. These local areas offer the optimum convergence of individual, collective, and municipal spatial interests. Personal interactions are the spatial medium exerted throughout spacetime. Skipping to larger spatial areas will erase park user identity and associations.

2.2.4 Places of the city

Describing parks and park users, even collectively, involves more than neighbourhood-city spatial scaling. Parks are places. According to Cresswell (2004:29-33), place comes into 'being' at the time of its identification, between people and location, rather than persisting purely as a social or objective thing. This subjective meaning, 'emplacement', forces municipal machinery from macro to micro approaches; admittedly, this revives a tiny internal structural-functional constructor of place-making that requires some filing down of park user character in order to achieve a more collective-friendly space. This filing down requires great care, though. Since we experience *and* express our surroundings, in park spaces, expression must reflect something generative in planning and constructed form.

If care is not taken to represent park users properly in space, non-places can be conceived and built instead. For example, in a broadly-ranging perspective, Sanders

²¹ Considering Literature here on park users, general and municipal, this may be no 'news-flash' to some municipalities such as the City of Calgary which, as discussed, embraces this community/ neighbourhood scale inasmuch as engagement appears active and frequent there. However, indications are this is not universally true, especially considering Kuching, where community engagement seems to emerge as a necessary compliance to given hierarchal directives rather grassroots empowerment beyond the token effort. See Section 2.4 for the supporting discussion.

(2008:277-279) argues that cities are complex systems that ‘evolve’ along different scales, involving global and local effects, but not necessarily in any simple, simplistic or linear way. Sanders calls these systems Complex Adaptive Systems, or CAS-cities. Observations of CAS-cities, according to Sanders, have characteristics of self-creation, symbolic emplacement, incidental coherence of form, and systemic structure changing over time through evolution. From this perspective then, perhaps according to Sanders, the city space is every kind of sociological explanation rolled into one. Unfortunately, Complex Adaptive Systems misses out too much of the key ingredient of place: people, generative and social.

In another careless emplacing of citizens, a social space might be a ‘good’ for people as recipients. For instance, some approaches in urban sociology, regimes for planning and maintenance, and various media seem to imply some inherent good of a park built into the city, as if the park is good in itself against say bad or hostile spaces elsewhere. Jacobs (1992:89) succinctly identifies this blindness when she says that city parks are seen as boons conferred down onto poor people. People should certainly be grateful, she recalls sarcastically. Having skirted around the due diligence required in investigating spaces and people, the error of inherent goodness has been imposed onto park users. The ‘inherent good’ approach inherits nothing from the people it is meant to serve. A park such as this is inherently political, economic, or structural-functional rather than recreational and social.

Theoretical approaches that ‘impose place’ can be subtle. Bruno Latour (2005:231) has identified that ‘social being’, such as being in space, is just sociological theory as seen in much of contemporary scholarship. Normative sociological theory mutes the subject entirely. Therefore, any theoretical framework requires careful application rather than copied over from other research.

That said, despite all efforts to minimize social machinery of place, planning, building and managing parks, these efforts to provide parks create another park interpretation for and of the city. Unavoidably an actual additional pseudo-material place emerges from the paper itself. This would be largely unavoidable where anyone besides the park user builds the park.

The more important thing, though, is that city people in their parks offer the most valid comments on the places they frequent. This is more valid than perspectives of politicians, economists, academics or individual residents and other non-users. Socio-spatial analysis of park users here is an observation of their interactions in places that point to some generalizable identity.

2.3 Theories and Perspectives

Park user understanding is the primary concern for park provision and research. From this socio-spatial standpoint the prevailing theories and perspectives on social interaction can be revisited and reviewed. In this Section, perspectives are discussed in a conceptual ‘inward spiral’, beginning with the more outer structural-level theories including functionalism and idealism and then drilling down into increasingly individual ground-level issues and practices.

2.3.1 Structuralism and Functionalism

In a crude summary of structuralism and functionalism, if a park user was just a cog in a great social machine, a mere piece of the greater city whole, then there would be little left to do but either figure out the overall structure of social relations in the city or else a focus upon each function a part plays.

In defining parts of the structure, Castells (1983:171) notes that when the state categorizes people as say blacks, gays, dropouts or middle-class, and so on, an 'us-vs-Others game' is started in which in-groups pursue their own interests at the cost of those Others. In this way, social arrangements must be over-simplified by the definer. To be effective, such a system needs to define all its parts to ensure efficacy, and in practice this is done by reducing these complex arrangements to a function or value. Expression, in this normative material superstructure, becomes more active in bargaining and scavenging for scattered meanings rather than sharing and orienting identity or meaning as a fundamental social element.

So, for a park user as either part of the structure or as a structural functional component, what the user thinks, does and experiences matters less than them fitting into a generalizing park user 'container', such as into 'a park' which fits into 'the city'. In this normative fitting, park users are more systemized than emplaced and the impression is that they have fixed features and function. Or, in other words as Madanipour (2003:14) says, the subject is no more than "a cog in the linguistic wheel, uttering words and sentences of a public language which is not their making," and social forces constrain (rather than represent) people.

Hence, rather than seeking a descriptive observation of park users to inform park planning, a structural functional interpretation 'demands' that park users should be present in a park, especially when green spaces were skilfully designed for them. Or, for instance, park users in a park should be healthy because it was designed with exercising in mind.

2.3.2 Idealism

With idealism criticized in a post-modern world, the 'ideal park user' has become more of a hidden rather than explicitly sought person. Detecting idealism is often tricky since the

approach often attempts to erase its marks upon society²². No matter how well hidden these marks are, however, idealist failures are quite apparent in some park spaces.

For instance, any park authoritatively conceived as a ‘failure’ while that authority denies a failure to understand park users is evidence of idealism because it treats a dynamic park user individual to a ‘thou shall *behave as...*’. This happens since, crucially, any ideal with content (as in ‘behave as’) is effectively totalitarian in a socio-political context (Žižek, 1999). In this case, the authoritarian prescription of space or attempts to dictate how park users ‘should behave’ graft a social type expectation onto people. Ideally people will go to the park. However, this puts ‘the horse before the cart’ since a park user expresses recreation as they like.

To augment this argument with a more recent twist of idealism, enforced integration is obscured by some forms of social responsibility imposed at large. For example, Whyte (2001:116) claims that facilities or designs that incorporate features into small urban spaces for certain users, such as wheelchair users, should never be segregated but integrated, “to make all of the place useful for everyone”. However, while popular and kind, this idea is an absolute declaration of spatial use. It comes across as an overly idealistic notion that starts to assume that everyone can and should begin experiencing spaces similarly or identically.

Grafting similar experiences onto people from universal ideals rather than directly from park user input represents normative park planning. For instance, in *New Urbanism and Beyond*, Marcus (2008:135) notes: “that theories in urbanism have been inherently *normative*, telling us what cities should be, rather than *analytical*, telling us how cities work”. When attempting to represent park users, structural or ideal assumptions lead to a fallacy that squeezes users out of their space and then replaces them with simulacra. In effect,

²² See for instance Žižek (1999).

integration efforts seem to convey rhetoric that ‘we are trying our best to serve everyone so do not complain about it’.

It can be surmised here that idealist movements (e.g. for political correctness) often use language that confuses clear thinking on heterogeneity. Everyday examples might include clever usage of ‘integration’ or ‘inclusiveness’; the general impression in everyday rhetoric is that *we (park users) must integrate*²³ to be good people, and to say otherwise begs calls for correction: ‘how dare you act so badly?’ Clearly by now the units of analysis, park users whom could have chosen how to integrate themselves, have been qualitatively erased and replaced by an ideal simulacrum who is expected to comply.

Active experiencing and expressing park space by park users suggest otherwise. Community-local people are better at managing their own interpretations of community space, and the implied municipal task involves finding out what those people want in their spaces. In this sense, the city is returned to its citizens rather than handed down to them. In short, park departments should manage physical content and not park user consciousness.

2.3.3 Society

Moving on from superstructural social theories that bundle people into an indistinguishable mass to a scale that allows more room for individuals, park users may be understood in terms of ‘society’, say as in a Canadian, Eastern, or Globalized society. However, because society-scales involve such a vast collective of people it remains only slightly less vague than ‘everybody’, and is still too broad.

²³ See for instance <http://phys.org/news/2016-03-racially-diverse-neighborhoods-re-segregation.html>. Here the ideal of an integrated ethnocultural and racial multicultural mix of people is being expressed through policy. This applies to parks either as a part of the city and neighbourhood, or potentially as its own space if studied and ‘idealed’ according to ‘who should be there’.

As an example of over-broadness, some point out that the public park may spatially reflect society as much as the churches and public buildings reflect the past. Parks symbolize a ‘return to nature’ in a sense, traced through Olmsted and Repton to recent times (Jellicoe and Jellicoe, 2004:373). This lineage, however, says little about park users or the social space. It should be remembered that park users are the ones ‘symbolizing’ parks, not history itself. Thus, starting with society and then defining the park user second time (as a social space is defined the first time by the social unit), means to annihilate the park user in the first instance.

Since space and time are expressed and experienced through park users, ‘society’ offers only the faintest hope for spatial relevancy. This large-scale collective is a place of vague objectivity. In contrast, the neighbourhood as say a walkable pedestrian network connected by parks offers much greater relevance.

2.3.4 Behaviourism

Contrasting the structural sociological explanations of people, behavioural spatial analysis may represent the most current materialist understanding of social spaces. However, whether using qualitative data or not, its objective and deductive methodology shall ensure findings remain fundamentally-halved and deprived of the subjective, cogito perspective.

Representative of its half-perspective, behaviourism should result in an objective material description of park users despite any type of data collection methods used. By definition, behaviour centres on outcomes of the body and brain, and these outcomes involve strictly-physical processes (Morris, 1991:32). Accordingly, the behavioural perspective cannot account for the mind as a dual reciprocation of the cogito expressive and material experiences, so all agency and decisions may at best result from micro-structural physical processes rather than capture the expression, as discussed in Section 2.1 as well. While the

material-only perspective adds a wealth of knowledge about spatial uses, this perspective is true only from its own vantage, and is inaccurate of the expressing mind.

Further on this, quantitative and statistical methodology suit the deductive, material approaches such as behaviourism better than a subjective, inductive one. It is questionable why this approach sometimes uses qualitative surveying or any qualitative inputs at all, as this represents mixed methodologies that lack fundamental perspective or justification as to why such inquiry was added on. Take for example Ohnmacht, 2015. Lacking the cogito-fundamental aspect for a qualitative inquiry would seem to ignore the expressive aspect of ontological Being entirely, as if a real fundamental consideration of expression is beyond worth besides as an intriguing colouring of behaviour-based results.

Such a monopolising methodological bias can be detected in written language. Take for example Ohnmacht (2015:31), stating that, “Social relations and their spatial distribution are major factors in an individual’s concept of space and consequent patterns of mobility behaviour.” From this materialist perspective, despite using qualitative interviews, the research can only indicate the structure of the material brain in the ‘concept of space’ rather than anything fundamentally non-material. Alternatively, the counter-perspective considers the *conceiv-ing* of space; the active, expressing, cogito-first perspective of the same phenomena.

That said, contributions of behaviouralism cannot go understated. As an outcome of physical processes that quantify responses of the mind, our behaviours are a kind of micro-deduction, one that seems closer to a cogito consideration. Reasoning this closeness out, in looking at a phenomemon, induction begins small (say at zero), while deductions gain understanding by progressing from large to small (as in two to one). In other words, both deduction and induction draw meaning closer towards each other, a lesser-separation of dual

perspective; so, due to this minimized deduction, behavioural sociological understanding may be the most fundamentally materially-reliable investigation into any space.

Considering how an objective behavioural approach differs from a subjective one, see Figure 2.2. As illustrated, qualitative observations may serve either or both subject-centric or behaviour-centric results. Behaviouralism by definition would focus on the body, either where the whole body is located in space, or where neurological parts in the body lead to differing experiences. This might result in some form of frequency of observed activities (as in Mahadin, 2016:61). Then, on the other hand, subject-centric qualitative study involving expressed space leads to the conceiving of space rather than strictly a ‘concept’ as a deduced artifact of experience.

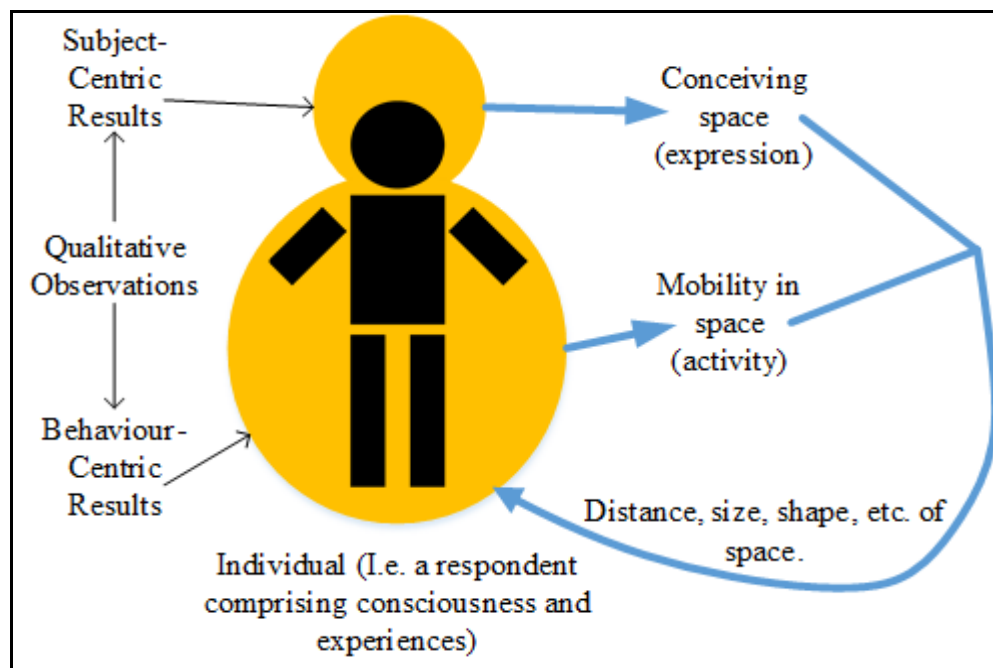


Figure 2.2: Qualitative Sociological Observation Types in Space Conception

Source: Author

Altogether, the argument here is that behaviourism alone does not adequately describe the park user. For instance, Mahadin, self-characterizes as largely influenced by

Whyte, embracing Whyte's devotion to form. Yet, the subjective perspective seems insufficiently considered. When Mahadin admits that the unique context of the New York High Line was crucial for its success (Mahadin, 2016:79), the character of this context is given merely as location and demography. The opportunity to ask whom the park users are in a frame that considers their expressed cogito milieu is missed.

Fixating on deduction as the only source of knowledge presents a fractured perspective. If a qualitative format is used (as in Ohnmacht, 2015) within the behavioural frame, frequency is used in juxtaposition to help describe this behaviour, thereby giving the deductive frame prominence. It follows, unsurprisingly, results give the message that *more equals better*. More park users experiencing or doing this well-felt activity is an improvement in outcomes of planning and design. The contention, though, is that this message starts to look like idealism extolling a tone of good research as it fails to describe where the qualitative aspect really comes from.

A qualitative behavioural study, therefore, may result in prescriptions that claim qualitative successes because the goal of behaviour-related understanding and spatial provision seems to be that of filling a park to capacity to maximize its benefits to the people. This is clear in the High Line research (see Mahadin, 2016) when 'success' is a behaviourally-framed as 'thumbs-up' to a densely-populated park space. However, a successful space is a personal, subjective valuation. While such valuations can be counted and described, confining them to behavioural social science and using advanced statistics on this data is not unlike eight blind people describing an elephant²⁴.

²⁴ Eight blind people describe an elephant. In this famous parable, blind people stand in different places and use their hands to determine what the animal looks like. Touching different parts of the elephant, the blind people isolated from one another, results in a fractured collection of elephant part-ideas and no coherent idea of the whole elephant. The

More explicitly, the utilitarian (say municipal) voice to fill park spaces is clearly a collective voice to serve as an efficient necessity. This perspective it is not unwarranted, but it still lacks understanding of expressed space. Alone, a behavioural study fails to give voice to individuals from their own perspectives, subjectively, and assumes that all people generally want the same outcome for the most people, that parks can and should be universalized to some measure to allow for maximum efficiency, and that minimal or singular opinions are unimportant.

As Figure 2.2 suggests, rather than in separation, social space may be described through both behavioural and subjective understanding; not as if only deductive maths can make comment on social Being. Closing one eye in order to record socio-spatial description is a decision rather than the hallmark of depth-perception into the subject.

So, characterising park users from their own perspectives *in addition* to the valuable behavioural park user understanding enriches sociological knowledge. Furthermore, a theoretical frame is improved by depriving it of normative ‘more is better’ prescriptions. In this way, we are seeking to understand both aspects, providing an opportunity to hear unexpected responses, and perhaps leading to more informed park plans and designs.

2.3.5 Spatial commentary

This Section discusses descriptive potential in social space to clearly inform the Theoretical Framework Chapter, and it builds on the earlier discussion on spatial integration and inclusion. If social spaces are considered as healthier and more convivial when they involve

behavioural activity of parsing qualitative data does the same thing: certain physical measurements falsely explaining qualitative phenomena, such as what should be better or worse in a park according to where users congregate. Yet qualitative expressions and experiences are more related to each other than separately to materially-measured facts out and about in the park space.

more people, beyond the point of merely busy, then parks may be well understood by what fails and deadens, and then who fills and enlivens, these city spaces.

Deadened, failed, and contradictory city spaces indicate abstracted or ignored space beyond any usefulness. Sassen (2008:304-305) shows that building or interpreting a type of space often leads to problematic or unusual space. In this regard, unusual areas may include transportation intersections, roofs of utility buildings, and other forgotten or awkward spaces that defied planning. Problematic spaces are often seen when public space is privatized, usually for benefits of power and richness, and even ‘weaponized’ to include surveillance and other ‘security’ forms. Contrasting parks which are explicitly successful in drawing people in and evoking moments of inspiration, bad visuality and lack of conviviality in city spaces is evident. As an example of dead spaces, considering passing any chronically-empty and neglected city park on your travels around the city.

Socially-dead parks may look blatantly ugly, but sometimes they look great in pictures and on paper. Empowering and monetizing parks to fill it with generic bodies, Cresswell (2004:43-44) argues, is an ‘end of place’ by the building of blatantly inauthentic space. This ‘end of place’ building leaves no room for engagement, signature, or personalization. Here as Cresswell points out, people [or customers] are provided a dull, fake space designed solely for a very limited type of consumption. Reciprocation between builders, interest groups, and park users becomes entirely lost to the following point: that generative socio-spatial associating of park users has been replaced by narrow authoritarian abstractions.

Moving against the deadening of space, reconciliation and reciprocity happens by way of the orientation to space itself. For instance, Lynch (1972) shows that landmarks and nodes provide orientation and give a mental-spatial context for the street or park user

experience, therefore producing an identifiable whole. ‘Wholes’ may include the city, street network, green open space, my/not my personal places, neighbourhood, and so on. Rather than structural ideals built into form, how people move and associate may be encouraged or enriched by park providers by paying attention to where, why, and how people congregate in healthier social space.

In this restorative sense, as an expressed statement: a social space is taken as a (good) park because it is experienced (well) thus, and this (healthy and convivial) park is thereby identified or expressed (as a good) because experience and expression have a mutually-supportive context. It goes oppositely in the negative sense, too. Altogether, researching context in space requires both experiential and expressive perspectives. Such perspectives, through space and over time, reciprocate around a dynamic notion of identity, to identify say ‘good’ with a park. Without this, a static spatial ideal or structural form easily freezes park user identity out of time.

From here on, the more specific discussion of the Literature Review continues insofar as particular issues, practices, and places are concerned. The next three Sections discuss prominent sociological issues in understanding park space and park user knowledge. These issues are not easily confined to a particular perspective directly related to social spaces, and appear to take on a specialised importance regardless of ideology. The most prevalent issues involve spatial justice, the environmental issue, and practices in urban provision and design, respectively.

2.3.6 Spatial Justice

As discussed in Section 2.2, inclusivity in park social space is generally more desirable than restrictive or private spaces. Lack of inclusivity when combined with a commentary on

socio-economics highlights the narrative of *spatial justice*. Spatial justice might be crudely illustrated by the well-known example of park benches, and how benches are built to encourage ‘desired’ users and exclude others. For example, an arm rest can be fashioned to ensure people do not sleep on the benches. This defensive spatial technique is generally designed to keep poor and homeless people from sleeping on the benches.

Access to ‘public parks’ is not as free as it seems. As mentioned in Section 2.2, parks evidently have set opening times, defensive structures to limit ‘undesirables’, and in some places security forces limit park user expression in favour for ‘desirable’ park users. Merely stating that ‘parks are free for all’ ignores evidence that social-spaces do not require an entry-fee to be economically or socially discriminatory to overall ability to access the space. So, while society generally accepts and practises no-harm to others in customs or policy, this aversion to harm can be gratuitously broadened to ‘I feel uncomfortable sharing a space with others unlike me, hence they should all be barred’. In other words, a strong and broad exclusivity in design and form is promoted at the expense of reasonably-benign inclusivity, by recasting park users as poor, and this is further twisted when rules effectively target ethnic groups in a deceptive declaration of anti-social bigotry.

Park space injustices have been exhaustively described, including in recent work by Alessandro Rigolon in a PhD questioning access of or to parks. These barriers to park access include lack of income, response or treatment to people of different colour, lack of safety, general ability to move about the city, and social pressures (Rigolon, 2015:75-76). The results throughout the work demonstrate these barriers to park access despite no-charge at the entrance, adding to the narrative of spatial and economical justice at large.

On the other hand, Rigolon seemingly misses the opportunity to describe park users out of their own perspectives. In this sense, the call for spatial justice, to get people to work

together, and the research implications that support this (see Rigolon, 2015:579), all favour a just idealism supported by behaviour, documenting where people can and cannot go. This lacks an additional step to investigate park user opinions at large.

The issue of justice is not merely quantitative or deductive. Spatial justice as only a collection of ‘bads’ versus ‘goods’, collected to spread them out fairly somehow, lacks the perspective of park user expression, such as in the community-versus-individual distribution of social capital. Social capital allows for more agency, not only for the ‘well off’ members of an unjust balance, but also investigates why worse and better off members make the choices they do in the capacity they can.

For instance, take the Psychological Sense of Community methods in claiming that community sense underpins social capital (Gomez, Baur, Hill and Georgiev, 2015:389). If research can serve a city or community by way of describing a better sense of spatial justice, as in the case of accessing parks, rather than just strictly inform how dire circumstances are, then a broader perspective may also invite a path to more effective improvements there.

In any case, access to the park can be illustrated by the socio-economic status of the park user. Ignoring this potentially-crucial information, by conceiving space narrowly or failing to connect recreation to interpenetrative life circumstances, is tantamount to embracing exclusive perspectives of park space use by neglecting the pervasiveness of economics in our lives.

2.3.7 The ‘environment issue’

The environment, the term in its popular usage, is intrinsically, extrinsically, and economically important to us. City parks may be declared necessary and valuable in relation to the broad environmental damage wrought by wanton urban development. Careless city

building is also related to careless environmental stewardship and the discourse it uses—such as seen in ‘sustainablism’²⁵, environmental degradation, or else whatever else seems to connect non-park users (politicians, journalists and entrepreneurs) directly with park space.

Unfortunately, these non-users seem to pile on contingent, hybridizing identities through popularized environmental issues that take away from the simple purpose of park use. Latour (1993), for instance, illustrates hybridizing scientific and social discourse as the failure of ‘moderns’ as these moderns apply an impossible, nonsensical modern paradigm to complex social and scientific studies. In a ‘melting pot’ of environmental, political and recreational-social constructs, a city person relates to park spaces in increasingly-burdensome ways, such as an ‘environmentally-concerned park user’, or a ‘green open space activist’. A park user cannot be qualitatively or reliably interpreted along lines that explode their identities beyond recreational use—the stated purpose of recreational parks.

On the brighter side of clarity, whereby park users remain front and center, some successful environmental programs appear to involve users more ‘democratically’, so to speak. For example, the conception of the ‘Urban Forest’ (see Figure 2.3) in The City of Calgary Open Space Plan²⁶ attempts to connect Calgary people with environmental health—not only by sharing recreational space but by educating park visitors too. The notion of the Urban Forest, in practice, challenges the more restrictive, specialized departmental

²⁵ ‘Sustainablism’, because contemporary ‘discourse’ or chatter on environmental issues in many cases overrides the actual environmental/ planetary problems themselves. An extreme example of this, at the tail-end of sustainablism, comes in the form of purchasing fuel efficient cars marketed as ‘green’—and sometimes literal green colouring is used to sell what is nothing more than another technologically-advanced personal vehicle. In this sense, one may as well spray-paint the road in verdant hues in a bid to add more roadway lanes.

²⁶ The Urban Forest is a concept used by the City of Calgary (Open Space Plan, 2002); this includes *all* trees in the city as being part of a single urban forest, and within this context community events for tree-planting or green space maintenance are organized. More on this below in the text.

organizational relationships by permeating inter- and intra-departmental (i.e. categorical) borders. In effect, conceptual and practiced barriers between landscaping, education, community, and the electorate are deconstructed. Practically-speaking, this deconstruction happens when tree planting events are organized or else whenever any park user walks, as usual, through the urban forest.



Figure 2.3: Calgary as a forest. Urban forest, park forest, and Birthplace Forest all in one.

Source: Fieldwork 2014

By allowing and encouraging park users to participate in more than just recreation, through more hands-on and locally-relevant park works, the municipality may succeed in grafting special issues, such as environmental stewardship, into successful park spaces without overburdening recreational enjoyment.

2.3.8 Practice

Practice discusses urban planning and design by way of the theory going into it and the resulting outcomes. This Section placed here is designed to connect directly with the following Section on Calgary and Kuching.

2.3.8.1 Theory in urban planning

Assuming that modern municipalities such as Calgary and those of Kuching employ skilled enough planners, they are probably influenced by ‘urbanisms’ that result in spatial outcomes in park space. This leads to a question of specialization versus integration in planning regimes.

In planning approaches, Calthorpe (2011:73) effectively asks of new urban planning approaches, ‘how can an increase in specialization lead to an integration of anything?’ In this sense, increased specialization appears to be ultra-deductive and either authoritatively peaceful or ignorant of other departments. Conversely, Castells (1983) derives meaning from conflict since park user identity may be influenced more by constructive conflicts in planning and academia too rather than by silent, well-oiled bureaucratic machinery.

As follows from Castells’ thought generally, a lack of inter-group or interdepartmental ‘conflicts’ is hardly a healthy peace. Thus, it reasons that park users are not better-served by the mechanical efficiency of a municipality that merely or predominantly follows an urbanist ideology. Urban (i.e. top-down) perspectives lead to more knowledge wrought of departmental or perspective conflict. More importantly though, park user knowledge comes out of the convergence of their own expressed and experienced associations; i.e. identity as a social construct out of personal conflict. Therefore, integration of up-to-date park user knowledge, gleaned directly from users, is a superior starting point from which to organize park departments.

For instance, the preference for increased ‘urban density’ (see Section 2.4) offers an example of conflicts in space and time. Denser urban form calls for an increasing the number of people living in proximity. This is a way to remedy suburban sprawl and make downtown living convivial and healthy, and it echoes Jacobs’ (1992:91-94) critique of wasteful ‘more

is better’ park-building attitudes. Whether *more* refers to either more parks or denser cities, the unfortunate assumption that ‘more is better’ perpetuates in the notion of more *of* rather than more *from* spatial effectiveness, increasing stress on unrenovable and ‘social’ resources by attempting to manage social hotspots rather than seeking a locally-driven initiative. As an inevitable compromise between the top and the grassroots, therefore, a careful increase in urban density and spatial effectiveness may mark an improvement for urban management in many cases.

Altogether, the message received here suggests that some municipal planning and specialization, but less in general, is ‘more’ towards a better representation of the park user.

2.3.8.2 Outcomes in planning and design

Moving on from plans and toward outcomes, Jacobs (1992:90) points out that, “In orthodox city planning, neighborhood open spaces are venerated magical fetishes,” and adds that, “people do not use the city open space just because it is there and because city planners or designers wish they would”. In some cases, recreational open spaces are *open* to be filled with interpretations rather than people, including political, economic and structural interpretations. Due to this and the space of governance itself, a park space is inescapably politicized in its planning, design, building, and maintenance, also by whom is either allowed in to or excluded from the park experience.

As a more progressive example, the Open Space Plan for the City of Calgary (2002:2-46) conceives of natural areas and open space as a system. Individual systemic components, involving communities with social and recreational needs, are derived from this perspective. The layout of these spaces may be viewed as a structural pattern such as a matrix with flows and movements of life pulsing through it.

By breathing real social life into a (perhaps necessary) systemic frame, Calgary involves more park users in parks while remaining systematic. Presumably in this way, park work may get accomplished more effectively and efficiently. To support this further, the Open Space Plan (2002) appears to achieve balance for ecological, economic and social concerns by involving both the municipality and its people less normatively and oppressively than what was described by Jacobs as ‘orthodox city planning’. Then speaking as a resident of Calgary, this somewhat-productive balance between local community and politics is evident in person, too. Hence, more socially-relevant plans may help catalyse meaningful design, appropriate management, and park user understanding.

In a summary of Section 2.3 here on Theories and Perspectives, a better socio-spatial understanding of and outcome for park users can be derived from integrative municipal planning activities that keep park users positioned as the axial source for park knowledge in building and maintenance.

2.4 Calgary and Kuching

Leading up to this point in the text, the literature discussion situated the park user at the axis of their own epistemology and hardly specifies local characteristics. Now moving the park user discussion away from spatial theory, understanding space means speaking of real people in real places. In real life space, characteristics of space are observably different across the world, and this represents an opportunity for breadth of understanding.

Calgary and Kuching are now discussed as separate cases, as they appear in literature, each beginning with some regional approximations before discussing writing from the municipalities themselves.

2.4.1 Calgary

City-based park users can be described regionally according to written history, population relative to religious practices, and ethnocultural background and practices. Beyond the generalities of the regional Calgarian, Calgary park users also need to be discussed through the lens of the municipality, according to the climatic conditions and how it may affect park use, and then summarized as a socio-spatial city. Immediate and clear contrasts with Kuching are given here too.

Starting from the broadest scale, Hiller (2014) has written a brief and effective chapter in *Urban Canada* from which Calgary can be put into an urban historical and global perspective. Historically and by majority lineage, Calgarians may be typed as North Americans following its history of European settling, or arguably colonialism. Aboriginal people were on the land, in 'Canada', first. Kuching has a history of colonialism too, as is discussed in Section 2.4.2.

The city form, as far as cities including Calgary are concerned, generally aligns to a Western movement structured by practices of Democracy, Capitalism, and Christianity (Fong, 2014:164-165). Calgary, while reflecting the Western movement, has also experienced a large influx of non-Western immigration throughout its history.

As another potential source for park user characteristics in Calgary, the most numerous ethnicities include Western European Caucasian, East Asian (including Chinese and Filipino and East Indian), and Aboriginal people, among others²⁷. Ethnically, Calgarians

²⁷ See either http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Documents/Social-research-policy-and-resources/Calgary_at_a_glance.pdf or Wikipedia.com.

are quite different from Kuching people²⁸ especially considering the numbers of Caucasian people in the former.

For religious beliefs, looking at the same statistics, Calgarians predominantly align with Christianity. Having no religion at all is the second most-numerous ‘alignment’. After this follows Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism, among others. In terms of religion, Calgarians appear to practise a similar set of religious customs as those in Kuching²⁹, but in differing proportions, and Calgarians are far more likely to report being non-religious.

Unique to Calgary, nearby Aboriginal settlements also characterize the city and its milieu, especially noting the Tsuu T’ina reserve to the west³⁰. Evelyn Peters (2014:183) draws attention to the value of understanding Aboriginal perspectives and culture. In Calgary, even though the municipal population of Aboriginal people is small in comparison to other groups, these people add an important heritage context for the region and natural areas where Calgary is located. Notably, understanding that the Tsuu T’ina on the ‘Calgary urban fringe’ is not the same as understanding Albertan rural and townsfolk living in the countryside, the latter of whom share similar lineage to many urban Calgarians. Effectively, the Tsuu T’ina reserve is apparent evidence of a different cultural heritage which did not just immigrate in to form urban Calgary. In this regard, the Aboriginal population is both pre-Calgary in a historical sense and not-Calgary in a cultural sense, occupying the same time and place.

In sum, considering the arrangement of cultural practices and beliefs, ‘the Calgarian’ is generally more homogenous than the Kuching citizen in that Calgarians are more often White with European heritage, and Christian or non-religious. Calgary may also be

²⁸ See <https://web.archive.org/web/20160415063610/http://www.theborneopost.com/2014/02/08/state-statistics-malays-edge-past-chinese-in-sarawak/>

²⁹ See census at http://www.liquisearch.com/history_of_sarawak/demographics/religions

³⁰ See either <http://tsuutinanation.com/> or http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sarcee-tsuu-tina/#h3_jump_2

characterized as being democratic (more liberal), capitalist and Western, with secondary influences from Asian and Islamic groups, and milieu influences from Aboriginal people. Calgarians in general may be more 'individualistic' too, with weaker ties to religious and ethnic affiliations in contrast to the Kuching discussion.

In order to discern the Calgary park user in more detail, a look into the municipal planning documents follows.

2.4.1.1 Case 1: Calgary's Municipal Development Plan and Open Space Plan

Regarding park and user conception, the Calgary Parks Department envisions the city as system-like linkages of parks and green spaces connected by pathways. Here, sustainability is a priority in the Open Space Plan or 'OSP' (2002:4). In this Plan, its Vision does not directly refer to either people or park users, and at this level park users therefore would seem to fade into the background. Since the priority is not explicitly parks designed for park users, and recalling that the environment is exploited by (people) systematizing space for economic gains, it seems exploitation is an implied or potential option, as in opportunity, in the Plan.

Beyond the OSP Vision, the Desired Outcomes prioritize the material environmental and community outcomes together, bringing the park user back in to focus when mentioning that "Calgarians interact with environmental education and awareness" (OSP, 2002:4-5). In effect, it seems that the OSP attempts to balance the productivity and conviviality of its spaces. In addition, one important point shows a researched trend that park users spend less time in parks but with increased intensity of value in time (OSP, 2002:6-9).

Conversely, and regarding the second document, the more current 'MDP' (Municipal Development Plan, 2013:2:24) states more precisely under Policy, that for a high-quality public park system, such a system will "Protect the basic function of city parks and public open spaces, and prevent parkland conversion to other uses". So, altogether it appears that

the OSP portrays a more systemic interpretation of parks, whereas the MDP is more explicit and authoritatively declares protective and preventative measures regarding green spaces.

2.4.1.2 Calgary climate

Acknowledging spatial realities demands understanding that Calgary is in winter half the year. Speaking personally, during these times the air is very cold. A great deal of the year is uncomfortable enough that parks stop being healthy and convivial social spaces altogether (in their standard or traditional form). In this way, rather than year-long convivial spaces, parks are semi-continuous recreational spaces for the typical park user.

The MDP (2013:2:32) notes that it must consider seasons and weather but neglects to go into more detail beyond this. As someone who has lived in and walked around Calgary, I believe this is an insufficient consideration of climate in municipal planning. Climate, especially in the cold and snow, is pivotal and not merely incidental for park use unless the city is meant to be a beautiful and walkable city for only half the year. For park and street users alike both the OSP and MDP need deeper consideration of its outdoor winter spaces.

Open spaces can be made feasible all year round for people. Whyte (1988:333) points out that Calgary has raised skyways for people to move through or between public spaces since the sun shines so low on the horizon. Furthermore, building codes in Calgary had certain structure height limits imposed to ensure continuous exposure to sunlight in parks (Whyte, 1988:259). More pioneering such as this can be done in wintering city spaces.

Beyond winter, other environmental factors would affect park users and use in different ways too. Calgary has relatively low rainfall amounts per year³¹, which makes parks

³¹ See either <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/forecasts/statistics/precipitation/cl3031093/caab0049> or this image http://agriculture.alberta.ca/acis/maps/agricultural_land_reso

generally much more accessible in the warmer seasons. Meanwhile, low rainfall also somewhat limits what flora grow there, in turn limiting what can be used as an environmental barrier, for shade, or visibility and so on. Also, park users experience dry skin in the semi-arid outdoors, magnified again in the coldest winter months.

Additionally, since each park represents its own ‘environment’, then whatever goes on outside of and then comes into the park space is, in effect, environmental too. For example, cars and transit vehicles are a source of noise and air pollution and so should be mentioned as an irritating externality that park users experience. Vehicles and any source of city noise and air pollution are especially invasive for small open spaces, and especially in downtown Calgary. Limiting these environmental factors would improve spatial health. Facing this issue, the OSP throughout highlights a necessity for non-motorized pathways in parks or for its park-connecting ‘greenway’³² so to deprioritize the predominance of the motor vehicle.

In sum of environmental factors, municipal Calgary literature appears to incorporate some degree of ‘environmental inclusiveness’ in space, yet both in literature and visible outcomes suggest that Calgary could work harder to make recreational urban space more available and healthier.

2.4.1.3 Calgary locales

Regarding individual spatial locales, and as far as where the neighbourhood fits into the city plan, OSP (2002:15) principles order its needs in the following four spatial scales: first, Neighbourhood; second, Community; third, Region; and last, urban design of natural

urce_atlas_of_alberta/climate/annual_total_precipitation_of_alberta/annual_total_precipitation_1971-2000_big_map.png

³² Also see Rotary/ Mattamy Greenway (2015) for more information on greenway development.

environment. Neighbourhoods are more citizen-centric compared with regions, while regions are more based on continuous physical characteristics. Communities (and districts) take a varied scale somewhere in between these two.

In unpacking these scales, the prioritisation of the ‘neighbourhood’ is a good sign that, at least on paper, people come as close to priority as they could be while still under the purview of the municipality. In some sense, a neighbourhood is like the idea of an urban village as it represents the individualized human socio-spatial ‘urban’ scale. Alternatively, the region appears more defined by distances and the physical environment while more contextualized by bureaucracy and socio-economics. The community-level compromise between these scales, perhaps indicates a balance between park user individuality and city capabilities.

With scales outlined, plans and priorities are turned into spatial outcomes (as in parks). The MDP (2013:162) explicitly states that the city shall foster community dialogue and participation in planning, promoting community education and engagement. This is a far cry from the authoritarian-sounding utopian plan warned against by Jacobs’ and others, as in the Literature (and pointed out by Reeds (2011:162)). Fostering dialogue and participation comes across as more constructive than, say, restrictive guidelines (e.g. ‘you will/ shall’), checklists (‘you are going to’), and rules (‘you must/ mustn’t’). Reinforcing this move away from authoritarianism, the MDP section does not outline how people or park users are identified or engaged by, or by what means feedback turns into apparent (park) development.

Now the Calgary park user may be tentatively described from the municipal planning point of view, as follows. Presumptively, the park user is of a well-understood ethno-cultural community or a neighbourhood person living in Calgary that visits and uses the park,

whereby the park is the physical and social space used for various recreational purposes. In the OSP and MDP documents, the park user is conceived of rather concretely. Since the park is concretely designed and planned for on behalf of city people this stands to reason, perhaps to allow for greater spatial efficiency. However, while the municipal frame contains diversity and adaptability, the frame itself reads as somewhat fixed and unable to adapt; the Plan will become increasingly-irrelevant over time. Built spaces and even municipal documents might be designed to be as dynamic as park users are.

2.4.2 Kuching

Finding information about Kuching was more difficult than Calgary, especially on parks and gardens. Even after locating sources, the information was harder still to secure, often requiring official paperwork, approval from authority and extra delays for processing. Despite these structuring processes, seeking information more often met with official rejection. This indicates a difference in how Kuching municipalities and leadership approach park users by the way they treat a researcher asking for information.

Expanding on this treatment, regionally-speaking, Rimmer and Dick (2009:250-252) outline problems in the governance of cities in Southeast Asia, whereby urban governance (over people) is weak and ‘economic development’ the much-preferred paradigm. Municipal governments are caught between rising expectations of the public, very limited resources, and limited powers to use those resources. By visiting municipal offices in Kuching, I too got the impression that park users were more or less subsumed into an anti-sociological and pro-development perspective.

Local politics is not a straightforward scene here, especially considering the increasing population and ‘big development’ projects going on during the research term. It is important to point out that the leaders of Kuching may be far less trusting of park users

than say leaders of Calgary are. I get this impression largely from my experiences dealing with municipal and bureaucratic hierarchy, and by what citizens have said to me in this regard³³. There appears to be a strong disassociation between those ‘high up’ in offices and the people on the ground. Related to this, there are observably far more community events going on in Calgary. While community events certainly go on in Kuching, one impression comes across that between park users and providers it is ‘them-vs.-us’.

Another interesting challenge comes from language and cultural differences: Kuching people speak³⁴ Malay, Chinese, English, Bidayuh, Iban, and others. Libraries and bookstores typically offer texts written in Malay, Mandarin Chinese and English. In other words, I can easily access a mere third of the written languages while many more languages are not written down at all. In this way, at least for this researcher, understanding what goes on in Kuching is more difficult than in Calgary.

2.4.2.1 Kuching urban form

Another major challenge for studying a city in Southeast Asia, again as Rimmer and Dick (2009:3) point out, can be summed up into asking about the relationship between people, time and space, and the economic and political trends making themselves visible or felt in everyday life. Beyond these sociological characteristics, Miao (2001:19-27) focuses on the current issues and debates in three areas: namely, urban identity, socio-economic sustainability, and equality of public participation and accessibility. The following discussion expands on characteristics relating to both Rimmer and Dick and Miao texts.

³³ NB: not supported by specific examples in this paper.

³⁴ More elaborately: Sarawak Malay, Standard (‘West’) Malay, Hakka Chinese, Hokkien Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, other Chinese dialects, Bidayuh of three or four dialects, Iban, English, Tamil Indian, other Indian languages, and so on.

Observable while travelling around Kuching and contrasting Calgary, the seemingly unstable and unchecked urbanisation of city building on open spaces, lower-quality industrial production, and less-apparent environmental commitment altogether suggests that the city is less sustainable and more precarious as a high-tech or highly-developed urban region.

Public participation and accessibility in municipal-allowed or municipal-led activities, from community events to requesting public information, is more restricted than in Calgary. Instead, the often ethnicity-based spatial communities of Kuching appear more stable and less mobile than in Calgary, perhaps giving Kuching people less personal, yet more small-group freedoms or equality through representation or membership in such groups.

More specifically in urban form, some such as Ahmad Bashri Sulaiman and Suhana Shamsuddin (2001:143-147) have pointed out that streets are ‘vanishing’ in the region. Path networks for walking have come under rezoning land use policies, especially from mall building and traffic policies. In addition, designers’ desire to build beyond the local context means traditional architecture and landscape will be replaced by design types that emerge from different cultural and climatic urban environments. This means the walk to the park becomes too hot or covered over, or even abandoned altogether due to its inhospitable exposure. While walking in Kuching, I have often found this is the case.

Ground-level experiences are also contextualized by history and customs that give Kuching its spatial experiential form. For instance, besides its post-colonial history, Kuching is intermeshed with *kampung* settlements in and around it. These village-like living areas are apparently under threat in the region, as Guinness (2009:33) indicates, from middle-class suburban development relative to greater personal vehicle preference. In the same place, Guinness also points out that in *kampungs* informal economic links are very important. This

emphasizes employment as a ‘necessarily productive’ part of well-developed socio-cultural practice. Hence, for a park to be successful in Kuching, it may need to reflect this stronger notion or capacity for ‘necessary productiveness’ to be meaningful and successful, or convivial, among its city communities.

In sum, a (potential) ‘multi-ethnic Asian, *kampung*-inspired culture’ park user, of Kuching, might look at large open spaces more suspiciously, especially if the space is not being put to any apparently-productive use. The more clustered ‘feel’ of the urban space may change how the park user moves through space, as in it slows them down, but how this applies exactly to an open park space is unclear. And lastly, how the park user is served or treated by the municipality may be a secondary concern from a local governance standpoint vis-à-vis economic and development programs.

2.4.2.2 Case 2: Kuching North

In an interview at the Kuching North city hall³⁵, I was informed that I would not be granted access to their Landscape Master Plan in any form. Despite explaining the need for information and presenting university documents, I was not granted access. After pressing, explaining the need to characterize park users, the office provided an inventory of public facilities, and some old research done on bicyclists. For the most part this information was useless, but it may indicate how Kuching North sees and treats members of the public or at least university research students.

The two documents given to me in place of the park plan are discussed here briefly to get a hint of the park users conceived therein.

³⁵ On April 23, 2014.

2.4.2.2.1 Inventory of Public Facilities (Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara [Kuching North], 2015)

This inventory list gives no mention of park users even though there is a clear enough implication that such people must exist. Interestingly, virtually every photograph in the document (and there are many) had no people in them whatsoever, as if the photographer had chased them off or waited for them to go away. In this manner, the document (while useful in helping identify a couple of park sites to administer questionnaires in) seems to extend the effort to remove park users by way of its representation, adding some veracity to the earlier literature claim that urban planners sometimes prefer unpeopled spaces.

2.4.2.2.2 Bicycle Need Analysis (Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara [Kuching North], 2004)

As something additional to the inventory list, this authorless research paper was provided for the research effort. While marginally more useful than the inventory for characterizing park users, the age and quality of the document is highly suspect.

A total of 29 park user respondents had been interviewed using closed-ended questions based on their activities. Park users often replied along lines that showed they were very concerned about attitudes of other users in the park or on bikes elsewhere. One theme that came across strong enough was that people should have more rules applied to them and more self-discipline in park use for their safety in the park, and for the safety of others.

Focusing solely on bicycle users in public spaces, people are characterized here according to their activity. Regarding their activities, there seems to be a special emphasis on what people are doing wrong, and therefore should be righted.

2.4.2.3 Case 3: Kuching South

From the Kuching South municipality, I was more successful in getting textual material. They offered their 2002 landscaping plan (Majlis Bandaraya Bandaraya Kuching [Kuching South], 2002)³⁶. While dated, it offers a more comprehensive view of the approach to parks and users. That said, park users are rarely mentioned at all and seem more assumed into being than anything else.

The planning methodology for the parks at the state/ provincial level is given in the form of a flowchart (p2:7)³⁷ laying out how Kuching South, through this Plan, gets its understanding and empowerment of park construction. The flowchart indicates clearly that experts only, rather than people, are a source for knowledge on park development. Problems (as in ‘Problem Statements’) are identified at the municipal level, so, presumably the park user is meant to be conceptualized as ‘a problem’ at the municipal level—but off the bottom end of the flowchart. For a cited example of users as ‘problems’, participation of tree planting by the ‘private sector’ was considered unsatisfactory in a section on feedback (p3:9). In addition, referring to people as ‘private sector’ indicates an attempt to keep park users out of the heart of planning altogether.

Moving on, the diversity of Kuching South landscaping design is based on the diversity of people so to bring out uniqueness in park space. In other words, cultural symbols are represented in park content and form (see p4:2). The Vision, here, apparently seeks to create an (abstract) environment of peace, comfort and safety which thereby suits both residents and local environment. In effect, this is the closest to a mention of individual park

³⁶ All page numbers cited in Section 2.4.5 refer to this document.

³⁷ Cited to aforementioned text. Citation system here adapted for this Section.

users in terms that imply they are more than mere activity-doers or else troublesome park inhabitants.

Last, the roles of groups and individuals in public space are mentioned (p5:6). The intention is to make landscaping a public activity and work culture, and to beautify the park. Apparently, users need to be ‘educated’ in this regard as the document points out. Most of all, users have a responsibility to make the municipality aware of park damage or problems.

Summarizing the literature from the two Kuching City municipalities, information is too unreliable to say how park users are really viewed by them (or in their own words). In the aforementioned interview with Kuching North, I was told that park users are more exercise and family-oriented. Other than that, there is some passing mention of ‘diversity’ in the Kuching South Plan, but this comes out more in terms of what the municipality shall build for city people rather than mentioning how the department may understand such diversity.

Besides that, arguably it can be said that Kuching municipalities either consider parks users only according to whatever they are doing and especially doing wrong in the park, or else they appear as some kind of customer who should not complain or question the methods of the municipality when parks are ‘given to them’.

2.4.3 Municipalities in summary

In general, the municipalities acknowledge park users but in different ways. Altogether, the City of Calgary offered a more systematic, representative response to researcher engagement. The Kuching municipalities offered a friendlier and more personal engagement but were either unprepared or unwilling to divulge information on park users or the full scheme of park planning. As a researcher, it seems fair to extend how I was engaged out to how city-

people will be viewed and treated in general, yet without deeper access to these offices and documents this claim is speculative.

Other than that, the texts and plans on Calgary and Kuching support the literature in general and then the Theoretical Framework Chapter. The park user represents her or his park social space by identifying with places differently. In addition, the literature adds credence to the possibility that park users can be compared according to some universal, regional, and individual characteristics.

2.5 Writing Style

Before the Literature Review summary, a brief discussion on the writing style used here is given to support its somewhat uncommon usage. To begin, academic ‘voice’ in research is so prevalent in writing that the purpose of research and its outcomes can be occluded by acronyms, statistical supremacy, and an almost normative burden placed onto readers that suggest that you must be ‘in the shop to understand the shoptalk’. While technical language and mathematical prowess indeed communicate well-respected aspects of the researched world, there must be no rule that states technical methodology on language need be applied as the gatekeepers of communication.

For starters, I use this controversial, sometimes-conversational tone so that the research methodology and results are directly readable and available to the largest audience possible. Analysis should be clear in my mind, as written, so that it can be discussed equally clearly in results. In essence, the thesis has been written in a way that shifts workload away from high-level data analysis towards a preference for more relatable results.

That said, the research must prove rigorous. While there are no p-values or advanced SPSS analyses here, the data is coded and then interpreted after checks, double-checks, and

triple-checks to ensure valid and reliable descriptions of park users. This process is presented in the beginning of Chapter 5, on analysis, and is shown in the corresponding Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2. There is no attempt to objectively present deduced statistical proofs here. Descriptive statistics partially-inform descriptions of park users rather than descriptions resulting only from numerical data. The park user is effectively narrated carefully as a set of descriptive statements from observation.

This methodology has some support in sociological research. In *Reassembling the Social*, Latour argues that narration and description in methodology and writing are superior to proofs by generalizations and explanations. He shows how the purpose of communication is much more useful (and less abstract) in qualitative interpretation than supposedly objective clinical list-reports or omnipotent third-person writing (Latour, 2005:128). Hence, to achieve a useful narration, Latour essentially says *show rather than tell*.

At least in this paper, ‘showing’ involves giving voice to park user activities and experiences. While some generalization is needed to make use of narrative—for the reader to be able to comprehend and respond to the research—such narrative is not a story aiming for reader interest, but a record of discoveries.

The descriptive technique is most essential here in the results, in the form of park user interpretations. In writing or expressing, by carefully choosing words to express park user interpretations, a narrative means taking smaller steps rather than writing vague general stories or precise objective facts removed from the Social World. In other words, as Latour claims, the small holds the big (Latour, 2005:243). The implication of this claim is that people cannot be described better than by people themselves. Phrases contain more logic than broader things communicated through an imposed type of discourse.

A discourse or academic school that insists on a particular manner of ‘objective talk’ in attempts to hide research biases or take attention away from mistakes in the research distorts brief truths claimed in sociological results. Reason asserts that objective voice of the technocrat is not always all-seeing and irrefutable, and discourses in an imperialistic tone shall fail to tell the whole story. This is important because sociological understanding has been more thoroughly explored from the material-monist perspective. Attempts to incorporate a cogito perspective along with deductive pursuits results in oft-repeated concerns of reliability or validity in ‘good research’. Yet, even with the best statistical engines, it is clear that people will not always act as predicted, and objective generalisation will certainly have blind-spots. Centering research on a park user’s responses offers value in the attempts to describe them.

To support this criticism of the predominance of objective data, recent reports argue that statistical data and big data are flawed, even when such pursuits are advanced to their extents or ‘biggest’ in terms of data intake and calculation power³⁸. What these articles show in common is that data is not always better despite the trend for more and more input. The article-writers’ remediation of this big data problem comes in different forms, including just doing more of the same by collecting more data, by being more objective and thorough in curating data, but also by context-based reassessments of a misunderstood sociological outcome instead of a blind devotion and policymaking based on numbers alone.

Context is sociological, and the sociological space is both objective and subjective. Qualitative, subjective, and simple interpretations of data can help formulate augmented sociological understanding, perhaps shedding light into the conscious being of park users.

³⁸ For example, see articles <http://www.govtech.com/data/When-Big-Data-Gets-It-Wrong.html> , or <http://www.govtech.com/data/When-Big-Data-Gets-It-Wrong.html> , or <https://www.utiainc.com/resources/blog/how-bad-data-changed-the-course-of-history>

Academic elitism in the academic space for particular methods over rigorous valid and reliable work is as counterproductive as spatial elitism in park spaces.

In sum, this research is approached differently and hence the paper is communicated differently. The literature indicates that even those most adept in big data are questioning its monopoly in research and policymaking. In trying to avoid the objective technocratic voice, so to preserve the inter-subjective perspective here, I too seek validity and reliability but in a manner appropriate to its methods.

2.6 Literature in Summary

In summary, the literature discussed how the park user is conceived from an ontological basis, how users exist in social space, and how they seem to be conceived from various theoretic or ideological standpoints. Following this, the park user literature focused on the more local spatial scales of Calgary and Kuching, respectively. Lastly, a discussion of the writing style of this paper was supported in the context of the park user-centric approach.

To recap, the park user is a spatially-generating actor in a particular place, to be observed in Kuching and Calgary. Then, the park user is a kind of person, like any other, exuding a subjective position which cannot be ignored either in data collection or in the writing that describes them here.

As follows, the Theoretical Framework Chapter is tailored to capture the essence of these arguments to construct a valid frame for descriptive potential, primarily sought in the form of indications through park user responses.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theoretical Framework is designed to suit the purposes of this research, and therefore given special attention insofar as how the park user is observed and analysed as data. This chapter draws attention to the park user using the tools and understanding gathered through the overarching discussion up until this point. It is divided into four major parts, namely, the research perspective, units of analysis, units in the spatial medium, and description of social space.

3.1 Qualitative Sociological Perspective

Descriptive potential of park users must be achieved to produce results. To begin with the perspective, a sociological perspective without a person or people at the heart of its meaning cannot mean anything. Hence, an individual's interaction in space and among other people is paramount.

As discussed in the Park User Section 2.1, the social context of space and abstract borders allows us to experience and express (or do) things with identifiable meaning. 'Identity' indicates the connection between self-consciousness and experience emplaced through space and time. So, in effect, the target unit is reciprocal with space and time while consciousness constructs borders in these conditions.

The investigation here takes on a dual form. First, involving a material perspective, individual experiences in the physical park must be sought out. Second, involving a non-material or cogito perspective, expressions or activities done are sought out as well. Binding this dual inquiry, the qualitative investigation is subject-centric as the inductive source of data rather than seeking objective, deductive ends.

As Figure 2.2 suggests, the dichotomy between subject-centric and objective-deductive approaches may be well-practiced, but through spatial mobility and physicality our concept of space recombines in our minds and bodies, so a dual-perspective is more comprehensive. Critically, material or non-material perspectives are non-fundamental, and we only *consider* these two parts rather than actually trace fundamental monism out to real-life situations. Instead, the individual respondent comprises consciousness and experiences, this reciprocation as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Social spaces, therefore, are self-imagined and physically-apparent. Spatial apparency is decided in the mind, and therefore from the subjective position the self-imagined borders of social space emerge before any ‘real’ borders of, say, the park emerge. Of course, this may beg the question: *If a tree falls in the forest with no-one around to hear it, then is there sound?* Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 indicate an answer to this while helping to inform the Framework: Physically, the sound is certainly produced regardless of cognition; then from the cogito perspective, the physically-favouring response is meaningless if the sound was never heard. The conceiving or experience of the physically-falling tree cannot connect with an experience without the agency to form that concept, even though the physical realm must certainly provide that input for the cogitation to be valid.

Returning to the sociological perspective, rather than dwelling between the inner and outer material units of ‘my’ physical body versus everything else, the mind can be seen more as the perceived border between the conscious ‘me’ and the physical outer ‘not-me’.

This socio-spatial boundary is more sociologically relevant than where people collect within park fences or else what types walls are built where, as seems popular with many methodologies. When considering both physical and cogito perspectives simultaneously, this ‘spatial mind’ partially constitutes generative expression; not just the recording of traces

of material working parts in that space. In this sense, describing people as either merely working parts, behaviourally or ecologically, merely extends one aspect of the dual paradigm and fails to take note of the subjective, user-first perspective.

In closing, the public park is foremost a spatial-physical outcome emplaced with meaning by the park user. Meanings are emplaced by other people too, but these are not for whom the park is designed. Park spaces and expressed-experienced boundaries are both tangible and social. Therefore, what is meant by ‘sociological perspective’ here is the result of experiential-expressive reciprocation constructing park-social meaning.

3.2 Units of Analysis

Park users, taken as material-conscious units, and as moving, living contexts rather than solid or predictable artifacts, suggests that the unit of analysis is not dichotomized into irreconcilable parts. In practice, this would further indicate that municipal park providers should build parks from more than material or behavioural understanding alone, incorporating attempts for subjective understanding of park users as actors as well.

From the conjoined cogito-material perspective, as in Figure 2.1, a park user is both an individual Subject and a collective Other. Here, the Self observes as sovereign, and then conceives of others in the park as ‘beyond the self’.

Taken from a subjective standpoint, others include all park content including other people, but also trees, wind, sound, and so on. As a spatial mind, the social process originates from the subject, by considering outside world experiences with the ‘other’. This subject-other interactivity is social space in its simplest form and frames a more fluid and interactive unit of analysis.

Conversely, many would disagree with sociological existence conceived this way. For instance, some have argued heartily against practices of dichotomization in social discourse, naming it a curse in our culture as it drives separation between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ experiences (Sennett, 1990:9). However, this ‘anxiety’ is unfounded because while the dichotomy is non-fundamental, it is practiced in our lived efforts.

Going into more detail, duality, as Cresswell (2004:102) says, is an anachorism splitting the in-place and the out-of-place³⁹. This suggestion that the schism is an invalid result of a dual-perspective rather than a monist one is refuted by the subjective creating of place itself. Instead, spatial conception entails the consideration of what is beyond that space in order to define what actually constitutes its inside⁴⁰.

Therefore, both the material ‘outside’ and the cogito ‘inside’ are clearly necessary for a spatial description of the user because people exert dualism whether it is fundamentally valid or not. Describing a park user through a monism, while perhaps strictly true as a favoured perspective, is false in essence, hence creating this anachorism especially when materialism attempts to exclude cogito understanding.

Returning to the ground, in practice, park users extend duality whenever they go to parks and effectively create or recreate social spaces through both presence and behaviour. This connects the ‘I’ of the park user, that singular and subjective unit of analysis, to his or her experience, rather than attempting to discard the cogito as an inconvenience or a merely-material oddity.

³⁹ Anachorism is a misplacement or wrong location, in geography.

⁴⁰ Also, see Bourdieu (1985) on what may constitute the in-out space juxtaposition.

3.3 Social Space

The medium of social space is the theoretical scope of the park user, describing how the unit of analysis exists and the nature of social interactions. In this Section, the park user is framed as an individual actor in space, dually expressed and experienced among other people and objects. Following that, the discussion turns to structural networks and the Actor-Network Theory for ways to describe units in space while emphasizing the subjective position of the unit of analysis.

3.3.1 Actor identity

In a spatial network, as it concerns both the collective others and the individual park user, the individual identifies relative to other park users as well as other objects. For instance, behavioural social space records objects of varying complexity and triangulates them within the notion that denser and more interactions are better than fewer.

However, there is much more to consider than merely people-objects in Euclidean space, fixed in time for later application to related cases. To identify park users in space properly, users are foremost the people who are going, wanting, intending, or have been to the park, and still have it in mind. In this context, related social interactions characterize the space, and these interactions happen not only between the subject and other people but with all related perceived or thought objects. Hence, there is no limitation on possible park experiences or expression. The identity of the park user in social space can be described according to where they are, in a relativistic sense, in a network among ‘others’.

To understand how the relative park user might identify, the user position is often falsely fixed across time too. Arguing against this, Bourdieu makes the relativity of the actor known, pointing out that position in the Social World is expressed as a location in social

space, expressed by constructing a representation of that space. This location or position of the actor is ‘their social identity’ in each discrete *moment* (Bourdieu, 1985). These moments are the expressed making of social space and experiential representations thereof. The addition here is that the ‘moment’ in time is nonlinear as an identity-point most relevant only at data collection time.

The indications are, therefore, that socio-spatial identities are continually and momentarily remade. To further support this idea, note that physicists since Einstein affirm a theory⁴¹ that the past does not exist *in* the past, but only presently. We cannot go back in time but only refer to it. Everything happens now relative to the now itself.

Other scholars point to relativity too, including Lynch (1972, p. 6), Carmona and Wunderlich (2012, p. 6), Castells (1996, p. 429), and Haimés (2003). In a summation of these ideas, *the relative actor is a relatively autonomous stratified constructing observer in local time*. So, since relativity is so important to identifying the actor, the question is how this applies to a real park in such complexity.

Sceptical sociologists might point out that relativity is a meaningless black hole of non-meaning. Countless park interpretations, they might say, will not produce an actual result. They may also say, for instance, the relativity of expressed-experiential spatial understanding has no measurable points, it is not easily encompassed by objective data, and positionality is decided in part by an unfixable and immeasurable cogito self. This also points to the *curse* of schism indicated by Sennett (1990) throughout his text and what I interpret as a ‘separation anxiety’ among the sceptics regarding an apparently-tragic division of the body and mind in urban sociology.

⁴¹ For example, see: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2932870/Is-future-decided-New-theory-time-suggests-past-present-future-exist-universe.html>

However, despite this apparent anxiety, duality is certainly felt and done. Complexity persists despite how immaterial it is. Therefore, the identity of the actor should not be reduced to exclude subjective or cogito aspects. This relativity of the park user better-informs the social networks they express and experience.

3.3.2 Structural Networks

Castells in *The Rise of the Network Society* appears a dominant influence in spatial-networking sociology. Space, according to Castells, involves communication processes that make up cultures. Communication processes evidently take place in a structural, and therefore predominantly materially-monist world. Further, Castells argues, this network society might be characterized by looking at social or biological rhythmicity in context with a ‘lifecycle’. Time in life and society is made meaningful and measurable only with death in mind (Castells, 1996:372-451). By reasoning on the functionality of this structural network type, a subjective point of view through the structural lens would identify an individual actor as an ego operating in a kind of milieu bubble, whereby experiences and symbols go into that bubble and expression and symbols go out (as in Figure 3.1).

Considering Castells’ indication of the lifecycle, this kind of living clearly refers to physical being, especially since a cycle indicates continuation among other life-cycles. However, the subjective position of the Self, as an expression of life *as* time, is ‘everything’ rather than a portion of objective universality *in* time. In other words, while the material and experiencing self moves about structural and conceived space physically, the subjective aspect of the park user is not confined by time and space; it *is* time and space.

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, from a structural perspective the ego-centric network described by Castells is most informative of its subjects due to an extensively-inclusive

incorporation of consciousness. However, this inclusivity while convenient is a work-around for the fundamentally-false negation of expressed cogito.

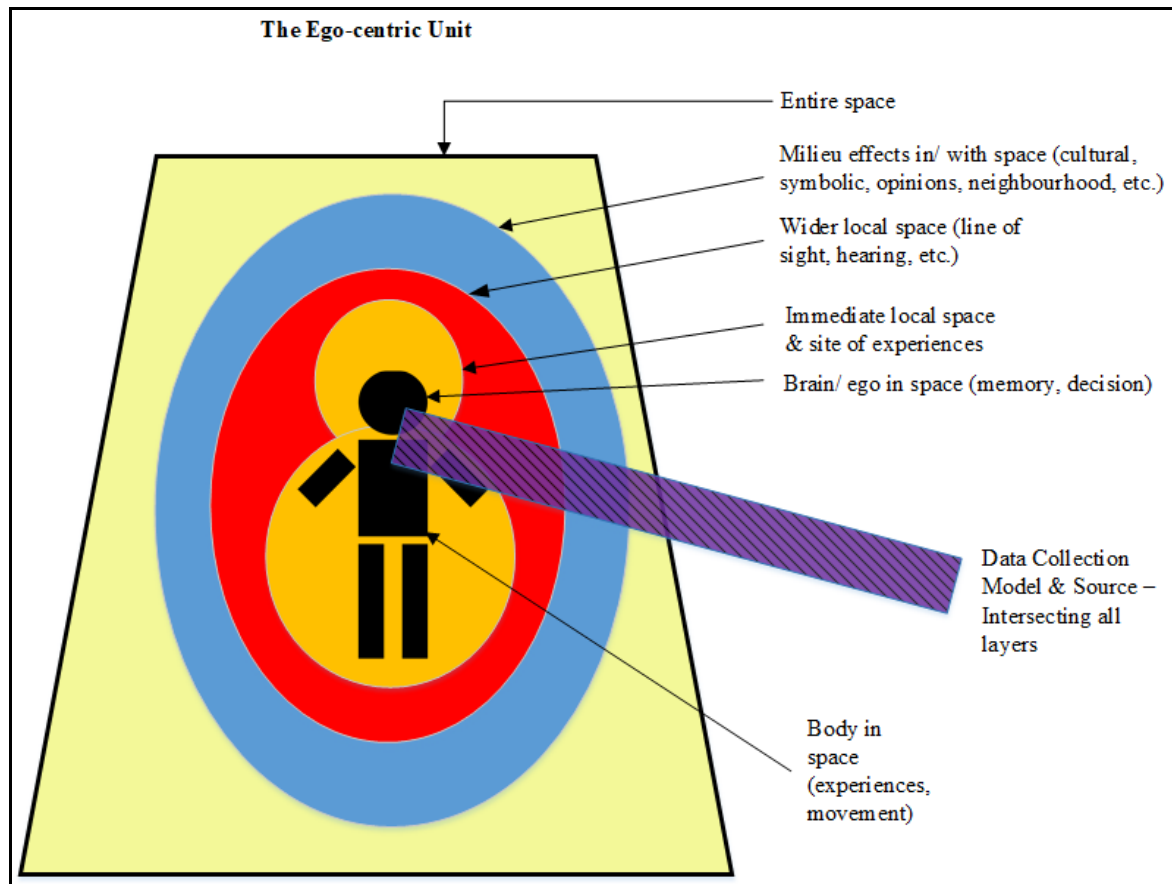


Figure 3.1: The Ego-centric Unit

Source: Author

As is indicated in the Figure, rather than the experiencing-expressing actor taken from a dual perspective, the inexplicable cogito is contained and either ignored or explained away (see Section 2.1, especially 2.3.4 & 2.1.1), and the mind is solely a brain-body outcome. As an extension to the discussion here challenging exclusively-materialist approaches, such perspectives are clearly unable to explain cogito beyond calling it illusory.

Whether by ignoring or installing ad hoc tools to account for cogito, structural networks cannot describe subjective life from an individual's position. All that the structure might contain, materially, still fails to encompass the subjectively-boundless aspect of the

mind present in the non-phenomenal *Me* expression. Structural networks shift continuously, due to this, but the approach seems to fail to explain why. Take for instance the observation that, “How social networks are formed and maintained is shifting” (Ohnmacht, 2015:33). Essentially, social networks are always shifting in all ways to some degree. Spatial relativity indicates that space has materially-rigid processes in the physical world, while simultaneously the subjective actor space is immaterially produced and axial to the observer.

Regarding the network actor, Castells details communication processes, physical experiences of conflict, and the nature of the data referred to throughout (see Castells (1996:372-451)). For instance, see Figure 3.2 illustrating material space and how symbolism describes space only after going outside the network interaction and inadvertently create new meaning. It must do this to account for conscious agency.

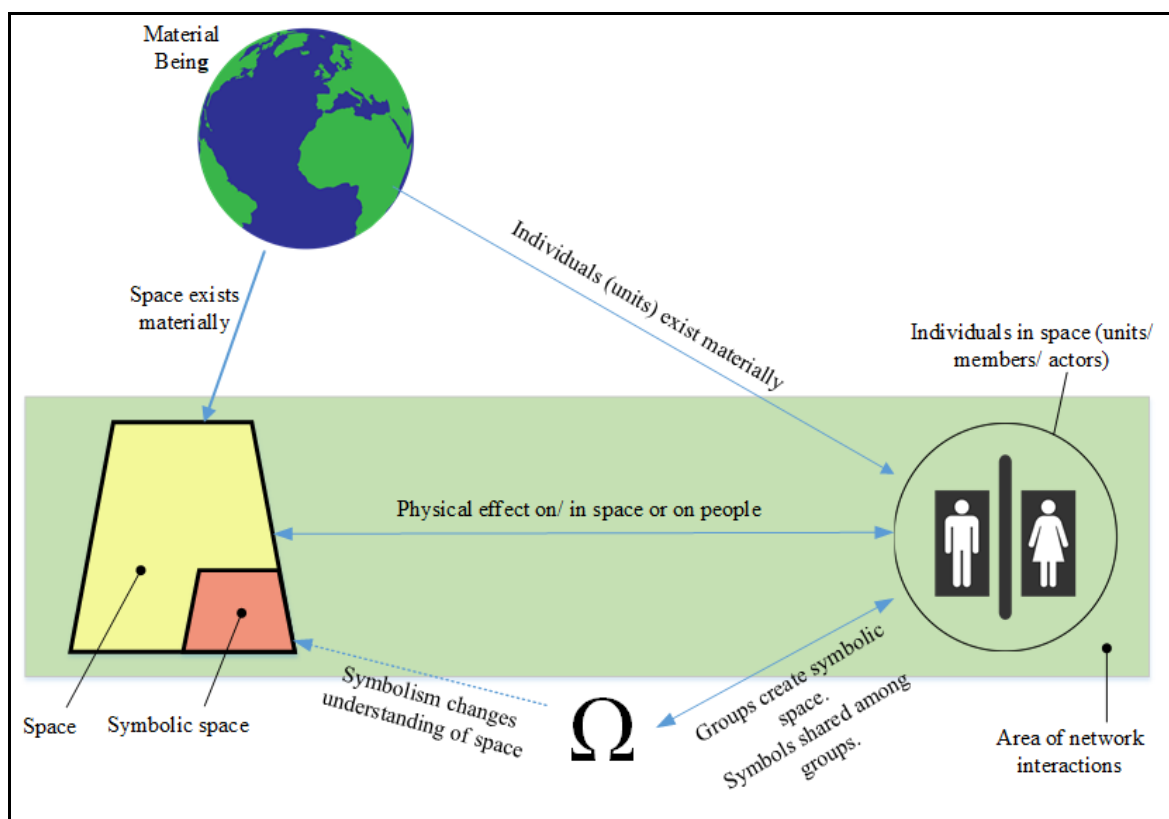


Figure 3.2: Material Social Space

Source: Author

Structural social space, by avoiding the expressive nature of cogito unjustly confines the Self. For instance, communication processes and conflicts are summed up as symbol-sharing to capture the indeducible agency of the Subject.

Importantly, for its own purposes, material spatial understanding is not incorrect. However, if cultures are only merely the sum of communication processes, and as in Castells' assertion that conflicts explain interaction, then the individual mind is not worthy of consideration at all. Yet here the mind is, defying totalitarian material logic. So, in effect the structural network discourse suits itself.

Instead of processes, network nodes as intense sites of spatial interaction are one way expressed being can be measured without reduction. The expressing mind in part defines the importance or decisions regarding nodality, such as how well defined or 'intense' a node may be by going to popular place.

Characterising nodality over processes may be better descriptive of social or group connections incorporating expressed and experienced identity. Nodality, whether outcomes of inter- or intra-connections, is seen when a group works to achieve a desired outcome (Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev, 2015:389). Either choosing to participate in the group, perpetuating the desire to nurture better connections, or forming any connection for its own sake requires expression.

Socio-spatial nodes take many different forms. Some are based on behaviour, others on usefulness, but also as a considered point of interest. Take for instance Jane Jacobs (1992), who throughout describes street users by their slowly, carefully-cultivated relationships. These actively-structuring and subjectively-intense relationships take years to nurture while locals build strong social and livable spaces.

It may be reasoned that while the outcome of the continual deduction of material discourse is simplification (inward but never reaching zero), cogito is outward, and the intersection is the 'I' with the physical 'me'. Therefore, striving for this deducible simplicity of expressed park use by reducing expressed being *adds* layers of description to the user in order to contain the neglected subjective position. Social spaces in this perspective become more complex because the monist perspective explains cogito ad hoc as something created out of nothing, a phantom, in a reversal of its deductive direction. Research traditionally aims for conciseness, so unless cogito is incorporated and looked to at its source, instead considered only by say adding a qualitative questionnaire onto a behavioural inquiry, then the research has lost its parsimonious quality.

Altogether, exclusive monist sociological explanations betray the full perspective of social life. Structural networks produce a great deal of valid observations of space. However, the fundamental blind-spot from this perspective means only part of the socio-spatial story has been told, or else the other part is tacked on to make an inquiry more inclusive-looking.

3.3.3 Actor-Network Theory

Rather than adding on qualitative commentary, descriptive potential can still be inductive as this subjective-centric approach requires by looking at the social activity as a way to understand the actor or park user.

Unlike a sociologically-systemized or structural part, the 'actor' according to Latour (2005:47), "is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it." From reading Latour, the actor seems to be a primarily-experiential platform which outputs social connections, and that social connections themselves are what may be described rather than actors themselves. This fused Actor-Network (as in 'ANT')

offers evidence that something social went on, and hence the researcher attempts to interpret patterns from it even though the patterns of interactions are not social in themselves.

With an intent to capture the park user in the moment, description must allow for their instantaneous release too. For instance, Latour (2005:35; 128) indicates that definition should be performative rather than pre-formative, as in ‘show rather than tell’. If performance is the source-point of information for the actor-network, then the ‘actor’ park user cannot be held up as an artifact; or, described to exhaustive lengths that invite impositions of dated, normative ‘sociological forces’. Description, therefore, is a momentary and weak assemblage of found (network) pieces that would be attributable to the notional park user.

Then, in writing or expressing this data, related to Writing Style Section 2.5, an ‘ANT narrative’ uses smaller steps rather than general stories. For example, phrases contain more logic than broader things such as discourse and so on. This is similar in how theory cannot explain people better than people can describe themselves; as in, ‘the small holds the big’ (Latour, 2005:243). Going smaller is always the more accurate interpretation. A ‘small’ narrative, such as informed by an open-ended questionnaire, allows for more agency (of self-consciousness) than anything bigger (of normative forces).⁴²

For this research, gathering up pieces of the ‘small’ experiences and expressions involve asking park users where they are going, how they interpret the park, observing whom they are with, at what time of day, and so on. From this, generalizations of individual park users can be made from similar responses. For this, say by tabling questionnaire data, simple descriptive statistics can help to show what is more similar or common; note that here,

⁴² To note, such narrative is not a story because fiction tends to highlight whatever it needs to inspire reader interest. Park user descriptions do not need to be more interesting than they are honest.

traditional and rigid quantitative significances, and statistical methods, will not prove whether a park user space exists or how, and instead would add layers of complexity and error potential instead.

So, in concluding the main idea, for the sake of communicating some ideas on validity, park user social spaces are similar to Latour's four points on ANT usage (2005:132). Using Latour's points but with changes for my purposes⁴³: (a) park user social interactions are point-to-point and observable in park space; (b) socio-spatial interactions are relevant only to the park user from their position, and anything else is inferred; (c) interactions, of a park user, reveal an effort that can be traced qualitatively by use of questionnaires, noting that the 'invasion' of the researcher into the park space shall partly disrupt the respondent's spatially-relevant park experiences and responses; (d) strictly-speaking, parks as subject-centric social spaces can only be formed, reformed or fragmented by park user activity alone, and spatial inter-action is the only means to reconcile park provision with more general park user needs and wants.

In summary, since a dual perspective is utilized to frame the park user within this scope of research, framing them as complex, momentary subjects expressing relative identities, these actors are described qualitatively as shallow, dynamic units of analysis rather than through an intricate tracing of all their interactions.

3.4 Describing Place

When generalizing park users according to their preferred place, park social space can be described as having features that are performative or practiced, as physical and social, and

⁴³ This is not a hypothetical statement. This is a statement acting as the culmination of the Theoretical Framework until this point.

of differing types of abstraction. Despite the range of these features, meaningful identity comes from only one place: the park user.

In a valid framing of social space, whereby a park user group identifies more similarly in-group than with any thing or person out-group, the park user (subject) is the central or axial 'location' and all other objects take a relative position. This centrality is like Wellman and Potter's (1999:51-52) suggestion that, "An ego-centered network is like a planetary system in which a host of *network members* surrounds a focal person". The network might be traced in the form of nodes, paths, or borders among numerous park user members.

Then, among numerous users, it stands to reason that the park location is more approximate than precise. The resulting generalities inform park designers about whom they build for. Spaces are necessarily unique, just as their defining subjects are.

3.4.1 Place

Place is where space becomes real for descriptive purposes and is usually bound to a location. That said, place is 'created, or rather, creating', says Cresswell (2004:83). *Real* space does not mean 'out there' and removed from people in any way but part of the subject. Socio-spatial places are hardly absolute physical locations subordinating park user experiences and expression.

Instead, a park-place is something quite like a city-place, such as Calgary or Kuching. As Ley (1983:9) points out, the city is not some unwavering entity that directs or shapes people, any more than interactions in or across space wholly describe a city or its citizens. However, while out-space interactivity changes the in-space, solely in-space interactions are closely-related in comparison and therefore inform the expressed space better. Accordingly,

each park should contain potential respondents closely-related to their space, their voices necessarily louder among countless views of anyone who might define the place outside it.

Within the city, though each park is unique, its activity can be located across different neighbourhoods, offering a variety of place-types. Then, when investigating each space from inside, it follows that built park content, its landscaping, fixtures, rules and guidelines, special events, and so on are all notionally-flexible objects which help characterize how the social space is identified.

Despite boundary mobility or shifting spaces, though, the unit of analysis is clearly more mobile than the social space. The static element of geography are home places where spatial members interact (Axhausen, 2015:10). Park places, as locations defined by its park members, represent the nodal congregating where the park users are doing their recreational activity, wherever they are.

3.4.2 Narrating place

With identity and place framed, descriptive tools are then required to devise a valid park user narrative. Especially relevant for parks, places and spaces may be described as having shapes, vectors, and boundary as the most notable characteristics. Further, as discussed in Section 3.4.1, the social space may be well understood by lines, nodes, and times in the form of behavioural vectors, points, and histories so to speak.

Additional to those linear or pointed mono-dimensional descriptors is the understanding of space as an exhibited 'shape'. Shape can be regarded as geophysical areas locatable (by map) with particular characteristics. Similarly, Kingwell (2008:165-171) highlights the importance of circles in context with lines and right angles. Shapes in this way may be interpreted as a symbol in a material network because circles are enclosures. For

instance, passing into a city by entering its walls is to completely enter an enclosed or encompassing space and become a part of it, and perhaps as a protected guest.

Parks, though, appear to have more permeable spatial boundaries in general than physical walls represent. In the park, you are often a welcomed guest but are usually free to come and go as you please, perhaps passing only a small barrier or fence to do so. According to Jacobs (1992:257), “often borders are thought of as passive objects, or matter-of-factly just as edges. However, a border exerts an active influence”. Jacobs (1992:260-268) also argues that borders encourage blight because they interface with permeable movement in the areas adjacent to that border. This especially includes built borders, parking areas, railroad rights-of-way, and others. Borders, in a sense, sap or block the fluidity (or human motion) required for diversity.

In some cases, borders will be rigid, such as expressways and ramps. In other cases, borders intensify use, as in waterways or waterfronts. Borders can also be made into ‘seams’, whereby they are more permeable and encourage improved through-movement. In a nutshell, boundaries are for keeping out *and* for keeping in. They are for crossing over, they shift, and yet encourage a stable physical form.

Recalling that the park user exists as an outpouring of doing and as a collection of done moments and experiences remembered, park user performance and responses to experiences connect to conviviality, health, or the lack thereof in park places. Hence, the dynamic features of the park user help to guide effective park description. In this way, park users will be given the opportunity to express along spatial lines, times, nodes, locations, and borders. Analytic work framed in this way shall indicate how well the municipality is doing for park users and what might be done to improve park management and design.

Therefore, place may be narrated by identifying the park space form by recording park user expressions and experiences of the park. This data is observable by asking park users directly on what they are doing, where they are going, how they are going about it, and their park experience.

3.5 Framework Summary

To provide an accurate trace of the theoretical position of this paper and to continue the thread of validity within the scope of study, the Framework Summary revisits the four main Literature Chapter investigations on park user identity, the park and user social space, and Calgary and Kuching in literature. In this way, the Framework Summary restates the Theoretical Framework to explicitly inform and justify the Research Methodology in general, how data is collected, and later analysed.

To begin, insufficient park user literature was found in a way that subjectively and qualitatively assessed and described user characteristics. Hence, it was more fruitful to approximate identities from a wider range of writings. Within this literature scope, the park user frequently appears as either a ‘body of behaviour’, a part of the systemic or structural whole such as in city or societal components, or as an expressing and conscious being.

In contrast to the commonly-found sociological theory, the Theoretical Framework here was designed using a qualitative subject-first perspective incorporating both the material and cogito aspects of being. The units of analysis are thinking, acting, and experiencing park users present in the park. Framing park users this way validates the scope of study in a broad manner and the following summation details how.

First, on park user identity, the social space of parks is an extension of the park user, and the user identifies with the space in all ways through both aspects of being. There is

value to research from this standpoint since park users described in only the materially-present, structural, or behavioural capacities consider only part of sociological being.

Second, on how park users identify for descriptive purposes, parks are both physical and non-physical social spaces and these performed sites contain all park-related interactions within. Park spaces should be measured according to their performance, evident in park user responses. For instance, beneficial park land invites heterogeneous, convivial, recreational, and more inclusive public use. Also, park places are better managed at scales no larger than the local neighbourhood and community.

More specifically, the park space is an extension of, and extended to, the user through social spatialization. In this manner, the user emplaces the park in space and time by recycling experiences into action. Action connects with expressed behaviours since particular (i.e. 'good') activity-experiences may lead to repeated activities and experiences in the future.

Third, regarding the scope of limiting the research areas to Kuching and Calgary municipalities, the literature and framework discussion clarified how park users might be generalized. In addition, investigations of Kuching and Calgary parks in literature offer a general context for discussion. For instance, Calgary park users may be more individualistic and Kuching users more collectivistic. Also, Kuching municipalities appear to be more authoritative in their treatment of citizenry, whereas Calgary adopts a more citizen-focused approach in interpreting what city people want or need. In the Theoretical Framework, these points create a context for an overall understanding of park users through either reflections or refutations of these generalizations.

Altogether, the Theoretical Framework does not conflict with collecting research data by way of a questionnaire, as a questionnaire can be written to seek out subjective input

based on the park space experiences and activities. This embodies the dynamic inclusion of ANT-like actor-activity given as brief evidential moments for recording. This, as a bridge to Research Methodology and to support Validity and Reliability (see Section 4.4), adopts a park user-centered position whereby the experiences and expressions of park users are sought in the form of qualitative questionnaire responses.

To clarify, the Theoretical Framework renders valid the groundwork for the Research Methodology. The attempt to describe park users is valid because questionnaire responses and observations can detect social interactions without reducing them. Also, the park user-centered approach is the most relevant position from which a researcher can observe the park user, and then related to this, questionnaire questions fashioned to draw out personal park user responses on park use and experiences offer the best potential for a ‘snapshot’ of park user identity within the scope of study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research Methodology Chapter summarizes the theoretical framework in how it applies to park users in the field through data collection methods. This chapter is designed as a break in flow from the literature. In this way, the intention is to clarify rather than repeat. After a concise summary of the methods following, the chapter is divided into four sections which elaborate on the approach, data collection, reliability and validity, and lastly ethics.

4.1 Research Methodology Summary

This summary acts as a brief overview of the detailed Research Methodology description given throughout this chapter. In short, this study only focuses on the park users in Kuching, Sarawak (Malaysia) and Calgary, Alberta (Canada) at parks under municipal management, looking at a selection of 50 parks per city, 100 in total. Primarily the data comes from administered questionnaires, with 102 recorded in Kuching and 131 in Calgary.

The research methodology used here involves a qualitative interpretation of park users in the form of structured description. Informing this description is data taken from park users by using a questionnaire, administered through non-random convenience sampling in park spaces in both case study areas of Calgary, Canada and Kuching, Malaysia. Questionnaire questions are derivative of the Research Questions and seek ‘descriptive potential’ on experiences and expressions of the park user. Section 4.3.3.2.1 describes the precise respondent selection methods.

After collection, data is coded through open, and then axial coding, with coding based on what features appear to stand out in responses; the categories and groupings for

this are decided as they come up rather than pre-determined. Where more descriptive coherency is required selective coding is also used. In coding, stages of reduction and aggregation of the data include grouping very-similar replies together and then putting them into categories or types that indicate identifiable characteristics. See Section 5.2 for details and Figures on how the results were processed in a standard, reliable manner.

Informing the layout of the Questionnaire, the Research Methodology is structured by the Research Questions as framed through the Theoretical Framework Chapter and the resulting Research Design (see Section 4.3.1). The essential questions ask: One, what is the park user? Two, how does a park exist? Three, how are parks expressed and experienced? Four, what characteristics of park users and park use are shared between different societies? Five, what park user characteristics are interrelated to some degree among all park users in the dataset?

Separately, validity of the research project is justified by gathering and interpreting information from park users in an open-ended manner to draw out social, physical, and non-physical characteristics; these characteristics are drawn out with the least ‘friction’ from normative prescriptions as is possible within the limitations herein.

Reliability is argued by the structured data collection and analytic methods (Section 4.3 and Section 5.2), notably in the form of observations organized through various mediums and stages of reduction and aggregation.

The rest of the Research Methodology Chapter involves detailing how the research is communicated and what it communicates, insofar as how methodology connects ideation on park users (Chapter 2 Chapter and 3) with actual results (Chapter 5). The next three Sections continue with: one, the approach and research writing methods; two, the general

methods of data collection; and three, by expanding on reliability and validity of the research. The last Section covers research ethics.

4.2 Approach and Writing

Discourse is an essential component of the research, particularly while trying to communicate a description of the park user. For this, park users in effect indicate how they can be generalized. Indications are sought by how users express and experience their park use, or in other words, how they identify or associate (with) the park.

4.2.1 Descriptive potential

Before statements on park users can be written as results, there must be a sturdy case for such based on evidence. To begin to build this case, park user understanding emerges from earlier discussion whereby a person senses and ‘imagines’⁴⁴ the park experience as well as ‘experiences’⁴⁵ it through material consciousness. This roots the sociological investigation to the heart of the matter: the park user.

In this way, describable sociological understanding of the park space comes from characterizing users in the park according to their own responses, and by looking for indications of how park users differ from a generic city citizen.

In this sense, the first Research Question: ‘does a park user exist?’ has already been presumptively answered⁴⁶. Descriptive potential develops from here.

⁴⁴ Imagines in a manner similar to how Hegel uses recognizes, in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Miller, 1977).

⁴⁵ Experiences, as in, ‘transcendentally’.

⁴⁶ Even though presumably (and sociologically) park users do exist, I cannot justifiably hypothesize or guess here what the results will indicate of park users. I have too little evidence from literature or previous research to make such claims. This means that rather

From this kernel, administering questionnaires in the park creates the opportunity to hear from users by asking people questions and observing. Respondents identify whether they are using the park, e.g. recreationally, what exactly that might mean to them personally, and what related actions and experiences come of it.

Descriptive potential is tentatively informed through answering the Research Questions (Section 1.3) through frequency observations of park user responses, and then through simple descriptive statistics to help confirm (or refute) such interpretations.

4.2.2 Descriptive statements

Descriptive statements essentially communicate an over-arching observation, as a characterization, of park users in public parks in Calgary and Kuching. The descriptive statements common to one city are contrasted against the other city where applicable⁴⁷. More importantly, though, park users are analysed and compared as a single dataset.

The content of park user description is sought in the data variables. Refer to the Figures in Section 5.2 to see how resulting interpretations were made in a systematic manner. Descriptive statements came from analysing each dependent variable (as in Section 5.3) in the form of initial interpretations. Then to communicate these results in more detail, the

than structuring the detail of the analysis in advance, the data and analyses themselves inform both the park user description and the necessary writing format as well.

⁴⁷ For example, reliable stark contrasts within a single city population would suggest that park users should be provided park services for at distinct and small scales, e.g. ‘the neighbourhood’. Elsewise, stark contrasts between the different city populations of Calgary and Kuching may imply that park users are not well-served by generalised approaches of landscaping and design written in ex-regional contexts (such as an Asian park built to Western standards). And finally, fewer contrasts in general may support the possibility that park users are more a universal group, and this would be encouraging for more global exchanges of knowledge.

initial interpretations were cross-tabulated, leading to the interpretative statements expressed in Section 5.3.4.

Following this, Chapter 6 offers a summary answer to the Research Questions founded on the interpretative, descriptive statements.

4.3 Data Collection

Primarily and broadly-speaking, data collection involves qualitative framing park users through the use of Questionnaires (referring to the sample in Appendix A) administered to recreational visitors at parks in Kuching and Calgary. The analyzed and interpreted data are in effect structured observations.

Secondarily, observations are taken by the researcher from the parks as well. Park space observations add context, verifiability, and may raise new questions. In this way, researcher observations might involve comparing what a park user sees with either what researchers see or as an attempt to see the park as a park user.

Organization of the detailed data collection methods here is as follows: research design, general scope, data sampling methods, and limitations. See Section 4.3.3 for full details on park and respondent selection methods.

4.3.1 Research design

The research design involves qualitative interpretations of descriptive statistics and researcher observations. This also Section incorporates some illustrative examples taken from the results to aid description.

The Survey tool Section, which follows, advances the research objectives by asking park users questions connected to the Research Questions. As a qualitative, subject-first

inquiry, park users are encouraged to respond in an open-ended manner, and after all the data is tabled the similar responses are coded for use in basic descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation.

To render the research design clear, it must be highlighted that the complexity of advanced statistical analysis, such as used commonly in SPSS, is not sought out here. These methods favour deductive and objective analyses, as is covered in Chapter 3, and breaking down data beyond frequencies and frequency-comparisons that involve parsing the qualitative-inductive nature of a subjective response beyond its own meaning and effectively turns the study into an objective, deductive one.

Using this qualitative subject-centric research design, with enough questionnaire samples collected, consistencies (or inconsistencies) are then identified and tabled by way of open and then axial coding for mechanical data reduction and analytic categorization in the context of the park. Coding responses is done in the face of overly-complex subsets of data, as in results that communicate multiple ideas through a single question (as can be expected in open-ended questionnaires). How the data is coded involves attempting to understand the various sociological factors connecting questions, answers, and related ideas. As a guiding frame, answers are reduced as little as possible to favour preservation of meaning.

To illustrate this, there was no need to code a question such as ‘Are you a park user? Y/N’ (from Section 5.3.1), but up to four coding steps were used for responses to the question on ‘What do you experience in the park?’ (from Section 5.3.3.2). Cases such as the latter often involved multiple instances where the coding revealed little or no indications worthy to report on. Separately, selective coding was used occasionally to examine specific and potentially noteworthy points such as exploring whether calmer experiences in the park led

to more positive park experiences (from Section 5.3.3.2.2). Refer to Section 5.2 for the illustrative model of how the coding and staging progressed.

There is good reason take multiple steps, as staging in this way helps work through various interpretative challenges, such as trying to understand what one park user means compared to another in their respective wording. Multiple coding stages also allow more dynamism with data such as applying one complex answer to two data points, or else applying two repetitive answers by one respondent to a single data point.

As an example to show how coding was accomplished in individual cases, respondents' answers were first tabled in raw form and then responses were scanned for keywords that could count as 'very similar'. For example, in Calgary, park user S001 said that 'large open space' was an important experience to them, while S005 said 'open space' was important; in this instance, both answers were taken as 'open space'. In other instances, data reduction was avoided: for example, S010 said that trees and greenery were both important, so 'Trees' and 'Flora' are marked and counted separately rather than just flora encompassing all individually-mentioned greenery.

Rather than detail every analytic run and additional coding stage in the text, in either the Methodology here or the Results Chapter, the staging is evident in the categories of answers presented throughout Section 5.3.

In addition, cross-tabulation is used to help refine description by supporting or weakening statements based on respective analyses. To summarise this and keep on task, Section 5.3.4 presents the results of the initial interpretations throughout Section 5.3 after cross-tabular analysis in the form of reinterrogated and refined interpretative statements. As advanced statistical software packages are not used, initial interpretations reprocessed in Section 5.3.4 help verify that statements hold up against other variables. In this way, these

various analytic stages must ‘agree’ with one another to build towards a stronger interpretation. Using this staging technique instead of relying only on calculation, there will be greater potential that the park user social space has been detected and is therefore describable from a subjective standpoint.

Using the general methodology up until this point as a guiding frame, the five core Research Questions are now synthesized into questions which the Questionnaire shall be interpreted to answer. The actual Questionnaire questions can be found in Appendix A, in the most recently-used state⁴⁸.

4.3.1.1 Survey tool

In this research, the survey tools include Questionnaire responses and researcher observations. The Survey answers inform the Research Questions. The Survey questions are derived as follows in Sections 4.3.1.1.1 to 4.3.1.1.5, whereby formative questions (*italicized, below*) form a direct link between the Research Questions and the Survey questions. Refer to Appendix A for the Questionnaire.

All things considered, the Questionnaire is purposefully brief in consideration of respondents’ time because people have in effect paused their recreation adventure to respond. A longer questionnaire might draw users out of their relevant recreational state of mind.

Also, the questions are designed to be open-ended⁴⁹ in nature as supported in the Theoretical Framework Chapter (see Section 3.3.3, and Latour’s (2005:243) “small holds

⁴⁸ English version only.

⁴⁹ To add, in these Survey questions I have tried to avoid alienating respondents by sounding either ‘too intellectual’ or ‘dumbed down’, and failing that, by adapting troublesome questions as necessary in the field. Additionally, asking questions often produces a ‘leading’ influence upon the respondents, in that it guides them to think in certain frames. Leaving answers up to respondents, whether elaborate or curt, is presumably (e.g. when in the middle

the big” argument), here argued that open-ended data collection collects ‘the small’ non-normative data, giving way to more meaningful and accurate interpretations. It follows from this position to record smaller, more careful movements, that the breadth of respondent answers and answer-types would be vast within the lens of a subjective-interpretative study, and this further justifies the need for the simple multi-stage frequency analyses (as in the Results Chapter).

Besides that, other observations that are not central to either park user experiences, expression, or identity are collected by the researcher after each questionnaire is done. These are treated in a manner similar how the independent variable data collected, as not central to the park user description.

4.3.1.1.1 Identifying the park user

The formative question here is, *what is the park user?* To answer this, the researcher will go to 50 parks and recreational green open spaces run by the local municipalities in both Kuching and in Calgary, seek out a minimum of 100 people in the park through non-random convenience methods by approaching park users as potential respondents based on line of sight as the researcher or assistants travel around the park, and then speaking to who appears immediately-available and self-identifies as a park user.

The rationale for these methods is to collect and work with straightforward, explicable data that remains within the scope of the research. As the goal here is to build an interpretation of park users in an exploratory fashion, and due to the lack of a formal

of a park) the best way to get qualitative-quality responses. With enough neutrality in wording I hope to see a clear majority of respondent expression rather than channeling of responses.

hypothesis, statistically-valid and structured sampling will be an unjustified expenditure of resources and time insofar as it is a non-parsimonious to achieve the Research Methods.

In this way, more-formal methods might give the impression that conclusions here are more proven or hold up stronger than they do. As argued in the Theoretical Framework, Chapter 3, while attempting to utilize Latour's four points on ANT usage (or see Latour (2005:132)), I have interpreted that qualitative interpretations are better suited to methods that are minimally structured and simpler so as to preserve a (hopefully) humbler narrative.

That said, sampling bias may occur due to the limited scope of spatial and respondent selection methods, and therefore results would be improved by random methods targetted to more incisive research questions.

So, using these methods, visitors will be asked: 'Do you identify yourself as a park user?' This closed-ended question is a simple opener to help ensure competent responses. In addition, 'How often do you visit this park?' (i.e. frequency of park use) will be asked. Also, respondents will be asked to identify whether they are a resident of the city.

In subsequent questions, subjective open-ended, or self-identifying techniques are used. This is done since, subjectively, the park user is best at identifying him or herself.

4.3.1.1.2 Park user existence

The formative question here is *how does a park user exist?* This investigation of identity is sought by interpreting park use to trace some commonalities among people that would be insightful to park planners and managers. For instance, literature has identified the importance of paths, nodes, and convergences in how the park user travels within, to, and from the park (as discussed in Section 3.3, or see Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev (2015:389)).

For this, park users will be asked: ‘How do you get to the park?’, and, ‘In brief, how do you travel through or across the park?’.

Park users will also be asked: ‘What are you doing in the park today?’ This should indicate how they express association with the space. Related to this: ‘How do you identify as a park user?’ is asked, seeking either expressive or experiential answers, or both.

In addition, park users are asked their income group or status. In order to better support the rationale for why income is an indicator in this study, since park users might generally reflect a socio-economic group (discussed in Section 2.3.6 on Spatial justice, or see Rigolon (2015)), or reflect say a ‘universal’ city citizen without many park-related commonalities, it is important to ask: ‘In your own terms, what income group do you identify yourself with?’ From this, answers such as ‘poor’, ‘struggling’, ‘stable’, ‘well-off’, and whatever else respondents offer, rather than raw income numbers⁵⁰, are of interest.

Furthermore, note that income is an important indicator when seeking to characterize park users, as low income is a barrier to access (as Ercan and Memlük (2015:75-75;217-218) note while also arguing for more qualitative park perspectives). Income is also an important indicator to the more thorough planning documents such as the Open Space Plan (Calgary, 2002:6) by pointing out the struggles for low-income users or potential-users.

These questions on how a park user exists, whether by use, identity, or method of travel as responses to the Questionnaire (to questions 2, 3, and 4 as follows in Appendix A)

⁵⁰ If park use is primarily connected with this dependent variable over any others then I would have to propose that economic means and status were more indicative of park use, and that the park social space is hardly generative of social identity at all. Here, clearly-subjective answers are sought. If there is no subjectivity relating park use to socio-economics the results will reflect this by offering no strong indications.

are analyzed categorically in order to represent experiential and expressive meaning from a ‘human perspective’⁵¹.

Separately, distance travelled and park use per week are analysed nominally as independent variables, and are primarily useful in cross-tabulation against the core questions.

4.3.1.1.3 Park space

The formative question here is *how does a park exist?* For this, respondents describe aspects or experiences of the park, physical and otherwise, and this helps to characterize the space within users’ respective ‘social worlds’ (i.e. in the ‘conscious city’ of Kingwell (2008)). The emphasis here is on the physical-spatial, and the park users’ identification with the space. In addition, researcher observations of the physical and apparent structural contents of the sampled parks are done.

Furthermore, users are asked to describe features of the park important to them, such as physical content, personal interpretations, or social interactions with brief elaborations of what is seen and experienced.

4.3.1.1.4 Expression and experiences in park space

The formative question here asks *how are parks expressed and experienced?* This question, related to both Research Questions 4 and 5, involves the cross-tabulation of results from the above three formative questions (Sections 4.3.1.1.1 to 4.3.1.1.3). To accomplish this, responses are analyzed through the aforementioned sequential coding stages and visual

⁵¹ ‘Human perspective’ as in what comes to mind or comes out in language, might be shared socially or ideationally. This is intended to preserve the qualitative and park user-centric emphases in the research.

comparisons of cross-tabulation tables and charts, according to interpretations of expressed activity and experienced park use as reported by respondents.

4.3.1.1.5 Park users in different cities

Lastly, the cities of Kuching and Calgary are contrasted to identify shared, comparable characteristics between park users. Ultimately, the goal by the analytic terminus here is to identify the park user socio-spatially in the park and city and attempt to justify a summary description.

To reiterate, these cities are chosen as an attempt to be more generally representative of park users of ‘secondary cities’ (as discussed in Section 1.1) rather than reinforce the already-strong voice on primary cities such as New York and others, or else focusing on special but limited cases such as suburban, village, or rural-sized cities.

4.3.1.2 Pilot Study

A short test of the Questionnaire was conducted two months before formal sampling began, in May 2015, using an informal survey run involving non-respondents. This was not a statistical pilot test, and is consistent with qualitative research methods as a “small-scale implantation of a larger study” (Given, 2008:624) and testing the research instruments (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

In brief, five pre-test respondents were chosen from friends of the researcher (three from Kuching and two from Calgary) and two pilot test respondents from Taman Sahabat park in Kuching sampled as followed the methods here in Section 4.3.3. Data collected here was not used in the results.

The Questionnaire was checked for inconsistencies and difficulties in getting the questions across to the respondents clearly. Also, survey administration techniques were pre-tested when working with research assistants, debriefing their exact manner of asking questions to verify that the park user might express as much as they could with minimized researcher interference or coaching.

Despite the lack of statistical pre-test, all data from respondents in the Results is still considered valid and reliable insofar as I trust each respondent in every accepted survey as being competent, and all park users comparable in single dataset per city. In addition, the comparisons made between the two cities act as a validating step of the interpretations, making such interpretations stronger or weaker.

4.3.2 General scope

General scope here refers to the sample areas and to the unit of analysis, whereby the spatial areas are the context for the units. In other words, the units of analysis define the scope.

For the more generalizing sample area, the survey will be done in what qualifies here as ‘parks’. Specifically, parks are recreational public urban open and green spaces restricted to those under the management of the respective municipalities of The City of Calgary, and the Greater Kuching Area (including Kuching North City Hall, the Council of the City of Kuching South, The Municipality of Padawan, and the Kota Samarahan Division). For this research, 100 parks are studied with 50 per city.

Other urban spaces in these municipalities, such as those interpreted as a ‘park’ but which are neither truly public nor municipal-run, especially residential, private, or corporate green spaces for example, are discounted from this study to better focus on the municipality as a park provider, and to stay closer to the (University of Malaysia Sarawak) Masters’ Urban Sociology research theme on Urban and Community Development.

4.3.2.1 Unit of analysis

Within the General scope, and continuing on in the guiding Theoretical frame in Section 3.2, the unit of analysis is limited to people in the park, especially those using it in a general recreational sense. This differs slightly from the Structural Diversity article (Voigt, Kabisch, Wurster, Haase, & Breuste, 2014:480) whereby *recreational* strictly involves those with free time. Here, the scope includes the general ‘recreational sense’ of choosing to go to the park even if the park user is, for instance, just walking through to get to the other side. That choice to go through the park, though emerging from a utilitarian priority, will presumably result in similar expressions and experiences as with those users only in the park for recreation during their free time.

Through this scoping of ‘potential park users’, for units of analysis, people approached in-space will identify her or himself as a park user by way of the Questionnaire.

In addition, the respondents will be judged by the researcher as being competent to reply. Those not competent, for example those illiterate, underage, or taking the survey as a joke, would give responses outside the scope of study. Such responses will be rejected.

4.3.3 Data sampling methods

Sampling is done through Questionnaire and observation, using non-random convenience methods. To summarize this, sampling methods are broken down in spatial and unit types, and is detailed in the following subsections.

In brief, for spatial, 100 parks with 50 in Kuching and 50 in Calgary were selected according to convenience with efforts to vary use. Next, for unit, 233 respondents per city were recorded and analysed as the park user, with 102 taken from Kuching, and 131 from Calgary. Precise methods follow.

4.3.3.1 Spaces

The park and park user are both socio-spatial, hence both people and places are considered part and co-generative of space. This differs from research methodology expressing behavioural human-structural itemization or network mapping, insofar as meaning emerges from the collective park user group instead. In addition, the park is a sample of spatialization within the city context, thereby legitimizing non-user groups with park user influences such as space designers, politicians, journalists, or academics within this socio-spatial milieu.

For sampling spaces, parks are in Calgary and Kuching. For Kuching, comprising of three municipalities, parks are divided at best guess by the spatial arrangement of communities and assorted online resources, and may not exactly reflect actual legal boundaries.

As spatial samples, a selection of 50 parks per city, 100 in total, broadly involves recreational public urban open spaces including: micro-parks, small parks, neighbourhood parks, community gardens, community parks, district parks, downtown (core or central city) parks, urban plazas, recreationally-inspired promenades along the river or elsewhere, greenways, greenbelts, green strips (e.g. next to a highway), recreational parks, environmental park reserves, and potentially more.

For more representative park sampling, samples are chosen according to uses (for park users) and size. This is done informally by park use. To do this, uses are derived from various municipal sources including online resources (such as www.calgary.ca), reading the signboards posted at the park entryways, and referring to the cited park planning documentation including Municipal Development Plan (City of Calgary, 2013), Open Space Plan (City of Calgary, 2002), and Kuching South (Majlis Bandaraya Kuching, 2002). Also,

various statistical geospatial resources and personal knowledge of the area were used as a rough guide to achieve this in the field.

With this use-information, each park was marked on digital maps built using Google Maps built-in annotation software, resulting in more parks than the 50 per city needed to study, so 50 parks were selected by roughly balancing out uses (such as dog park, kids' park, exercise park, educational park, environmental park etc., referring to terms explicitly indicated by the municipality or strongly implied by municipal-built features) and eliminating other parks from the selection set.

Eliminating parks from sampling was notably non-random, too, as after all parks found were put onto the map, the 50 chosen from these were in effect chosen in the field, 'on the fly', or just before going out rather than in advance. With so many variables involved in trying to detail park selection, especially factors that would force changes later on (e.g. weather, closures, events), advance selection is not beneficial over this convenience selection. See the two maps that follow for the resulting sets.

See Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 for maps of the cities, and spatial sampling outcomes of parks researched. Each public park observed in the research project is marked by an icon star⁵².

⁵² Star colour legend. Green/ Purple: human-only park users. Yellow: dog/pet-friendly parks. Dark blue: parks with special purposes such as extensively educative or designed for community engagement. Light blue: plaza. Tree icon: natural area. In Kuching, all parks were pet-free, and three parks were plazas (in the downtown cluster).

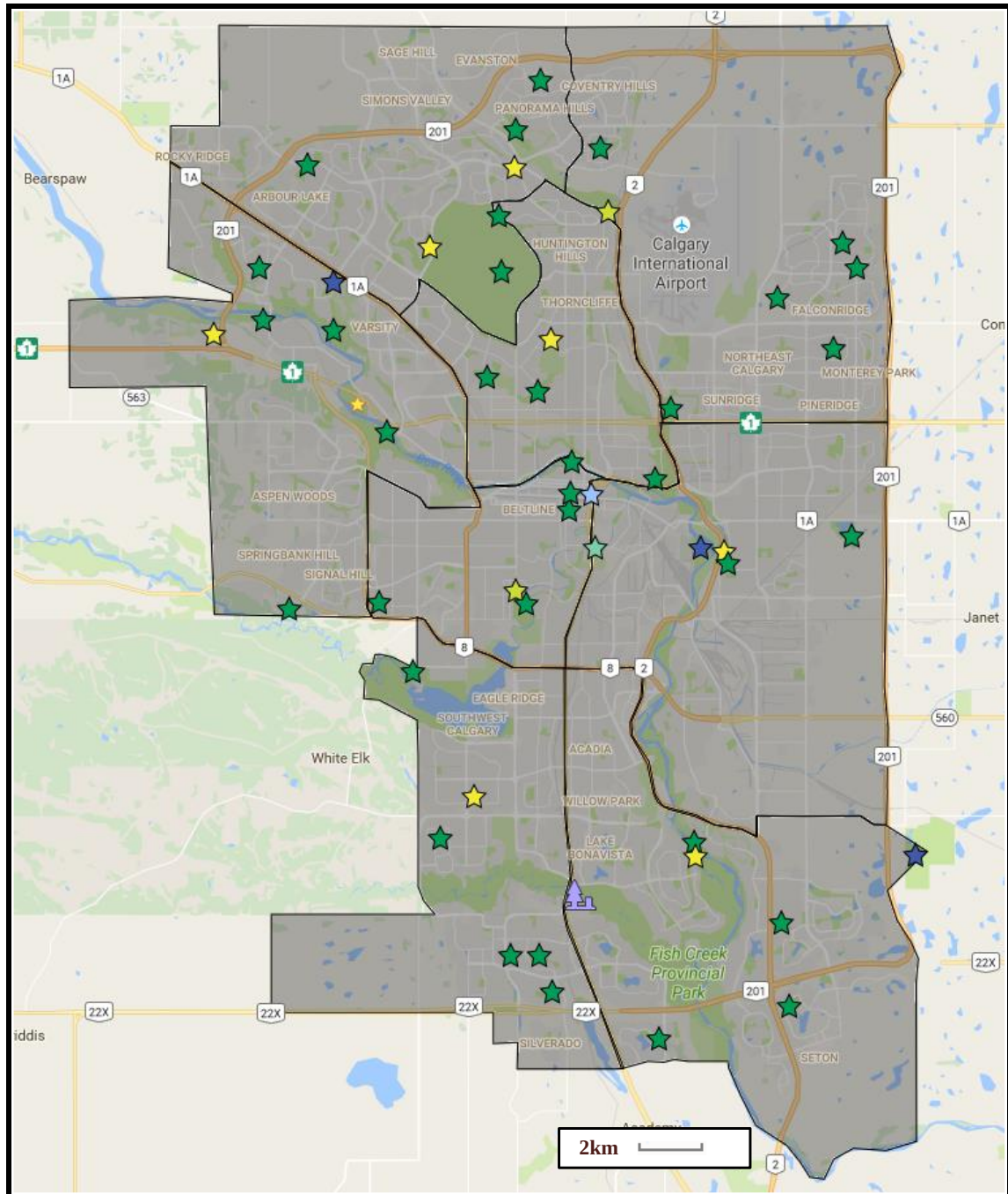


Figure 4.1: Calgary Municipal Map

Source: Fieldwork 2015

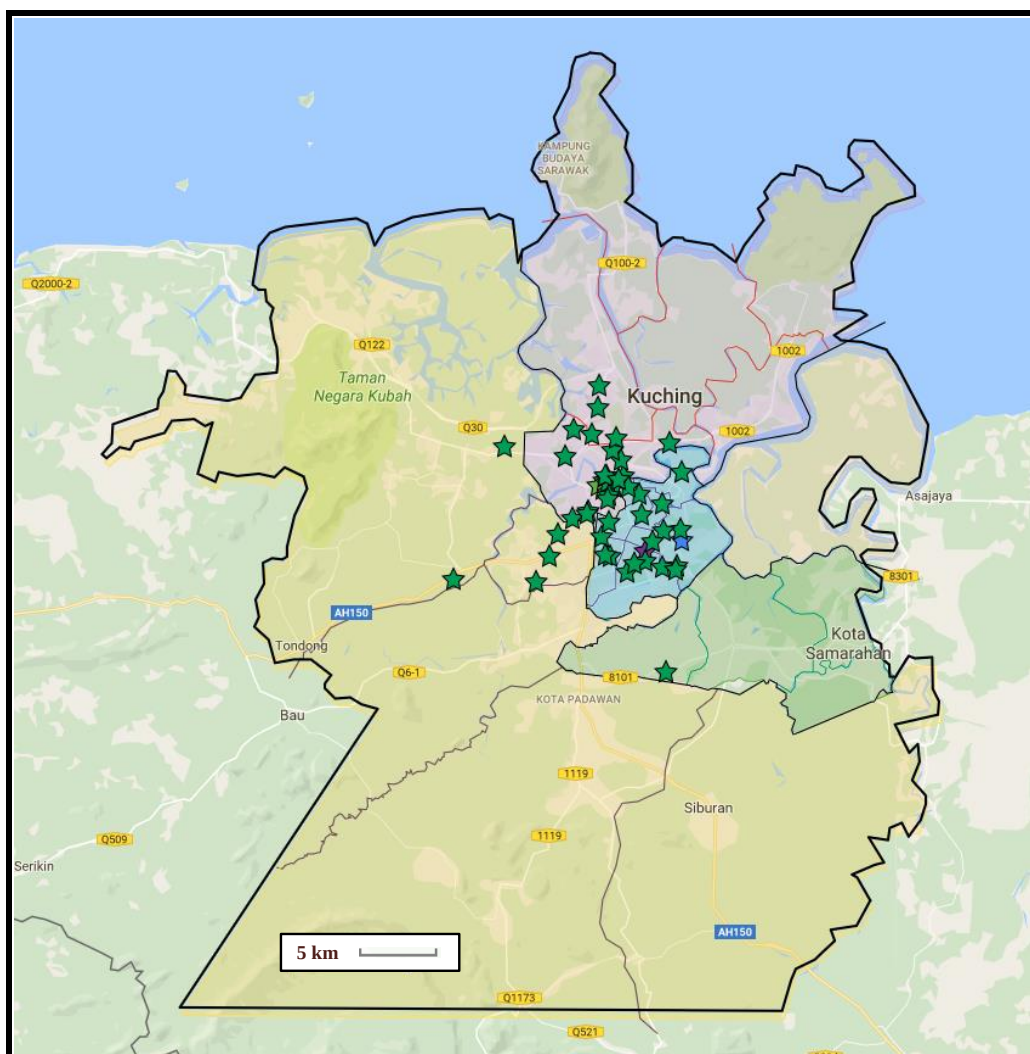


Figure 4.2: Kuching Municipal Map

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Kuching Maps Legend

Colour (of shape)	Municipality
Red/Pink	Kuching City North
Blue	South Kuching City
Green	Kota Samarahan Division
Yellow	Municipality of Padawan

4.3.3.1.1 Observations

Observations of park users and park spaces are taken, in part, by recording additional notes on survey respondents after the line of questioning finishes and the park user goes on their way. There is no limitation to what this may include. Observations are spatial in effect as they are not recorded subjectively from the park user responses but at a distance.

Data collected in this way are not central to the park user investigation and are not used as dependent variables in analysis. This data may offer an assortment of potentially-characteristic secondary or tertiary independent variables. These variables may be used to ascertain whether interpretable traits or conflicting cross-sections arise among dependent variable interpretations.

Observations come in three forms here, namely: those observations appearing in the moment, those appearing after a longer consideration, and those taken at the start and end of the park user sampling run. This is broken down as follows:

First, spatially-interpreted and physical observations are taken from all sampled parks and this can be described in a ‘momentary consideration’ when looking at immediate park content; this includes for example, benches, trees, smells, sounds, rocks, and grass, plus buildings, paths (formal, informal, or imagined), signboards, fences, walls, and so on. Some additional notes on park users are taken too, including what gender the respondent appear to be, their apparent ethnicity, and their roughly-estimated age.

Second, some other features are actively-interpreted by the researcher but taking a ‘moment longer’ to consider. As can be gleaned throughout the Literature Review from various sources, these include borders, edges, barriers, obstacles, practiced or built paths (to, from, between, around and within) and in ‘moments’, pauses, feelings/ emotions, plus whatever else may manifest through reflection.

Last, some observations are made or recalled after the fieldwork, say in hindsight or retrospect, while analysing the data. This last type is severely limited to what can be found recorded in field notes, or observations that are easily-verified and obvious.

4.3.3.2 Units

Building on what was noted in the general scope, the primary research sample involves the potential park user, and confirmed park user responses are analysed as results. Park users are those who are present for generally-recreational purposes. As such, they should not include police officers, marketers, or other such people who have little recreational purpose for being in the park.

Altogether, the aim is to collect a minimum of 100 samples per city (a family or a group answering ‘as one’ considered as a single response only). As a rough guide in advance, this may include approximately 6 samples per park, with an upper limit of 10 samples and a lower limit of 2. The lower limit applies unless limitations (such as an empty park) causes me to abandon sampling that space and, if necessary, return to more popular parks later.

Park locations are spatially nonstandard, spread out, and multi-scalar, therefore through this apparent variety there is reduced need to take a larger number of unit samples within each park to derive a park user description.

Unit samples, as a completed survey of acceptable responses, are collected as follows.

4.3.3.2.1 Administering surveys

In the park, non-random convenience sampling is used to choose which people to approach. As discussed at length in Section 4.3.1, this is done in order to preserve a clearly-

interpretable qualitative narrative without inadvertently ‘adding’ layers of meaning through unhypothesized, untested analyses.

In sampling, the researcher or a research assistant sees someone as a potential park user, then that person is approached in the park, greeted, informed of the research intent, and if willing is then administered the Questionnaire.

As mentioned in Section 4.3.2, an acceptable response is given by a competent individual or small group (such as a family) who identify as park users, while the researcher or assistant write down the verbal responses onto the paper. After briefly illustrating how the Questionnaire is laid out, consent is verified again before the core questions 2-4 (see Appendix A) are asked, typically in a manner such as “is that okay (to continue)?”⁵³.

To address the core Research Questions and the goal to look for park user characteristics, open-ended questions are asked. White space on the Questionnaire page is maximised when possible to invite people to respond more expressively. In asking the open-ended questions, seeking a more closely-subjective answer, leading questions or giving examples is and was avoided as much as possible. If the respondent struggles with the question or answering it, and appeared to want to continue responding to it, some examples might be offered albeit frugally. See Appendix A for the Questionnaire used and more on the manner of question delivery.

Notably, the Questionnaire is written in three languages. In and for Calgary, the survey was written and administered in English only. In and for Kuching, the survey was written in English, Malay, and Simplified Chinese, and administered in whichever language the park user preferred to use. To do this in Kuching, I took on communication and

⁵³ Only one respondent, after agreeing to the survey at the outset, stopped at this point.

translation field assistance to increase chances of getting more responses to questions (asked directly by local Malaysian university students, rather than by me, a Canadian).

Following survey collection, data was inputted into Excel computer software and analysed as laid out in Section 5.2. Before that, Limitations, Reliability and Validity, and Ethics are detailed.

4.3.4 Limitations

The limitations described here are those encountered before, throughout, and after the research fieldwork was conducted. Limitations are especially pertinent to reliability and validity, as in the following sections.

4.3.4.1 Methodological limitations

First, the research offers little beyond interpreting a possible identification of the ‘park user’. The simple wording and brevity of the Survey and Research Questions, and because statistical or advanced qualitative methods are not used, suggests that the findings are neither exhaustively in-depth nor mathematically valid.

Second, the researcher is not trying to map out a network or the spatial interrelationship of actors in all their intricacies, and therefore is limited in how it might describe a precise network or a ‘socio-spatial map’.

Third, this research is predominately in English and considers much more literature from Western sources than from others. Therefore, this paper will not make much use of, or challenge, any particularly non-Western paradigms (as in different traditions) from their respective points of view.

Fourth, two very different places very far apart are contrasted here. It is within the realm of possibility that people over such vast distances cannot be contrasted or compared side-by-side. However, as I believe that people can neither be universalised nor individuated completely, I will go about as if this limitation regarding differences is unlikely to result in an indescribable contrast.

4.3.4.2 General limitations

Time, money and patience are not infinite. As a relatively poor and certainly married post graduate student, one who decided to contrast opposite locations on the planet without funding assistance, my scope may have to be narrowed even further as time goes on.

Other than that, certain practices of my university (and society in general) limit the manner of how to research or make claim upon park users. While neither necessarily good nor bad, institutional limits include: adherence to ethics, laws, local customs, university practices in the style of research and thesis presentation. Similarly, I am limited in how to write out or express the research paper insofar as I cannot simply write whatever I want, and am required to narrow down the paper for brevity and conciseness; furthermore, particular methods of discourse have been insisted on by examiners so as to better situate language of the paper in the ‘academic realm’ of sociology, especially that related to park research and design. In addition, detail of the cross-tabulation work is not described at length here due to page limits, which may erode the argument in favour of brevity.

Besides this, as a social scientist, I might challenge some customs and expectations when possible and when relevant to understanding park users, as long as it serves good research and report writing and still remains within the ethical guidelines.

4.3.4.3 Encountered Limitations

Like predicting the weather, limitations are often encountered unexpectedly after a plan goes into action. Those limitations not obvious or noted here are encountered limitations, and are detailed here. These limitations are split into those encountered before the data was analyzed and while analysis was going on.

4.3.4.3.1 Before analysis

Prior to analysis, the data collection proceeded refreshingly-well with respondents in both cities friendly in the vast majority. Likewise, I came across only rare instances of being refused entry to public space in my efforts to conduct research; only two parks for study were ‘out of bounds’ for approaching park users, both in Calgary (Devonian Gardens and the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary); conversely, no parks were out of bounds in Kuching.

Municipal workers in both cities were almost all always very friendly and some were particularly approachable, interested in what I was doing and willing to talk ‘park business’. There are only a few more limitations to add here.

First and perhaps foremost, in Kuching parks, there were often too few users or none at all. While there are around 100 researchable parks in the Greater Kuching Area (a wild estimate, but at least more than the goal of 50 sites minimum), the number of potential survey respondents encountered was observably much lower per park than in Calgary. As a rough benchmark, and noting Section 4.3.3, the aim was for between 2 and 10 samples taken per park in order to spread inputs out spatially. However, many more parks in Kuching were entirely devoid of human life during each of the two or three park visits, as compared to Calgary. Due to this limitation in Kuching, the per-park respondent minimum benchmark was made flexible, resulting in more zero-population parks than initially planned.

For instance, by the time I finished 50 parks in Calgary 131 samples had been collected on a single run; but on the first run in Kuching only 62 had been collected. The Kuching sample number, I decided, should match up to around 100 or to be more numerically comparable with Calgary, and to do this two popular parks were revisited in Kuching. Specifically, in Kuching, more than the upper benchmark of 10 samples per park, 38 samples were taken total at The Malaysia-China Friendship Park (TS115; for location, see Figure 4.2, the purple star icon), and 15 from Sama Jaya Park (SJ112; same Figure, blue icon). Hence, samples were concentrated and perhaps over-represented in these two parks; furthermore, both parks are in the single Kuching community of Tabuan.

Second limitation, and again in Kuching: all but one survey was done by trained research assistants. While I am very happy with their work in general, especially on the questions aimed at the Research Objectives, a few questions and answers were rendered unusable. In one crucial case, it proved unreliable to interpret in Kuching how respondents walked through or around the park, as in Survey question 2c (Q2c); so, I cannot reliably say what kinds of paths these park users took as a group. In reflection, I failed to be vigilant about—or communicate properly—how to administer this question.

Third, and in both Kuching and Calgary, asking people questions that might be termed ‘abstract’ proved more challenging than I had anticipated. Upon reflection, asking abstract ‘academic questions’ (e.g. Survey Question 3a (Q3a): ‘How do you identify as a park user?’) in a space where people want to relax was not very helpful either to my respondents or to me. In effect, asking people questions in this way appeared to result in borderline respondent annoyance or frustration.

As an extension of this ‘abstraction’ limitation, to avoid compromising respondents’ interest in helping me, Q3a was reworded until it worked as best as it could with minimal

coaching. Due to this, interpretations are perhaps not as precise (or as valid) compared to other questions.

Furthermore, in addition to rewording, Q3a was extended with: ‘...so for example, what do you think about while you are in the park ...or what do you think about when you are about to go to the park?’ and so on. These extensions would seem to put a ‘leading’ aspect into the question. However, despite this, with a careful interpretation and analysis of the answers, as is given in the Results Chapter, losses to validity should be minimized.

Other than for these two questions (Q2c and Q3a) there were no major obstacles in the field.

4.3.4.3.2 During analysis

During the analysis, encountered limitations involved Survey questions Q3a and 4b (Q4b: ‘Please describe non-physical, interpreted features of the park...’). These datasets proved challenging to analyze. While these two questions followed the Theoretical Framework in attempts to identify experiences and expressions of the park user, answers were too complex (e.g. multilayered) to convey in such black-and-white terms. In the results, expressions and experiences can be looked at as either a type of association or a type of non-physical, interpreted experience in both Q3a and Q4b, in two parallels.

This reanalysis requires further clarification. Attempting to construct simple, singular interpretations from such complexity offered too many possibilities for any one statement. The data only started to make sense after analyzing the responses separately in both Q3a and Q4b for association *and* for non-physical experiences. In this way, for type of association with the park, responses were looked at (and hence the park space itself) as expressed either personally, socially, according to space, or to nature. Then alongside this,

responses for non-physical experiences could be typed as either more experiential or expressive, and at the same time as either more extrinsic or intrinsic.

Unexpectedly, results came out clearer along intrinsic-extrinsic lines rather than along experiential-expressive lines. From the data, on one hand, it appeared that park user experiential-expression is relatively similar yet disconnected; essentially these results said little. Importantly here, the experiential-expressive analysis referred more to a state of Being in the park, whereas the intrinsic-extrinsic analysis is more representative of association as means of internal ‘communication’ between the self and outside world; in other words, a ‘movement’. The manner in which the park user connects non-physically with the park, the intrinsic-extrinsic association, shows more definition through analysis.

This overall analytic limitation acts as an interpretable minor discovery or at least as a clarification. The intrinsic-extrinsic manner of interpretation is probably more indicative of the ‘proto-social’ internal-externalized expressions of the *I/Me*, with *not-me*, as discussed in Section 2.1 on ontology.

Altogether, I do not believe that the limitations here have halted answering of the Research Questions. That said, my confidence in interpreting park users’ experiences and expressions was weakened.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

The research here is valid and reliable. This claim is developed through the Literature study and Methodology, as was initiated in Section 2.6. This Section compiles and then summarizes the validity and reliability argued throughout, here in one place.

First, validity is justified by the methods in general by: emphasizing the strengths and admitting weaknesses in the approach style (Section 2.5, Section 3.4, and Section 4.2);

attempting to detect the park user's social space through using methods designed to draw out social, physical, and non-physical characteristics (Sections 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.3, and Section 4.3); and then by drawing on sociological knowledge in literature from various traditions, and from Calgary and Kuching, to consider many interpretative possibilities (Sections 2.3-2.4, and Section 3.1).

In summary of validity, since park users are given space to report on their experiences and interpretations as well as their expressed activities, and best reported on with least researcher interference, users indicate how they associate with the park space. So, data collection is valid insofar as it records verbal and observable information from park users in their respective park spaces. In this way, the identity of the park user is indicated (or 'located in space') through replies that can be considered 'collectively similar' by reducing individual traits to those that show themselves most prevalently across the sample sets as is detailed in the results in Chapter 5.

Second, reliability is argued by the structured data collection and analytic methods here. Data collection methodology is detailed here in Chapter 4, while analysis methodology is detailed in Section 5.2.

To argue for reliability, by using non-random and subjective-centric qualitative data, reliability comes in the form of observations organized through various mediums and stages of reduction and aggregation.

For instance, data mediums are recorded in observations in the form of notes, drawings, photographs, and reflection; mediums also involve open-ended and closed-ended answers that are tabulated and cross-tabulated for frequency of responses.

Then, for stages of reduction and aggregation of the data, very-similar replies are grouped and then categorized or typed in a manner that best indicate park user-identifiable

traits (such as physical, social, and non-physical expressions and experiences). Standardization and rigour in this method ensures reliability is maintained for the results.

It is prudent to note that since the subject's responses are considered reliable as competent subjective responses, reliability is not required in the form of deep quantitative analysis (whether purely statistical or qualitative-statistical), and as argued, a deeper analysis beyond simple frequency analyses denatures the subjectivity of the response.

To further strengthen the case for reliability and validity, techniques for the analysis are discernible throughout the Results (see Chapter 5: especially Section 5.2).

4.5 Statement of Ethics

This research, the researcher (and assistants), and findings shall be confined to the rules of the University of Malaysia Sarawak, and the laws of Malaysia and Canada, respectively. The researcher (and by extension the research paper) will in all earnest work towards following local customs and norms, shall attempt no physical or mental harm, avoid committing taboos or making uncomfortable the people directly approached for the research, and takes into serious consideration the privacy and time of potential survey respondents approached.

In the written form here, any reference using the personal pronoun *I* and all apparent self-declarant opinions and assumptions in the report refer to directly to the writer of this research document, Alexander Curnow, rather than research assistants, respondents or anybody else related to the research project.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, these qualitative interpretative methods centered on park users' responses, taken as data of their experiences and expressions, are made valid and reliable through structured data collection and coding, altogether considered as results as in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis attempts to answer the five Research Questions to support plausible descriptive statements. Results are organized by the Research Questions and ask, ‘What is a park user?’, ‘How does a park user exist?’, ‘How does the park space exist?’, ‘How are parks expressed and experienced?’, and, ‘How do Kuching and Calgary park users differ?’.

This Chapter begins with an Overview of the results. Then, in Section 5.2, a pair of step-by-step flowcharts of the process used to determine results is illustrated in detail. After that, Section 5.3 shows results and evidence for each descriptive statement by dependent variable. Also, in Section 5.3.4, statements are reinterpreted through cross-tabular analysis in summarized form. Last, Section 5.4 discusses these results.

5.1 Results Overview

Altogether, 100 parks, 50 per city, were studied and many of these resulted in Surveys administered and counted. Refer up to Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 for maps illustrating the park sample spread.

To respondents, 12 questions (1a-4d) were asked using the Questionnaire (see Appendix A for details), and 9 of those (2a-4c) were analyzed as dependent variables during cross-tabulation. From the Survey, 10 descriptive statements were interpreted and are presented according to the Research Questions. Figures illustrate where necessary.

The 10 major interpreted statements claim that park users: (1) drive to the park more often; (2) express use as either the end goal or part of a string of activities; (3) apparently

wander or lead along linear, round, or other path types⁵⁴; (4) are more inclined to lower-intensity and health-type activities, and these activities appear most related to social and economic factors; (5) they associate more personally with the park, with group composition standing out in this regard and elsewhere; (6) more often self-identify as middle-income or class and indicate a possible ‘mindset’; (7) they experience the physical park positively and more often along structural lines; (8) experience the non-physical park positively, personally and intrinsically; (9) experience social interaction positively and tend to stereotype each other; (10) and when reporting one experience as positive generally, they report all experiences more positively and this is likewise for negative-experiencing users too, perhaps indicating a correlation.

5.2 Results Processing

To support the analytic methodology both validly and reliably, the way to determine results was designed specifically for this research project. As this design cannot be easily attributed to well-known techniques, the following discussion and two flowcharts lay out every step taken to analyse results.

In both cases, these figures speak better for themselves over a lengthier, in-depth step-by-step explanation in text. In both figures, the process begins from the leftmost orange box and attempts to proceed rightwards along the red arrows. The grey boxes are informational, and the green and purple lines show the checking and verifying processes especially when conflicting evidence was identified. Black-bordered steps identify formal stages towards the goal, while circular steps show where critical decisions were made.

⁵⁴ A weak finding.

First, Figure 5.1 illustrates how the dependent variables were analysed and interpreted into descriptive characteristics centering on the Research Questions. These descriptive characteristics involve only frequency tabulation done using Excel software, as defended in the Research Methodology and Framework. Rigour was reserved for the systematic steps outlined here, while keeping focus on the subjective responses to the Survey questions. On the illustration, this process went through the ‘simple results’ box to get to the results. Cross-tabulation, as illustrated, went through the process ‘pivot table and analysis’ box instead and is detailed following.

Next, Figure 5.2 represents an overview of how variables were cross-tabulated into to either strong or weak interpretations, or otherwise how data was discarded as a non-observation. To retain validity, cross-tabulation of the simple frequency analyses did not inform the major dependent variable results directly and was used instead to help describe each initial interpretation in more detail. Furthermore, cross-tabulation helped to verify or call into question each dependent variable as a check step to ensure the earlier interpretation could stand alone as a descriptive quality rather than as an outcome of different reasoning. Cross-tabulation methods are detailed after the Figures.

The steps in these Figures were involved in all results in this Chapter. Immediately after these Figures, the method of cross-tabulation is clarified, and examples given.

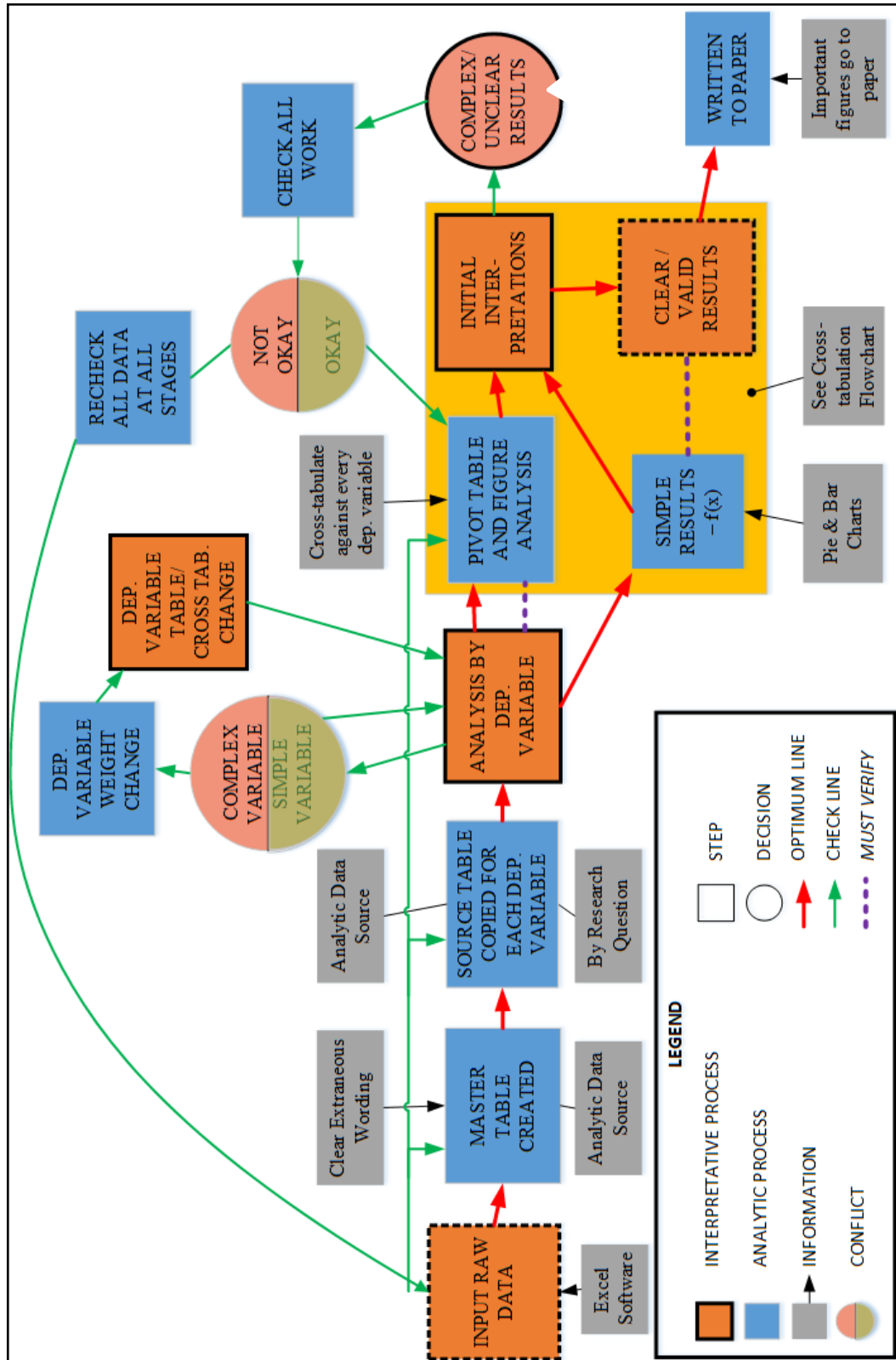


Figure 5.1: Analysis Processing Overview Flowchart

Source: Author

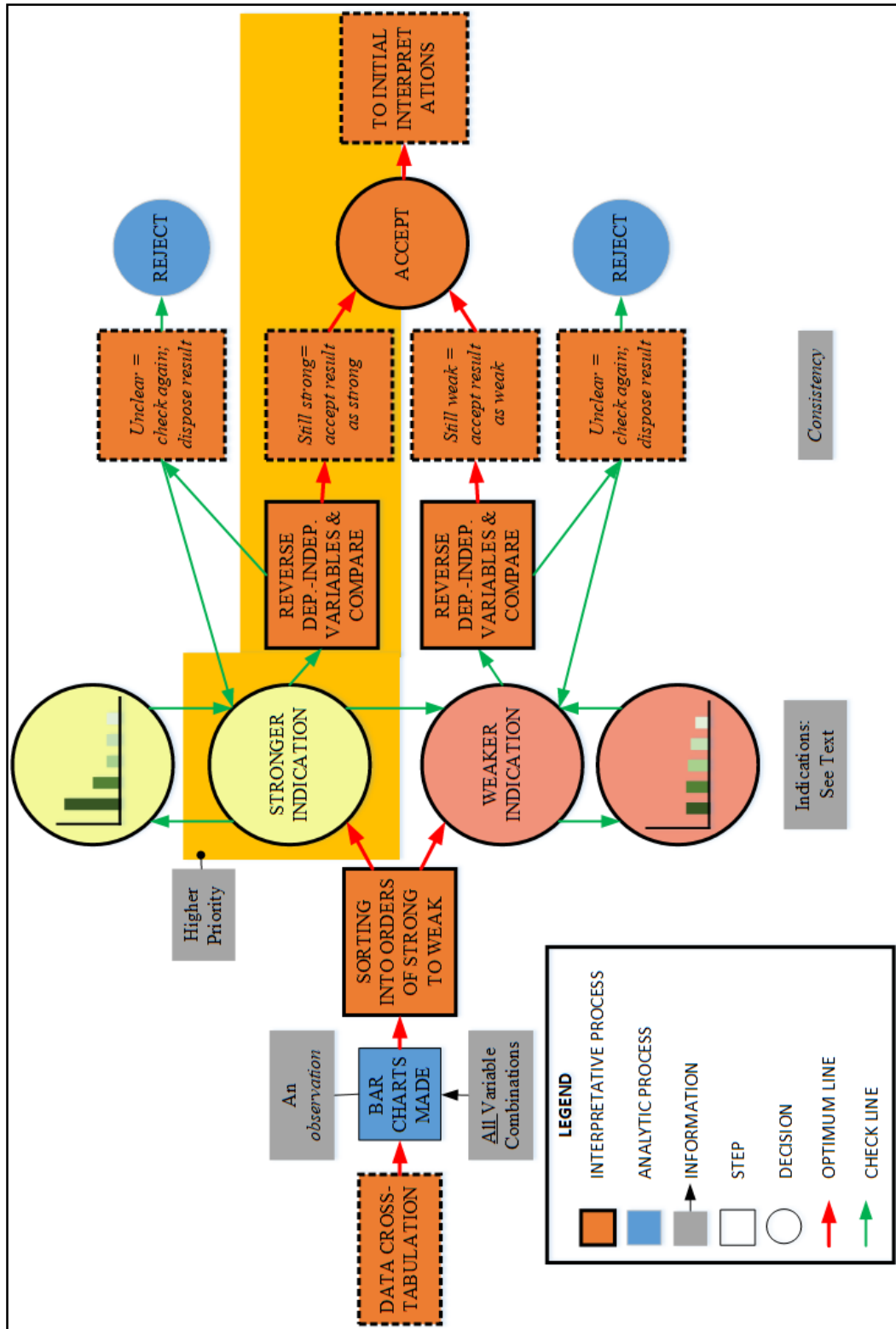


Figure 5.2: Cross-tabulation Analysis Flowchart

Source: Author

Tabulation and cross-tabulation were done using Excel software rather than SPSS or other means. Excel was used as it provides superior visual-building tools in graphing and charting, and to achieve clearly-describable results while providing the same facilities for simple result frequencies. For instance, if responses clearly favoured one response or type of response, then a stronger or weaker indication was determined according to how that variable compared to others in the same set. Hence, if results were ambiguous, meaning that indications could not be claimed and after checking again, then such results were discarded.

Obtaining clear results in cross-tabulation requires some detailed explanation and examples. After interpretations were made initially and directly by frequencies, cross-tabulation involved producing frequency bar chart graphics using tabling software and then comparing these in two cross-sections. In other words, each dependent variable was cross-tabulated against every variable, and then the dependent and independent variable were alternated for additional comparison. The need for this alternating came since in each dependent variable complex responses were split according to each point of data within each response, thereby suggesting that results might differ going the other way.

As an illustrative example of this variable-splitting, a response to what a respondent experienced in the park could have been “trees and benches”. As a single-response dependent variable combining both objects, this is effectively useless as the total dataset would then become a collection of individual sentences rather than actual useful data. Therefore, the response could be coded as either: trees/benches, or typed as nature/structural features; in both cases this would multiply the independent variable for each dependent one. In this way, too, the cross-tabulation became an analysis of subjective responses rather than of respondents. This was desired as it goes without saying that each park user is an individual, with unique experiences and expressions, and therefore a systematic method to interpret data

is required in a way that sustains the interpretation of the dependent variable while still being a collectively-viable result among individuals.

However, if charts did not show observable similarity, then this reduced the clarity on the indication. Unclear results were checked for errors at the conceptual, fieldwork, and analytical stages, and so on. If the observed data still looked the same, then these results were discarded. Hence, *clear results* that were observably repeated in cross-tabulation in both directions, that were not rendered unclear by other variables, are results considered reproducible and error-free.

After each result was accepted as clear, it was also classified according to whether it was stronger or weaker (as in Figure 5.2). As follows, the cross-tabulation process took one set of responses by-variable and crossed them against responses by different variables. Hence, it stood to reason that an observably-stronger indication is one whereby a high number of responses in one variable in one direction coordinates with a high number in the other variable in the alternative direction (for example, when a variable is clearly distinguishable on the chart). This coordination of responses is clearly-observable without the need for advanced computation beyond frequency description.

To summarise, the clear results are expressed as *indications* that inform interpretations rather than as data described or calculated as significances, as causation-correlation relationships, or in any other way deemed statistically valid, reliable, or proven. Indications are discussed as follows.

As an example of how this indication process was done, a stronger indication such as *park users drive to the park more often* came out clear in the frequency of given responses. To describe this further, cross-tabulation showed that ‘drivers’ as a response-type were more observably connected with response data related to socio-economics than other factors such

as park user group composition, the weather, etc. This observable connection was repeatable in the opposite direction of cross-tabulation with socio-economic related variables as dependents. It also stands to reason that driving is connected more to socio-economics than to other factors; notably, this connection also refuted my earlier (unstated) presumption that driving might connect with lower-intensity activity in the park, or in other words, that drivers would be lazy compared to walkers.

To further detail the same driver indication, the observed data was clearly not connecting with intensity of activity or activity choice. In other words, park travel and user activity hardly indicated much connection at all. This was further observable in the reverse cross-tabulation of the same variables, in that it lacked definition as well. From this, a subordinate indication was that park users hardly connected arrival methods such as driving with what they planned to do there, thereby adding to the clarity of the stronger indication that socio-economics stood alone.

In addition, the analytic process used here may also require further justification so to defend against the assumption that research conducted without modern mathematical and computing techniques offer little to no value in the academic field. Results, here, are observations of data based in frequency of responses and the cross-tabulation of those responses. These observations do not seek deeper numeracy than this because I believe that for the research, (1) Results should be clearly explainable and understandable to anyone at all stages of the process, (2) Results need not require highly-technical analysis or advanced calculations to find valid and reliable research significance, and, (3) The multiplying of responses for complex survey answers for the dependent variables, after the first step of analysis, may magnify weak statements into stronger or weaker ones, and vice-versa.

In summary, the results were processed in a manner preserving reliability and validity throughout each stage and built towards the interpretative description of the park user. The actual results follow.

5.3 Results by Dependent Variable

Results here are written out as interpretative statements or characterisations of the park user, supported by written and illustrative evidence. Organization of the results follow both the Research Questions and Questionnaire: covering park user presence, park user expression, and the park space experiences in Section 5.3.1, Section 5.3.2, and Section 5.3.3. Then, Section 5.3.4 presents a summary of the initial interpretations followed by reinterpretations of the same after the cross-tabulation work was done.

To note, while all dependent variables were analysed against each available variable, results included focus on only what claims are clearly apparent in the data, and description focuses on stronger interpretations. For instance, because each city is taken as a separate case, interpretations made for one city are sometimes not repeated in the other city. Take note of the cases for analysis of ethnicity in Kuching and then gender in Calgary: it does not mean analyses of ethnicity in Calgary or gender Kuching were not done but that the analysis produced results not worthy of mention.

5.3.1 Park user presence

Presence is expressed as the number of park users in the parks. In this study, 233 park users were interviewed as respondents, with 131 in Calgary and 102 in Kuching. In both cities, 94% of respondents were city residents, with 123 and 102 respondents as residents of Calgary and Kuching respectively. The remaining 6% of respondents came from outside the cities.

On average, park users in Calgary spent more time in the parks than their Kuching counterparts, about 4 days per week and about 3 days per week respectively.

In sum, the park user observably exists in either city, as a consistent visitor, and most likely comes from the city that the park is in.

5.3.2 Park user expression

Four sets of results are given here on park user method of arrival, after-park plans, manner of travel through the park, and activities done in the park.

5.3.2.1 Method of arrival

Park users typically drive to the park. In the results for how park users got to the park, for Calgary, 52% of users arrived by car and 34% walked there. In Kuching, more than 73% arrived by car, 14% by motorbike, and 13% by other means including walking. This is reflected in Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4 respectively.

Separately, respondent distance travelled to the park was calculated using rough estimation. On average in Calgary, parks users traveled 2.95km to the park. In Kuching, the average distance was slightly more at 3.33km.

Considering in Kuching that transit services were observably harder to secure and paths harder to navigate, compared with Calgary, results indicate that higher car preference is linked to accessibility and the socio-economic means of users to get to the park.

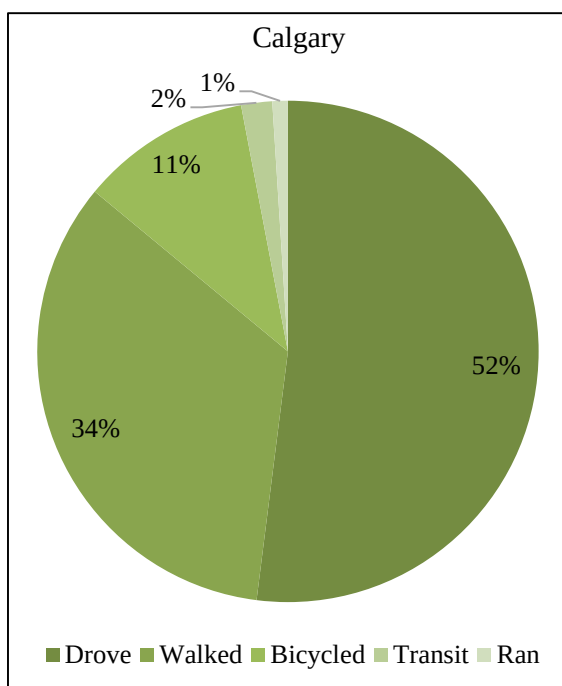


Figure 5.3: Park user report of their method of arrival to the park in Calgary. All responses.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

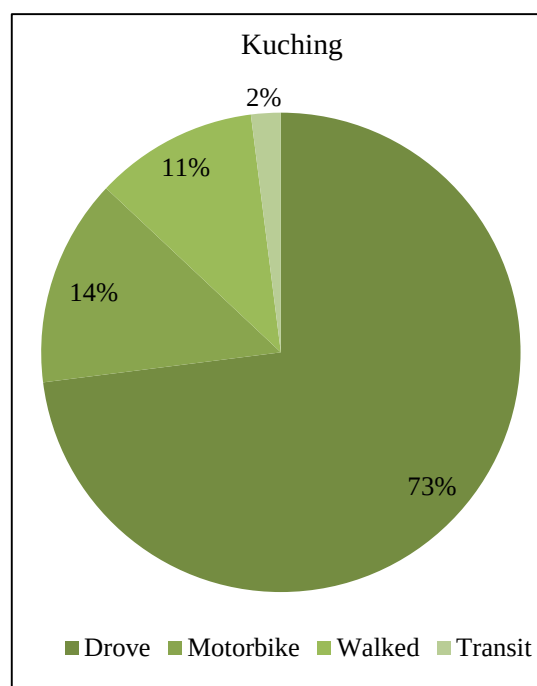


Figure 5.4: Park user report of their method of arrival to the park in Kuching. 1 n/a response removed.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.2.2 After-park plans

Park users go home after their park visit, or else continue on with their day. In the results for after-park plans, for Calgary, nearly 70% of users indicated that they would go home right after their time in the park. In the remaining proportion of responses, users reported many other things they would be doing after, including going to work, eating, doing errands, sight-seeing and seeing friends. In Kuching, a little more than 50% of users would be returning home after, while nearly 25% would be going to eat a meal after, and the remainder doing other things.

As an additional analytic step, with responses separated into types of expression, as Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6 show, nearly 80% of Calgarians were ‘returning somewhere’ (especially home) after the park, and 16% were ‘continuing their adventures’. Separately,

52% of Kuching respondents would be ‘returning somewhere’ afterwards. Markedly, 43% of Kuching respondents indicated ‘continuing adventures’ after, often to go eat. Neither Calgary nor Kuching park users emphasized visiting people after.

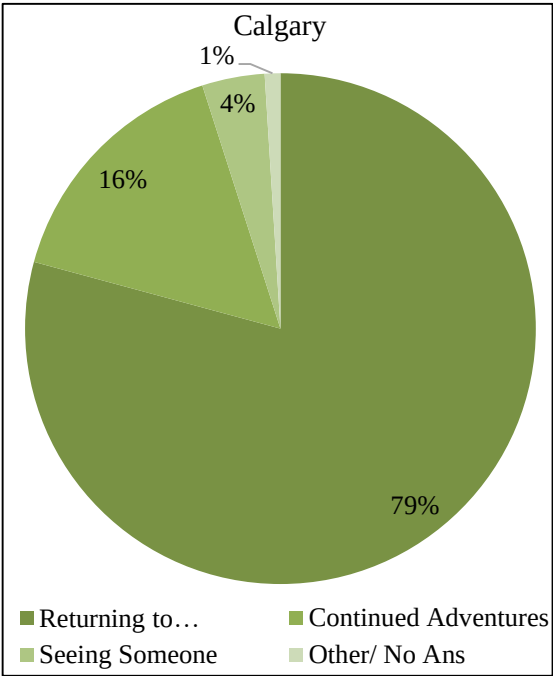


Figure 5.5: Park user after-park plans as an expression in Calgary. I.e., ‘after the park visit the park user would be....’ doing one of the following four types.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

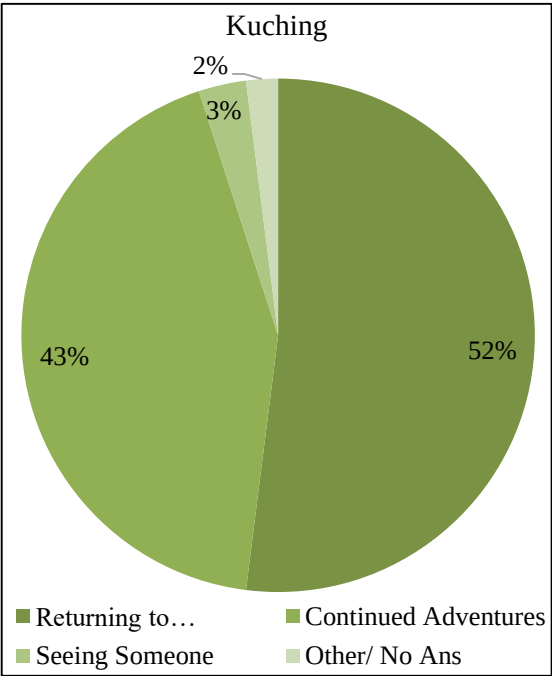


Figure 5.6: Park user after-park plans as an expression in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.2.3 Paths

Park users do not follow paths or people around the park. In Calgary, 40% of park users traveled the park ‘linearly’, either back and forth or through it; 31% went ‘around’ in loops; and 19% had no defined path. At 3%, a small number of users reported ‘following’ either the path, or others such as children around. See Figure 5.7.

The Kuching dataset in this question was rejected, hence weakening the result.

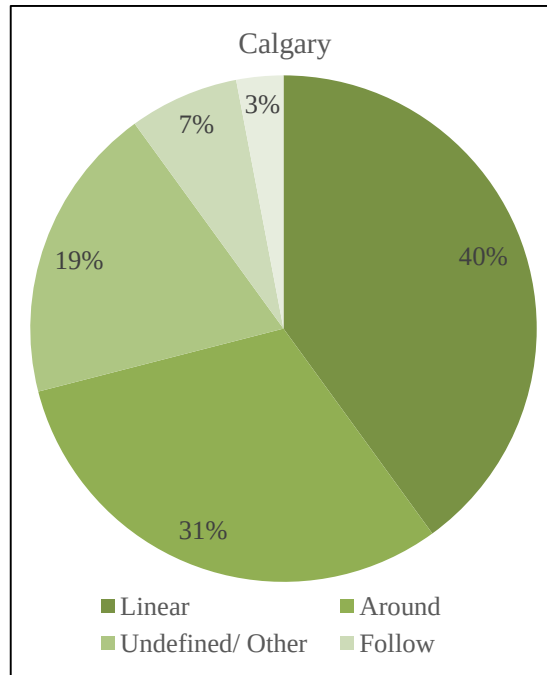


Figure 5.7: Types of paths park users took.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.2.4 Activities

Park users are more inclined to lower-intensity and health-type activities. Park activities were numerous. To look at expression by activity the dataset was analyzed in two ways.

First, ‘intensity of the activity’ was judged according to ‘energy level’, either for higher-energy exercise activities (such as jogging, sports, etc.) or else for lower-energy recreational or passive activities (e.g. walking). Here, intensity is taken as an indication of how the park user identifies, through her or his body, with space.

In the results, Calgary park users preferred lower-intensity park activity at around 77%, and the remainder preferred higher-intensity. Similarly, Kuching users preferred lower-intensity activity at around 65%, and the remainder higher-intensity.

Second, activity ‘type’ involved categorizing what respondents were doing in the park according to use in or of the space. For in-park activity type, Calgary park users

appeared to express broader and more ‘balanced’ (or spread out) types of activities than Kuching park users did. The results and spread of types can be seen in Figure 5.8 and Figure 5.9.

More importantly and in either city, park users preferred health-related⁵⁵ and social-related⁵⁶ activities over other types.

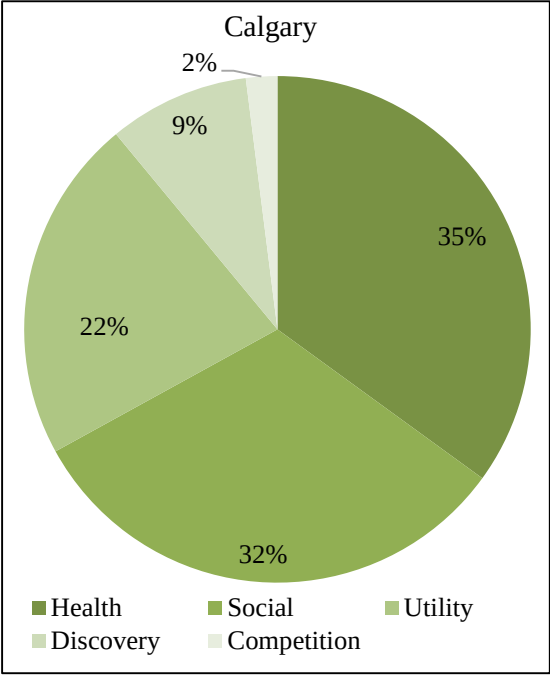


Figure 5.8: Type of in-park user activity in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

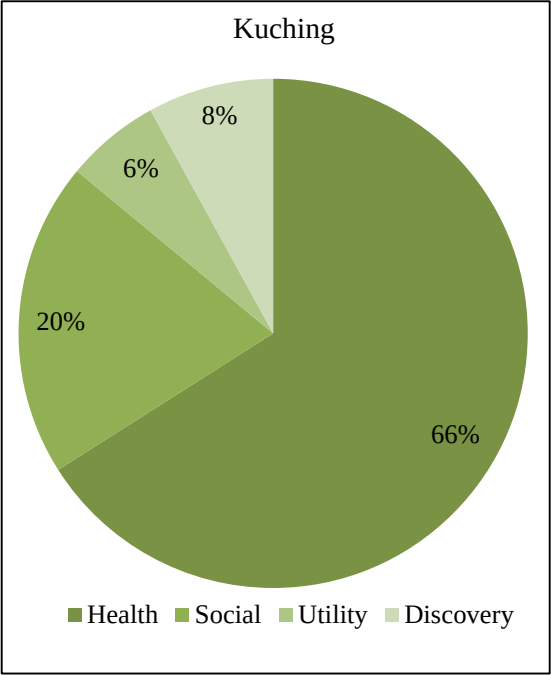


Figure 5.9: Type of in-park user activity in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

To further discussion on health-centric activity-types, it is notable that Kuching respondents expressed nearly double the preference as those in Calgary. Regarding other activity-types, social activities were somewhat important in both cities. Then, utility⁵⁷ activities were more important in Calgary. Then finally, competition-centric activities, such

⁵⁵ E.g. ‘Rest’ or ‘relaxing’.

⁵⁶ E.g. ‘Family time’.

⁵⁷ E.g. ‘Eating’ or ‘having lunch’.

as team sports, were rarely a preference in Calgary parks, while none at all were reported in Kuching.

5.3.2.5 The park user group

In summary of the previous four Sections, the strength of each variable and how clear each came out as a result is considered here. On one hand, park user method of arrival, activity intensity, and after-park plans came out strongest. On the other hand, particular park activity appeared rather unimportant, and path taken was ambiguous.

Considering the stronger indications against the weaker, the stronger seem to be a kind of vector that connects effort and methods of arrival, general types of activity, and after-park plans. In this way, the park user expresses her or himself as an apparent ‘context’ of events rather than as a collection of discrete events. This is supported by the observation that actual in-park activity or movement in the park came across as relatively unimportant. Characteristically, therefore, the park user group is more inclined to build park use into their day based on what they want to get out of it as a whole and by what means of travel they must use or prefer using. In other words, management of the day defines park use over actual in-park plans.

5.3.3 Park space

Experiences and park user identity are in focus here, and additionally whether the park space can be managed as a convivial or healthy social space.

5.3.3.1 Identity of the park user

The Survey asked how park users identified or associated with the park. Following this, in looking for a plausible contrast of perspective, respondents were asked to self-describe their income group or status.

5.3.3.1.1 Self-identity with park space

Park users identify personally with the park space. Through the results, Calgary park users appear to identify with the park in particular experiential-intrinsic terms⁵⁸.

To note, ‘Experiential intrinsic’ identification involved responses that can be summed up as ‘felt and internalized experiences’. This is illustrated in Figure 5.10. These indicated more of sensory input or feeling of something (rather than an expressed action or connection) that was internalized and personal (rather than social or connective directly with external space—also, see the Glossary in Appendix B for usage of intrinsic/extrinsic in this paper.

On the other hand, Kuching park users appear to associate in particular expressive-extrinsic⁵⁹ terms. This is seemingly opposite to Calgary responses, as seen between Figure 5.10 and Figure 5.11. For Kuching, extrinsic-type answers appear more distinct than expressive answers.

⁵⁸ E.g. ‘Weather’, ‘Excitement’, or ‘Peaceful’.

⁵⁹ ‘Expressive-extrinsic’ replies, contrasting ‘experiential-intrinsic’, included more socially and spatially-inclined responses. These indicated more of a connection with something external, such as, identifying with tourists or with dogs, as part of the park visit.

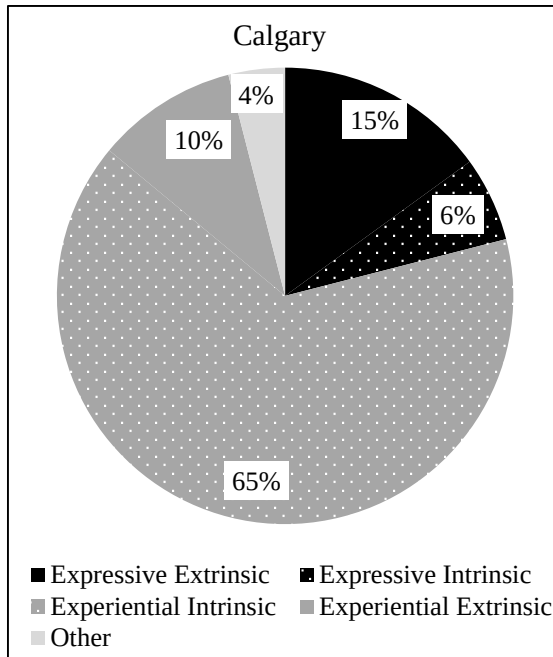


Figure 5.10: Type of park user experience or expression in park in Calgary. Black/ dark grey pie slices represent expressive/ experiential responses. Solid/ dotted slices represent extrinsic/ intrinsic.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

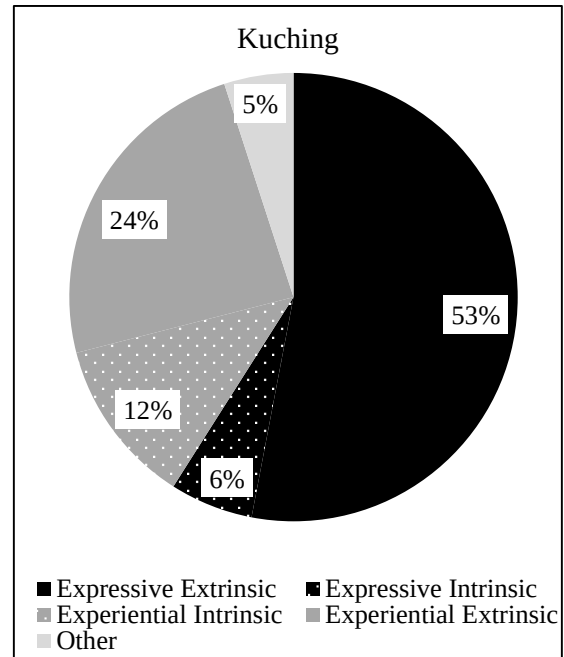


Figure 5.11: Type of park user experience or expression in park in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

In a separate analysis of the same dataset and reflected in Figure 5.12, Calgary respondents gave more personal-type⁶⁰ replies, and to a lesser degree social⁶¹ and nature⁶² types of replies. Then, as reflected in Figure 5.13, Kuching park users gave more personal-type and slightly fewer spatial-type replies. However, if spatial⁶³ responses include nature-type in Kuching, the category exceeds personal-type responses.

⁶⁰ E.g. 'Beauty', 'Health', 'Fun', or 'Walking'.

⁶¹ E.g. 'Playground' or 'Children time', 'Strangers', 'Hanging out', etc.

⁶² E.g. 'Nature', 'Outdoors', 'Flora' and 'Fauna'.

⁶³ E.g. 'City', 'Paths', and 'Convenience – of location'.

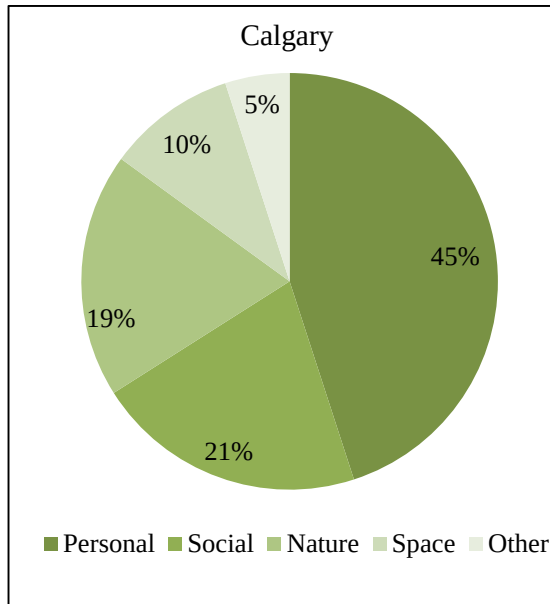


Figure 5.12: Type of park user association with parks in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

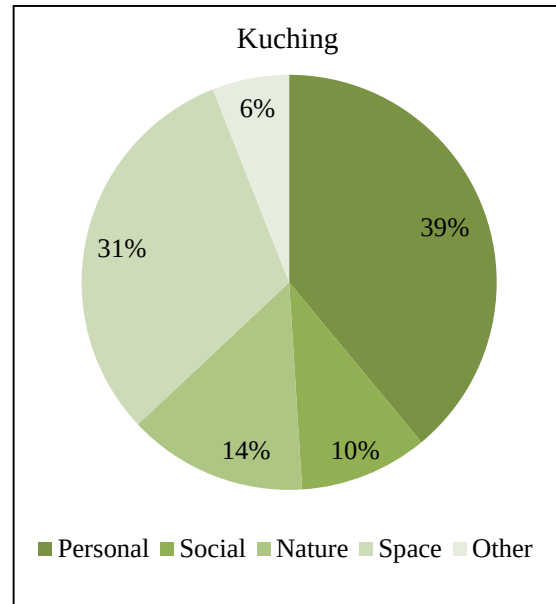


Figure 5.13: Type of park user association with parks in Kuching. Variable order follows Figure 5.12.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.1.2 Income group or status

*Park users describe themselves as middle-income*⁶⁴. While park users most often identified as middle-income or class, data arranged into a ‘better off’ group of users versus a lower-income ‘worse off’ group gave stronger indications and therefore were more describable than data analysed in an income gradient or by discreet responses.

Therefore, in this way, middle-income responses resembled the ‘comfortable’ and ‘well-off’ group of responses across various cross-tabulations. Lower-income responses contrasted the middle-income group in the same way that the ‘worse-off’ group contrasted the ‘well-off’.

⁶⁴ See Section 2.3.6 and Section 4.3.1 for the explanation why this Survey question was asked as a dependent variable.

In the results, Kuching respondents indicated that park use is more (with 63% of responses) a middle-income activity compared with other individual income groups or statuses. Similarly, in the results for Calgary park users, middle-income was the most common individual response (41%).

Then, when looked at as better off versus worse off for Kuching park users, 69% of respondents were better off and 25% were worse off. See Figure 5.14 expressed as number of responses. In Calgary, as in Figure 5.15, 61% of park users were better off and 19% worse off.

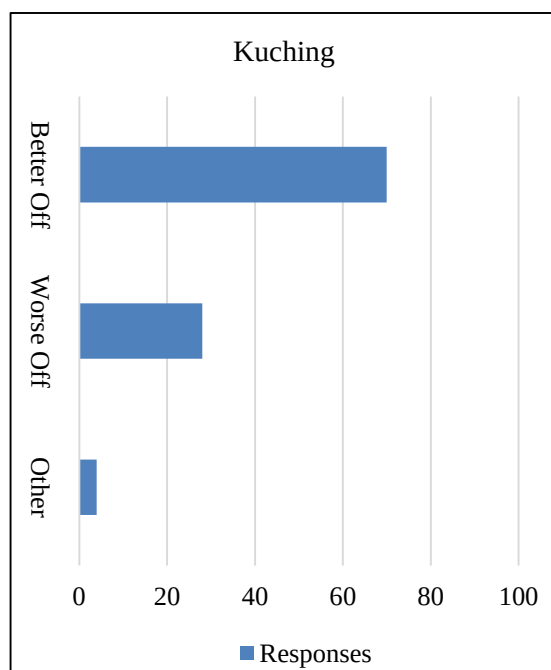


Figure 5.14: Self-identified income group of park users, in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

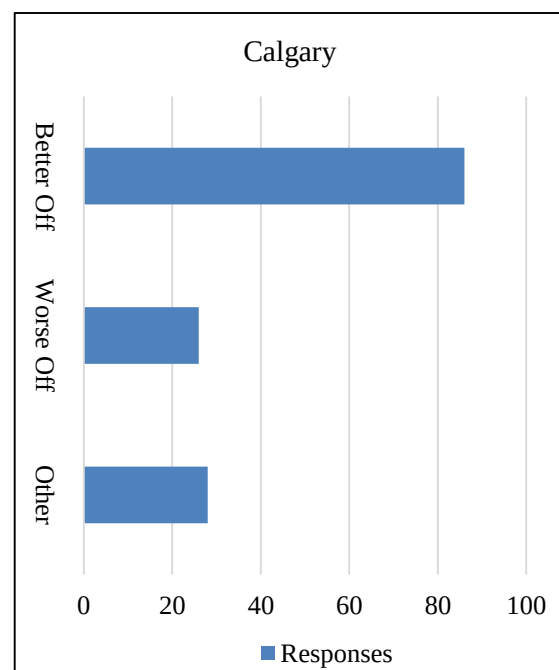


Figure 5.15: Self-identified income group of park users, in Calgary. Variable order follows Figure 5.14.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.2 Park user experiences

Next, park users were asked to report on their physical, non-physical or interpreted, and social experiences while in the park.

5.3.3.2.1 Physical experiences

Physical experiences are positive and reported along structural lines. The first analysis here arranged data according to positiveness of experience; the second analysis went according to experiential type.

For positiveness of physical experiences, park users spoke positively⁶⁵ in 85% of responses from Calgary, and 69% from Kuching. See Figure 5.16 and Figure 5.17.

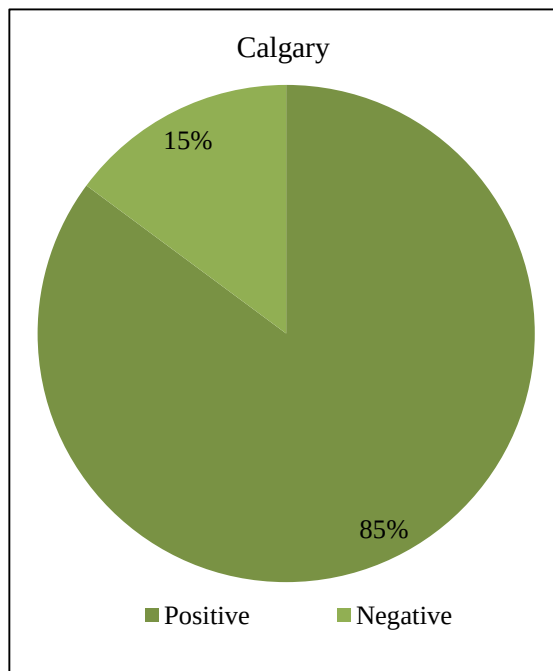


Figure 5.16: Positiveness derived from physical experiences of park users in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

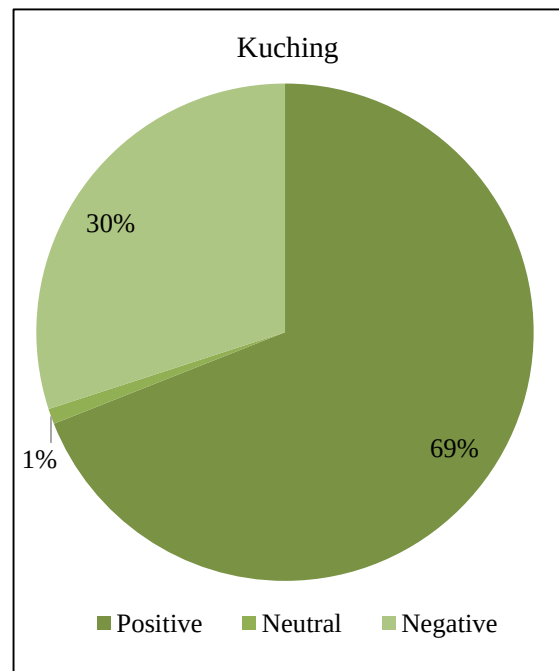


Figure 5.17: Positiveness derived from physical experiences of park users in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Separately, for physical experiences analyzed by 'type', park users responded in more structural terms regarding the space. See Figure 5.18 and Figure 5.19 for category groupings

⁶⁵ E.g. respondent K007 said that trees were good in the park and should be preserved, and this was analyzed as a positive comment on experience. Conversely, and taken as a negative response, K021 said the park was not well-maintained and that there was too much rubbish.

and results. Along with structural responses, Calgary park users also responded more often in terms of nature; conversely, Kuching park users responded in more social terms.

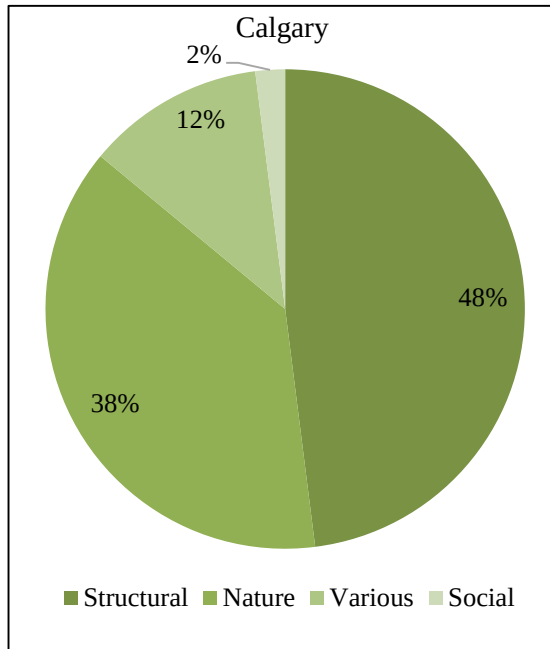


Figure 5.18: Physical experiences of park users as a type of form in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

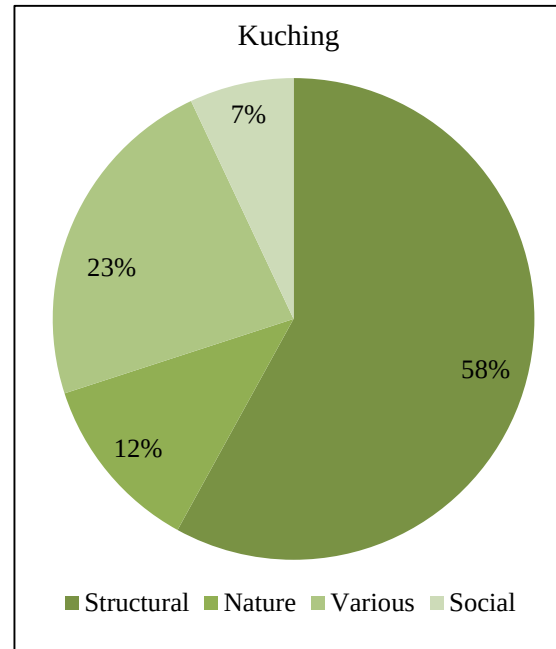


Figure 5.19: Physical experiences of park users as a type of form in Kuching. Variable order follows Figure 5.18.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.2.2 Non-physical experiences

Non-physical experiences are positive, personal, and intrinsic. These experiences of the park space were analyzed according to positiveness, association, and type.

First, non-physical experiences of park use appear particularly positive, by 64% in Calgary, and then by about 78% in Kuching. Combining ‘Particularly Good’ experiences with ‘Neutral to Slightly Good’ responses, about 97% of park users in Calgary and 93% in Kuching found going to the park a generally positive non-physical or interpreted experience. See Figure 5.20 and Figure 5.21.

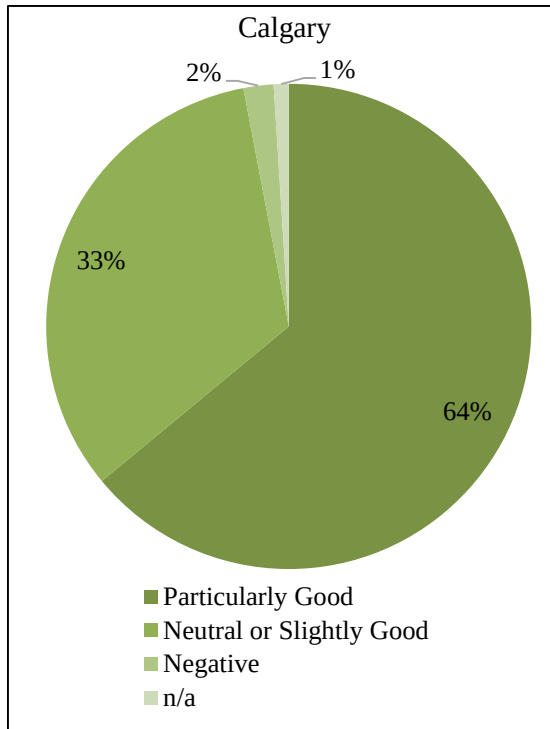


Figure 5.20: Positiveness derived from non-physical experiences of park users in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

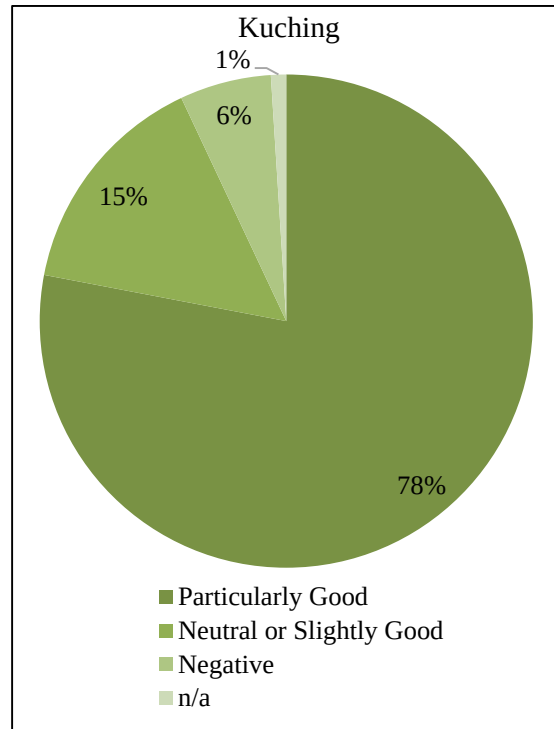


Figure 5.21: Positiveness derived from non-physical experiences of park users in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Then to elaborate, it seemed plausible that non-physical experiences, if felt ‘calmer’, would be more preferred by the park user and hence offer a healthier park space experience. So, with these experiences looked at as either more or less ‘calming’, the results from either city support the commonly-held idea that better park experiences are calmer rather than, say, ‘not calm’ or stressful⁶⁶. This is illustrated by Figure 5.22 and Figure 5.23.

⁶⁶ E.g. ‘Clearly Calm’ or more precisely ‘Clearly-related to calm’ included ‘De-stress’ or ‘Isolated’ responses. ‘Possibly Calm’ or ‘Possibly-related to calm’ included ‘Happiness’, ‘Escape’, and ‘Accessibility’. ‘Not Calm’ or ‘Non-calm related or Stressful’ responses included those high-intensity activities such as exercising, as well as responses such as ‘Angry’ or ‘Sad’.

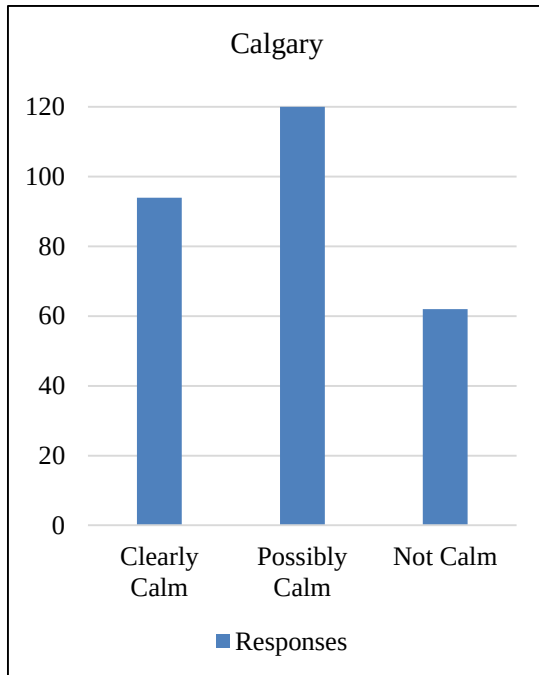


Figure 5.22: Responses of non-physical experiences as calmness in the park in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

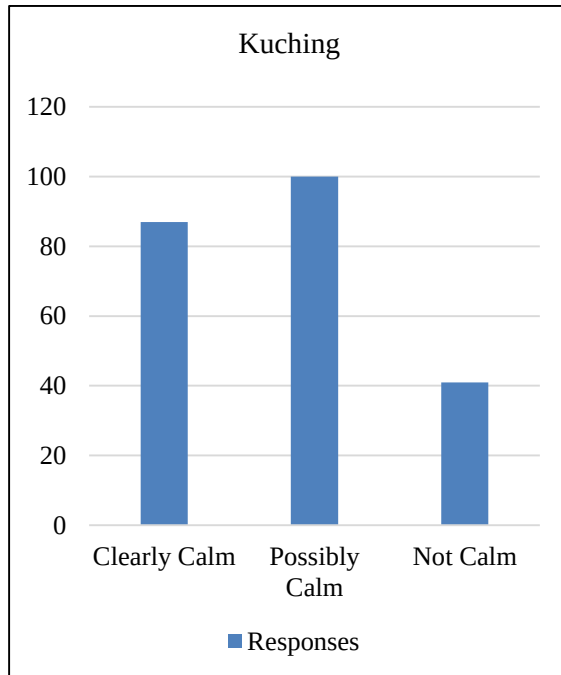


Figure 5.23: Responses of non-physical experiences as calmness in the park in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Second, moving on to non-physical experiences by type and association, analyses in this category followed the same coding technique applied in results for Section 5.3.3.1.1 on park user identity. The intent for using parallel techniques was to check whether the respondents replied similarly overall since the nature of the two questions may have been taken as the same or similar by respondents. Indications are inconclusive, as discussed at the end of this Section.

As shown in Figure 5.24 and Figure 5.25, around 68% of park users in Calgary, and 82% in Kuching, responded in particularly experiential-intrinsic terms for non-physical experiences. Considering the overall visual pattern of the Figures, when looking back to park user identity, the broad differences between cities were not repeated here for experiential and expressive type. Instead the results appear proportionately similar between Calgary and Kuching.

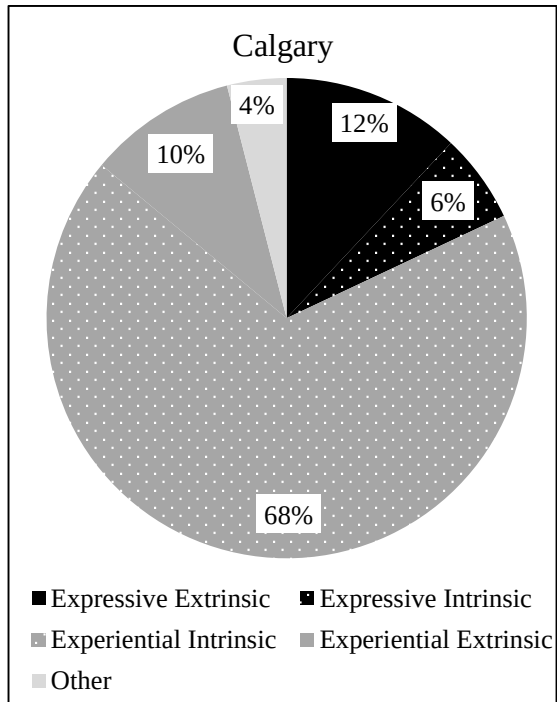


Figure 5.24: Type of park user non-physical experience or expression in park in Calgary. Black/ dark grey pie slices represent expressive/ experiential responses; solid/ dotted slices represent extrinsic/ intrinsic responses.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

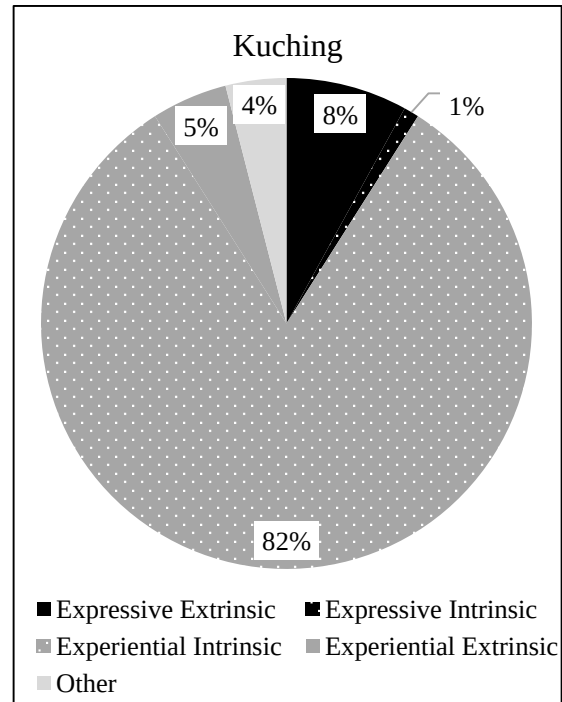


Figure 5.25: Type of park user non-physical experience or expression in park in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Third, as for association-type, non-physical experiences in both cities appear strictly personal. See Figure 5.26 and Figure 5.27. Compared to the similar analysis for Section 5.3.3.1.1, the ‘personal’ response type is still the most common throughout both Calgary and Kuching, indicating that the park user neither identifies with nor experiences the park visit in an abstract or purely ‘outer’ way.

As just discussed, the asymmetry between the experiential-expressed, extrinsic-intrinsic analyses between Calgary and Kuching (Figure 5.10, Figure 5.11, Figure 5.22 and Figure 5.23), suggests that respondents experience and identify with the park space differently. Therefore, it reasons that park user identity is not merely a physical experience for a merely physical body.

Identity, therefore, is the mediator between experiences and expressions rather than a purely subjective or objective phenomena. The noticeably-similar dominance of personal-type replies (Figure 5.12, Figure 5.13, Figure 5.26, and Figure 5.27) supports this because it stands to reason what is ‘personal’ must be located somewhere partway between what is felt from outside, and what is acted upon or felt from within.

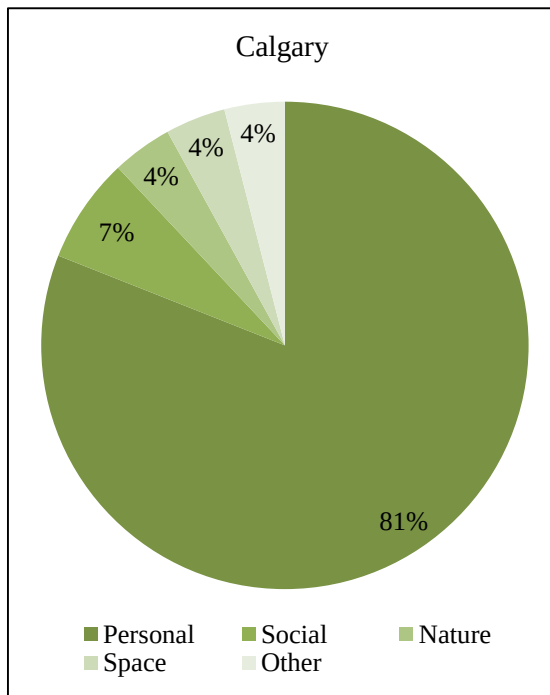


Figure 5.26: Non-physical experiences as type of park user association with parks in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

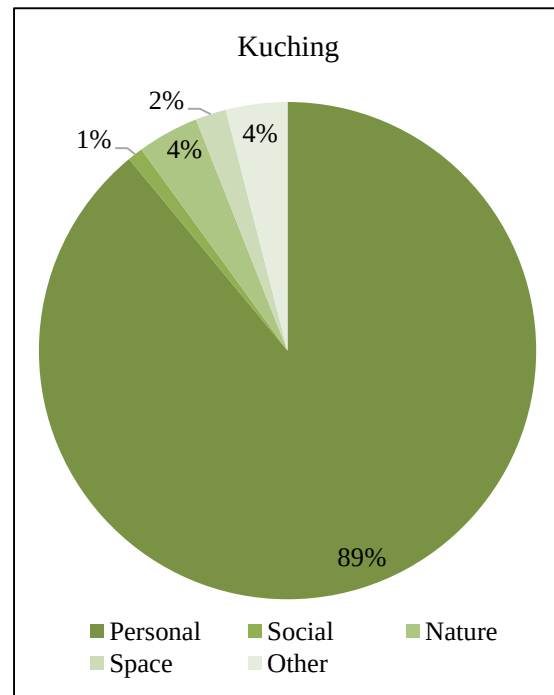


Figure 5.27: Non-physical experiences as type of park user association with parks in Kuching. Variable order follows Figure 5.26.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.2.3 Social experiences

Social experiences are positive, and park users stereo-type others. Park users, from their personal experiences, spoke on the behaviours and observations of strangers in the park.

Social experience responses were analyzed according to their positiveness⁶⁷. Following this, to what degree the park user appeared to judge others was analyzed based on their wording.

First, in terms of positiveness, people spoke more positively most often about their observations of other people in both cities: responses were slightly more positive in Calgary (79%) than in Kuching (73%). See Figure 5.28 and Figure 5.29. In addition, park users giving replies that were relative or contingent in some way (e.g. park user S030, who said that people behaved “as other business people” did in the park), were the least present in the park.

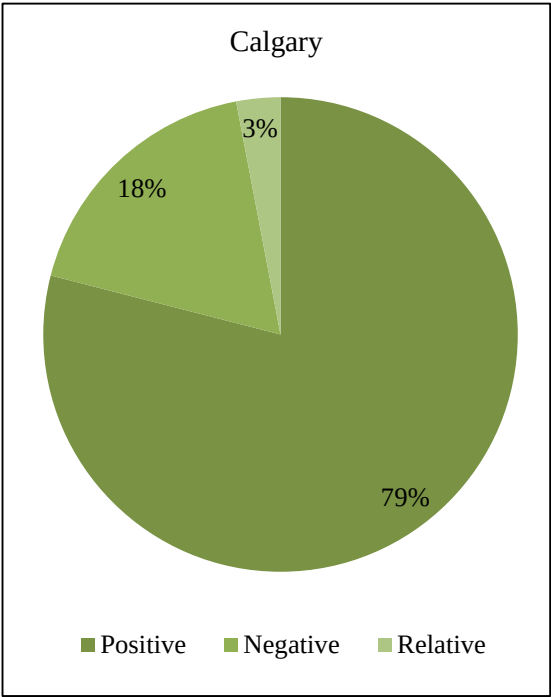


Figure 5.28: Positiveness of social experiences in Calgary. 1 Neutral response removed.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

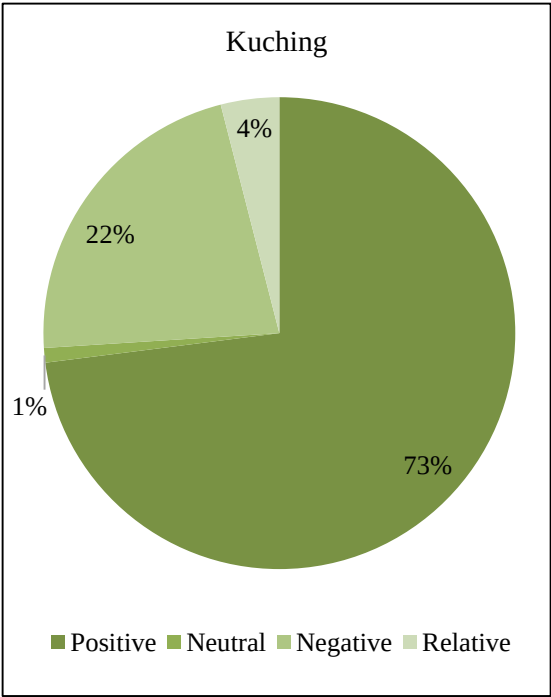


Figure 5.29: Positiveness of social experiences in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Second, in a subsequent analytic step, experiences were re-analyzed according to the impression as to whether responses came across in more (plainly) observational or stereo-

⁶⁷ Positive social comments included saying others were ‘Great’, ‘Polite’, or ‘Courteous’ and so on. Negative comments included ‘Unengaging’ and ‘Withdrawn’.

typical terms. While stereo-typing is sometimes referred to as ‘judgementalism’ (as in excessively-critical), stereo-typing people here is not at all suggestive of ‘bad’ in itself. Instead, ‘stereo-typer’ is used here indifferent to positiveness as a moral valuation.

In the results, park users seem to stereotype others more than offer simple observations⁶⁸. In this way, Kuching park users responded most as stereo-typer (71%) and in Calgary, users responded 44% in this way. See Figure 5.30 and Figure 5.31.

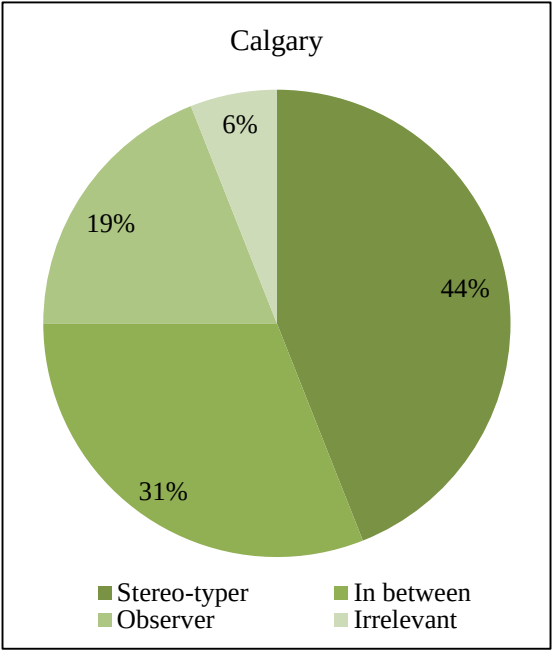


Figure 5.30: Judgement of park users’ social interaction in Calgary.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

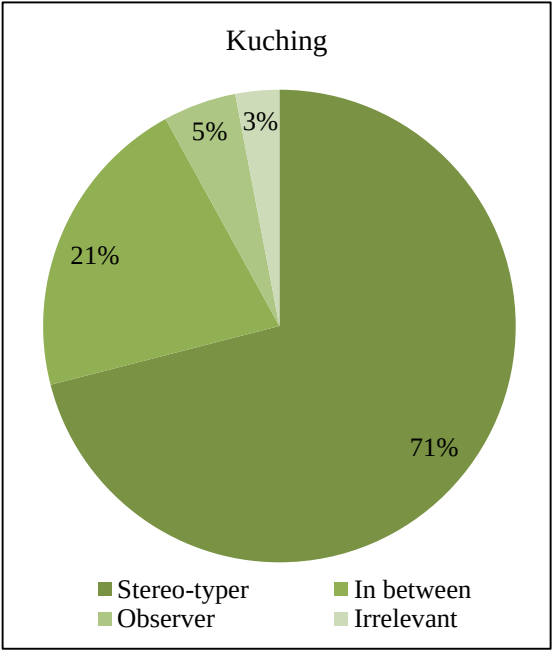


Figure 5.31: Judgement of park users’ social interaction in Kuching.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.3 Park user space in focus

First, in park user spatial analyses, some indications were stronger than others. Beginning with the weaker, indications for income group or status failed to add much descriptive quality

⁶⁸ For example, respondent K010 said that some people were ‘irresponsible’, and that those people were ‘litterers’. I took ‘irresponsible’ as a stereo-typed valuation of others, whereas ‘litterers’ as in between stereo-typing and observation. A litterer is a type of person observed but also judged. A direct observation itself might be, instead, ‘I saw people littering, or, people often throw rubbish onto the ground’.

except when grouped into better off and worse off categories. Another weaker indication came from attempting to directly communicate expressions and experiences, rather than intrinsically and extrinsically, the latter pair coming across much stronger and clearer in results. Lastly, asking respondents on any further comments at the end of the survey offered only middling-strength indications. Here, structural aspects (usually concerns and complaints) were important to users in Kuching, while Calgary users expressed more appreciation for the parks.

Second, stronger indications came from looking at experiences, altogether, as a type of association with space, from the personal-type responses dominating in analyses for Section 5.3.3.1.1 and Section 5.3.3.2.2, and the just mentioned extrinsic-intrinsic pairing in the same sets.

Third, another strong indication is that park experiences are generally positive, and in cross-tabulation it may be argued that positive responses beget more positiveness across all experience types; this is similarly reflected in negative-with-negative responses too. This indication of a ‘mindset’ is illustrated by the following columns, in Figure 5.32 and Figure 5.33, showing the positive-with-positive shift⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ This type of cross-tabulation, for experience positiveness was replicated in each way possible. Figure 5.32 and Figure 5.33 illustrate two examples of 12 analyses, between Calgary (C) and Kuching (K), done on positiveness of experiences (strength of indications in parentheses). On strength of indications: 7 of the indications were strong, 1 moderate to strong, and the remaining 4 moderate. None were weak. In particular, the results from experiential cross-examinations are as follows: physical-non-physical (C: strong, K: strong), physical-social (C: moderate, K: moderate), non-physical-physical (C: moderate, K: strong), non-physical-social (C: moderate to strong, K: strong), social-physical (C: moderate, K: strong), and social-non-physical (C: strong, K: strong).

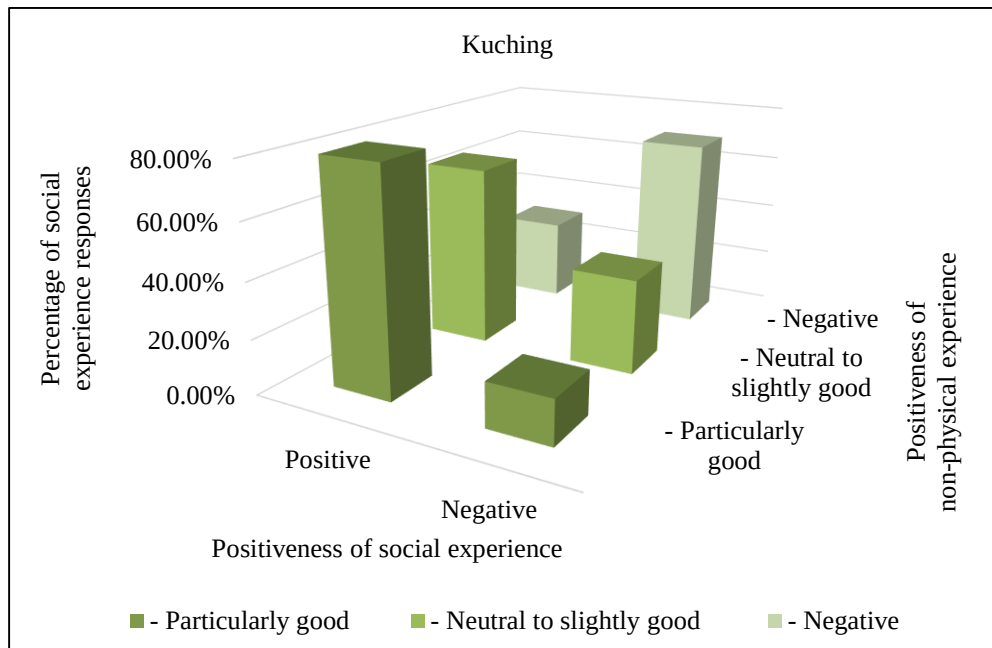


Figure 5.32: Percentage of positiveness of social experiences given, per column, corresponding with positiveness of non-physical experiences, in Kuching. Interpreted as a strong indication that positiveness in one area leads to more positiveness in others.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

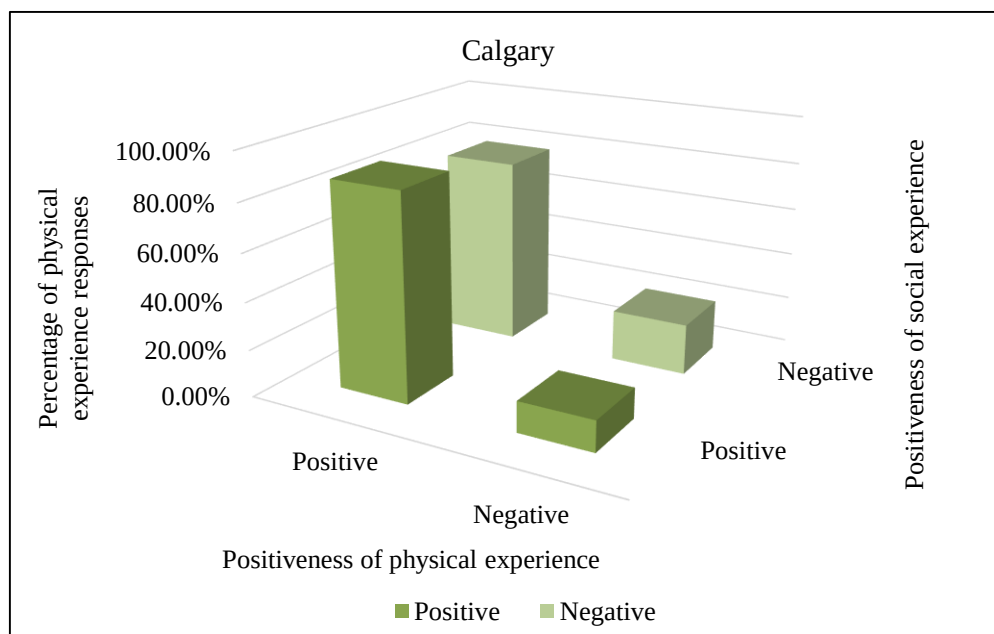


Figure 5.33: Percentage of positiveness of physical experiences given, per column, corresponding with positiveness of social experiences, in Calgary. Interpreted as a moderate indication that positiveness in one area leads to more in others.

Source: Fieldwork 2015

5.3.3.4 Manageable space

Research Question 3 on social space asks whether a park user experience, and therefore a manageable space, can be inferred from the results. The answer is *yes*, potentially, as there appears to be a connection between the socio-spatial park user in user identification and non-physical experiences (as in Section 5.3.3.1 and Section 5.3.3.2). Rather than a directly experienced and expressed social space, indications much more strongly favour an association with the space, meaning the park is cognitively kept in mind and the ‘association’ acts as a kind of shuttle between the experiences and expressions, and the outside world. Furthermore, the proposal that space is associated is supported by the analytic failure to find strong indications directly from the expression-experiential analyses.

In retrospect, the interpretation of association, as in an association with social space, portrays much more of the movement (physical and interpreted) of individual spatial engagement than the apparently-static expressions and experiences taken at face value. Furthermore, this is more representative of the Theoretical Framework, in Section 3.1.

5.3.4 Interpretative statements

This Section answers Research Questions 4 and 5, on how parks are expressed and experienced altogether, and how Calgary and Kuching differ. The text here takes on a more interpretative turn by summing up the overall indications from data essential to communicating the analyses through empirical characterization.

Answering Research Question 4 here takes looking at the evidential support from Section 5.3.1, Section 5.3.2, and Section 5.3.3 and has interrogated these points through cross-tabular analysis. Hence, the organization of Section 5.3.4 follows the descriptive statements. By doing this, not only do the results give individual statements that have seen

rigorous reinterpretation of experiences and expression, it lays the groundwork for comparing the cities in results for Research Question 5 in the same places.

This refinement of the descriptive statements omits step-by-step analysis and figures to meet page limitations, while the process to achieve this is given in Section 5.2.

5.3.4.1 Park user arrival method

Park users typically drive. Calgary park users walked almost as often as they drove. Cross-tabulation indicated that drivers appear to be more socially-inclined, and walkers less so inclined. Driving appeared more related to accessibility and socio-economic means than to other factors.

Kuching park users typically drove, and drivers can be characterized along lines of park activity and accessibility. In Kuching, socio-economic means or habits appear to be an even stronger influence, or even a deciding-factor, on type of arrival.

Reinterpretation: Park users drive to the park more often. In Calgary, they walk almost as often as they drive. Overall, indications are that arrival method is most influenced by accessibility and means thereof, whereas social and activity attributes appear secondarily influential.

5.3.4.2 After-park plans

Park users typically go to the park as the only or end goal. In Calgary, the prevalence of park users returning to their starting point, such as home or work, suggests the park outing is certainly the end goal. Considering indications from analyses, this expression can be connected with in-park activity. ‘Returners’ were more inclined to health and utility activity

types. Those ‘continuing’ their outing after the park visit were more inclined to discovery types of activity.

In Kuching, the evidence does not solely support end use but continued use almost as often. Continuers appear to be more social and engage in lower-intensity activities. Returners appear to engage in higher-intensity activities and relate along more socio-economic lines rather than type of activity engaged in.

Reinterpretation: Park use is either the end goal or part of a string of (continuous) activities. Often, park users’ after-park plans appear connected to either type of in-park activity or socio-economic indicators.

5.3.4.3 Park user paths

Users do not follow others around. In Calgary (only), park users did not passively follow others or paths around the park. Rather, they wandered or led along either linear, round, or undefined types of paths. In retrospect, the method in which this survey question was approached seemed to lead to a weaker claim.

Reinterpretation: Rather than following other people or paths, park users apparently wander or lead along linear, round, or other path types.

5.3.4.4 Park user activity-type

Users partake in lower-intensity activities, either health or utility in type. For Calgarians, women were more prevalent in lower-intensity, social, and utility types of activities. Men appeared more inclined to higher-intensity, health, and discovery types of activities. From this, health and social activities appeared more important than utility ones, supported by results for activity-intensity and group composition.

For Kuchingites, Malay people apparently engaged in lower-intensity activities more often than Chinese people did⁷⁰. Overall, health-type activities dominated, and the park users doing them were reportedly better off in income.

Reinterpretation: Park users are more inclined to lower-intensity and health-type activities. A users' chosen activity appears to be most influenced by who is in the park user group, and socio-economics appears to be somewhat important too.

5.3.4.5 Park user identity with park space

Park users associate with the park personally. In Calgary, park users associated with the park social space more personally and intrinsically. Female park users represented these two characteristics more often (in concentration of responses counted) versus male respondents, suggesting again that group composition appears important for understanding association and identity.

In Kuching, park users associated more personally and spatially, and in expressive-extrinsic terms. In effect here, Kuching park users responded oppositely to Calgary park users. Group composition, ethnicity, and socio-economics did not prove useful in cross-tabulation with Kuching park user identity.

Reinterpretation: Park users associate personally with the park. In Calgary, they identify more intrinsically with the space too. Group composition stands out in this regard.

⁷⁰ To clarify, cross-tabulation of this dependent variable in the Kuching dataset strongly indicated that observed ethnicity contributed to how park users associated with the park; these respondents were less-defined by gender and therefore this result is not remarked upon. Conversely, Calgary respondents identify stronger along lines of gender and less so along lines of ethnicity – plus there was likely too little ethnic diversity in the Calgary dataset to reliably comment from an ethnicity standpoint.

In Kuching, responses were more extrinsic, but connective influences such as group composition remain unclear.

5.3.4.6 Park user income

Users more often self-identify as middle-income or class. In Calgary, better off park users (which include the largest ‘middle income’ group) involved more female, and fewer white park users, as well as those engaged in higher-intensity activities as compared to worse off users.

Alternatively, in Kuching, better off park users were more often Chinese and preferred health-type activities. Worse off users were more often Malay. Here, income factors appear to link park use with cultural and socio-economic characteristics.

With the improved positiveness of experiences vis-à-vis increased income, results suggest that park users have more of a predetermined ‘mindset’ (such as enjoying the park in advance of going there) rather than, say, of the social space ‘giving’ or ‘nurturing’ positive experiences to users solely from within the park space itself.

Reinterpretation: Park users are socially, culturally and economically influenced in their park activity and experiences according to whether they are better or worse off. This, to some degree, characterizes a predetermined mindset brought into the park. Also, socio-economic means appear more important (or crucial perhaps) in Kuching than in Calgary.

5.3.4.7 Experiences of the physical park

Park users experience the physical park positively. Calgary park users experienced the physical park more positively than negatively, and in addition, these individuals used the park more often. Separately, structural-type physical experiences were the most common

responses, and nature-type experiences nearly matched in number. Structural-type responses may also be influenced by group composition.

Kuching park users also experienced the park more positively than negatively, and structurally in type; users responding in a positive way also stereotyped others in the park more often, and involved fewer Malay in either positiveness or stereotyping.

Reinterpretation: Park users experience the physical park positively and more often along structural lines. Composition of the group seems to stand out.

5.3.4.8 Park experiences and interpretations

Users experience the non-physical park positively, personally, and intrinsically. In Calgary, non-physical experiences were typically positive, personal, and given along experiential-intrinsic lines. For characteristics, positiveness may be linked to social composition; also, personal-type experiences dominated over other types; and, experiential-intrinsic responses came from park user groups more often involving children and less often dogs.

In Kuching, non-physical experiences showed positive, personal, and particularly experiential-intrinsic responses dominating. These attributes in tabulation are very well defined. However, due to the dominance of these three types of responses as compared to their respective lesser ‘other’ types, describing finer characteristics is avoided.

Reinterpretation: Park users experience the non-physical park positively, personally, and intrinsically. Non-physical experiences are influenced by social or group composition, especially in Calgary.

5.3.4.9 Social interactions and experiences

Park users experience social interaction positively and tend to stereotype each other. In Calgary, park users more often positive of social interactions also drove more. Stereo-typers also responded in less positive and less appreciative terms compared to Kuching park users. Group composition and activity-type appeared as stronger influences on users' social experiences and judgement of others in the park.

In Kuching, park users reporting more positive social experiences drove more and were more likely of Chinese ethnicity. Stereo-typing for users in Kuching is, instead, reported by park users more positive of their experiences, and these users were better off and were more likely Chinese. In sum, socio-economics and ethnicity, or culture, appear to be important here.

How users judge others in the park appears dependent on location. Rather than observing other users, stereotyping others was connected to greater positivity for Kuching park users, but to less positivity for Calgary users.

Reinterpretation: Park users have a good 'social time' or experience in the park, in both cities, yet they respond to strangers differently. So, although in both places social experiences appear connected with respective economic and cultural predeterminations, when it comes to users' observations of others in the park, those offering more judgemental terms rather than (mere) observations had a better time in Kuching compared to Calgary. Whether the connection between park enjoyment and stereotyping is due to people enjoying stereotyping others in general, or as a contributive factor to a more enjoyable park experience, is unclear.

5.3.4.10 Supplemental reinterpretations

Regarding all three analyses for experiential positiveness in either city (as in Results for Section 5.3.3), park user positiveness appears connected throughout. So, park users who gave more positive responses in one question more likely responded more positively in others.

The same went for negativity; but, as to whether these responses were more negative, or more critical is unclear. The reason for this is, in addition, supported by the observation that respondents who felt the park experience was a poor one might have worded responses not negatively at all. For instance, where there was a ‘non-committing’ answer, such as ‘don’t know’ or those answers rendered unusable, there was an increase in negative responses in other questions. This suggests that ‘non-answerer’ park users were more negative of experiences than those speaking negatively all across the board. In other words, Survey non-answers or the non-committed answerers themselves indicated through their behaviour (in answering questions in this way) that they may pointedly express more resistance and adversity than the majority of respondents. This implies that, perhaps, these potentially more negative-inclined respondents attempted to conceal this behind neutral, ambiguous answers and for whatever reason chose to express answers without forthrightness. Incidentally, this was seemingly more prominent in Kuching.

In any case, experiences connected by positiveness supports the proposition that park users bring in a ‘mindset’ to the park.

5.4 Discussion

This Section covers the most important findings in conjunction with themes covered in the Literature Review chapter, focusing on conviviality, quality of use, activity-driven use, planning and design, and Kuching-Calgary contrasts.

5.4.1 Experiential conviviality

First, park use in general is all-round positive, personal, and involves lower-intensity activity. These results characterize what park user experiences stand out over other types, therefore indicating what factors should be considered first to achieve vibrant, convivial park use. Within each of these factors, distinction in use appears most connected to group composition noting gender, ethnicity, and those accompanying the park user.

Comparing this to the literature, Shaftoe similarly observed that sensual experiences were crucial, arguing that healthy park spaces are convivial, social, positive, and personal (Shaftoe, 2008). Shaftoe (2008) and Whyte (2001) also emphasized that people are walking or relaxing in the park, thereby confirming the importance of paths, places to sit, and visual or other sensual qualities which accord with a healthy or natural environment along with the ever-important presence of other people. Obviously, paths, seats, and visual moments should not break personal positive, and lower-intensity moments and should allow for differing degrees of privacy for a park user or their group. That said, the park is certainly a public place at the same time and visitors revel in watching others in the space, so the public-private character of the park is likely unique to each place rather than expressed in general form.

Second, results indicate that park users seem to experience the physical park more along structural lines. Respondents more frequently mentioned built features over flora and fauna, even though all three are physical. This is reflected in the Structural Diversity article when highlighting the importance of built features (Voigt, Kabisch, Wurster, Haase, &

Breuste, 2014:482-489). Yet, in either the results here or the Voigt et al. article, it is reasonable to assume that questions related to physicality come across more as structural *in the asking*. Thinking as a park user here, perhaps it is more familiar to point out tangible maintainable objects than features of nature, whereas nature in a way exists as a spatial given. In this way of thinking, nature is not immediately summoned to mind in a survey since nature seems to maintain its own ecological balance with fewer interventions, and ‘natural beauty’ would allow for more flaws in the observer’s mind than the human-made things, the latter which necessarily demand more upkeep to be acceptable.

Therefore, experiential conviviality inquired through a survey question or observation restricts answers to the nature of its own asking. For example, the people in the park likely sought out or sought to confirm the personal and positive experiences of the park they were used to; meanwhile, inquiry using this scope, since it does not test respondents outside of the park, might fail to comment on potential users who never arrived, but only those that did arrive.

As another comment regarding the structural preference of respondents, experiences are physical anyway. Nature is permissibly less orderly in our eyes and appears to form an important background experience for the user, but nature demands fewer comments or efforts to maintain than structural features do. While much research indicates the importance of structural amenities, the results here did not indicate that the particular structural form was important in parks generally, unless human-made things such as paths or bathrooms were broken.

In conclusion, experiential conviviality while all-round well-felt and focused on physical features speaks for users in the parks and little for those who were not able to go.

The questions themselves seem to exclude those potential users outside and rather reaffirm the characteristics of those already there.

5.4.2 Quality of use

Quality of use, as a summation of the findings, was found through better or worse experiences in the park, was linked to socio-economic means, cultural predeterminations as a kind of mindset, and again the composition of companions and reaction to strangers in the park. Similarly, Shaftoe (2008) throughout his text mentioned the important influences of location, accessibility, social conviviality. Scholars pointed to climate too, but judging from researcher observations here, mild to moderate climatic variations played little influence⁷¹ on quality of use.

Breaking the findings down, first, culture and mindset influence quality of use and these influences are arguably important as they are brought in to and out of the park, instead of the conviviality of experiences of users already in the park, as discussed earlier. This is supported by the different experiential responses and the general positiveness of respondents in this research. Accordingly, ethnicity and other related social factors, in conjunction with location, are another crucial link to spatial quality insofar as how locals identify with space.

Alternatively, behaviourists would argue that networks and the formations thereof explain the agency of making better spatial experiences happen (as in Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev, 2015:389). In another perspective, though, networks are a compromise between behavioural-objective and the subjective inquiry used here, as network connections express both aspects of park use; for instance, motivation and action taken to get to the park would

⁷¹ There are some negative influences of conviviality or quality of use that are clear from moderate or heavier rainfall, nightfall, smoke or haze, high heat, and presumably winter.

likelier involve both higher-quality experiences related to previous or expected use, plus the expressed decision to go there and form opinions of the space meanwhile.

Second, in the results for activity-type, lower intensity activities were clearly preferred, and higher-intensity activities were reportedly done by more affluent groups, especially in Kuching. However, since park users indicated that walking and other lower-intensity activities as being as healthy as higher-intensity ones, for instance when users indicated the social or destressing benefits of a walk, this suggests that users need not choose cardio to become healthier because easy walking or socialising offered important health benefits too, at least from the subjective standpoint.

Third, and on income, park users described themselves more often as middle income, and in cross-tabulation middle income users tended to answer as higher-income people did, thereby suggesting that socio-economic access to parks is freer and easier for these people.

In contrast, lower-income users responded in different ways, were less present in the park, and drove less often, altogether suggesting access to the park was both a critical and challenging obstacle for them. This point, supported by discussion on Spatial Justice (Section 2.3.6), indicates that the majority of the already-present park users are freer in socio-economic ability to get to the park, while the worse-off users face more obstacles. Furthermore, there may be a lack for better-off users to understand these lower-income obstacles, especially since going to the park is free of charge and income struggles are not exactly visible there. In this case, therefore, municipalities and communities may shoulder the burden of improving lower income access and information or education related to these conditions.

Four, results of note that did not stand out very distinctly include the particular physical qualities or contents of the park, the income or class alone (removed from either

culture, ethnicity, method of travel, or activities), or the difference between experiences and expression of park use identity.

In the case for identity, extrinsic-intrinsic analyses and description of association was more useful. This implies that location and income alone are not as important as social-spatial emplacement (Cresswell, 2004) or active socio-economic contexts (Castells, 1983). This counters to some degree Whyte's (2001) emphases on public space content beyond a kind of minimum standard of flexible outline for design; instead, content appears intrinsically unimportant and relative importance is apparent in the 'character' of the space, what culminates in other words, as how city people emplace that character.

Results in this research also run counter to findings, "that specific properties are very important to park visitors and their activities" (Voigt, Kabisch, Wurster, Haase, & Breuste, 2014:489). It is not surprising that the behavioural research, being epistemologically-materialist, comes up with these results. It finds what it is looking for. The contention here is what is 'important' to park visitors is a very *subjective* question as far as the approach here is framed. So, taken from another standpoint, 'specific properties' are unimportant through the subjective lens, whereby here quality of use is expressed in terms of mindset, personal daily contexts, and cultural context of place.

Altogether, quality of use as the route to better promote park spatial conviviality than conviviality alone, appears well-connected to socio-economic and cultural contexts over physical form.

5.4.3 Activity-driven park use

Notably, park use as an activity or expression was largely ignored in the consulted texts in favour of either observations⁷² or experiences⁷³. Conversely, Kingwell (2008) indicated that an ‘imagined’ city existed, implicating an expressed city, or say park, over a merely experienced one. How expression connects with Kingwell’s actual city space comes across ambiguously, leaving room here to build a clearer claim.

Accordingly, the findings and analytic successes and challenges here indicate expression is achieved through association, a movement (discussed in Section 3.3.3 as ‘an array of swarming entities’ (Latour, 2005)), rather than in a static space of fixtures as what Porter and Howell (2012) appeared to imply.

Also, producing answers of a different tone, in behavioural research the assumption is that park user activity is the goal *and* the source of the goal, whether explicitly stating it. In other words, preferred and denser park activity comes from better-felt park experience, so more people go there (adding to the experience), and therefore a good experience is a denser one too since it indicates collective assent (see for instance: Mahadin, (2016), or Ercan & Memlük (2015)). While surely the behavioural standpoint is correct-enough to explain material efficiency of spatial use, it is no substitute for a fundamentally-based descriptive interpretation of the park user. This differs from incorporating actor agency of actively deciding to go to the park and do one’s chosen activity.

Alternatively, the results here indicated that park users did not merely follow others around or go to parks that were the best places for their activities. Instead, users appeared to make a choice based on their recreation time and had the park visit fit into it—suggesting

⁷² As in Whyte (2001) and Jacobs (1992).

⁷³ As in Shaftoe (2008) and Hutter (2012).

that the park was a convenient place to express their collectively-similar desire to experience the park as expected, rather than only as a function of socio-spatial density. Social groups were certainly important to the visit, though, but how that can be described is not properly explained in a park context by either this research or others mentioned.

As a kind of moving middle-ground, these associations and a park user mindset appear to predict qualitative outcomes of activity and experience better than either actual perceptions, park contents, or imagined content. Rather than counting things in the park, instead observing interpersonal associations in spatial contexts offers a more dynamic and comprehensive perspective in understanding users and parks.

5.4.4 Planning and design

Both the literature studied here, and the evidence as discussed in Section 5.4.1 and Section 5.4.2, strongly suggest that an inventory list of public facilities (say from Kuching North, 2004) is a poor substitute for a comprehensive city parks plan. A park plan should put people first, especially those who are willing and able to go there. Respondents in their respective neighbourhoods are presumably more representative of each park compared to users clumped together with the city or broader population, or else in plans where users are virtually nowhere at all (i.e. Kuching South, 2002).

Planning and design need to be more than an artifact that resulted in a park, either document effectively ending before the first real park user arrived there. Documents need vigilant updating. While this research did not study the plan-writing process, the Calgary Open Space Plan (2002), for example, seems to move planning focus towards a pro-user perspective, yet it appears that more work needs to be done to keep it valid with research on users in the park. Continual updating and malleable plans also involve more than community

meetings and internet surveys alone, as these will fail to capture the necessary park user frame of mind in these out-of-place settings when trying to obtain reliable information. Users in the park space need the opportunity to speak while they are there.

5.4.5 Calgary and Kuching

Calgary and Kuching park users contrast in a few noteworthy ways. First, socio-economics stands out as more important in Kuching, while broader response-types in Calgary suggest lesser economic and accessibility limitations. Second, ethnicity seems important in Kuching park use, while gender more so in Calgary.

Third, compared to Kuching, Calgary park users tended to give more intrinsic responses that were personal and often emphasized the park users' group as well. Conversely, Kuching users tended to give more extrinsic personal replies, while emphasizing spatial or structural park aspects more often.

Four, these cities appear to differ in how park users judged others insofar as positiveness is concerned. Related to this, Kuching users were more likely to reply in 'non-committed' or non-answer ways; these types of responses perhaps concealed unexpressed negative associations with the park space. Even so, characterising negative experiences here is weak at best since these responses represented a small minority.

In either city, neighbourhoods and parks showed observably-unique qualities, suggesting the scale of spatial grouping can go as small as individual parks and still retain meaning for municipal uses. This hardly differs from recent behaviourist research, such as in Axhausen (2015), whereby networks for parks are place-related social localities, or as in 'psychological sense of community' that is influenced by proximity to the park (as in Gomez, Baur, Hill & Georgiev, 2015:390).

5.4.6 Summary

In closing, more attention on expressed or associative park user characterization is required. Overly relying on experiences and observations to achieve an understanding of city-people is demonstrably lacking proper subjective interpretation. Park use, as it stands, is a generally positive experience even though that experience appears to emerge largely from a mindset.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Summary chapter briefly answers the Research Questions, offers a terminal hypothesis, and then gives summary recommendations.

The research project asked, ‘Who are park users?’ From a socio-spatial perspective emphasizing individual people or actors as the source of evidence, park users are people at the park identifying with the place and often with some consistency.

As shown, people within the park space can be characterized by their different activities and various experiences; however, the way park use differs appears tied more closely to the park user group rather than activity and experience alone.

In other words, park users identify with the park spatial realm according to whom they are with or see, what they see, and what they plan to do. Furthermore, evidence suggests that how the park visit goes, for better or worse, is influenced by a predetermining mindset regardless of the experience mediated in the park space. The general outlook and attitude of individuals are brought in from outside the space.

6.1 Answering the Research Questions

The five Research Questions are discussed here according to the results. To recap, results were reached by in-park observations of park users and the physical park space. Park users, as the central concern for interpretation, were observed directly by the researcher and through responses taken by a largely open-ended question Questionnaire. Results were then organized and analyzed in a structured manner to give indications for the interpretations to stand by.

6.1.1 Park user existence

The first question asked: *what is a park user?* The answer, in brief, is *someone going to the park*.

Rather than proven in the field, this answer was assumed through forming the Research Questions in the first place and the literature study supports this.

Answering the following four Questions involved collecting responses from park users' open-ended survey questions through qualitative, interpretative methods. Results were analyzed as observations supported by descriptive statistics.

6.1.2 Description of park user existence

The second question asked *how* a park user exists. Results indicate that park users exist in the moment, in the park space, and identify actively with their space.

Users experience the park positively, engage in lower-intensity activities, and often drive to the park. These characteristics stand out more than any others, and hence are stronger and more valid.

Most often, characteristics appeared to stand out most when cross-tabulated against who the park user was with (or without, perhaps). This 'park user group' is indicated in the analysis by gender, ethnicity, children, pets, and general social types of responses.

6.1.3 Description of the park space

Third: *how does a park exist?*

From a sociological perspective, a park exists generally through the expression and experience of a park user as social space. While the existence of this space is a temporary and contingent realm in a physical space with the park user there, an important distinction

for the sake of meaning is the park user first ‘emplaces’ the park social space into its physical location.

In addition, findings indicate that park users bring a mindset to the park, as a predetermined set of expectations rather than a timely and dynamic connection with their preferred park place. In this sense, the existence of the park turned out to be more abstract (in the park users’ mind) than anticipated here, reaffirming the notion that social space is more in the park user’s mind than in an actual location.

6.1.4 Park user expression and experience

Fourth, research question asked how parks are expressed and experienced. Results indicate *through associating identity*.

An individual’s confluence of expression and experience in or regarding the social-actual space amounts to park user identity. As an identity, expressions and experiences are potentially detectable through park user associations. In practice, though, looking directly at experiences and expressions translates poorly into description. Data looked at in this way was too static, dead, and appeared dislocated from other variables.

Conversely, park users responded more distinctly to questions in extrinsic and intrinsic terms. Individual identity was not easily detectable in the survey, and instead, how the park user connects more internally or externally with the space, as in intrinsically or extrinsically, was more evident. These interpenetrative movements of association are, incidentally, more representative of ‘proto-social’ activity as an interaction between the Self and ‘Other’ concepts explored earlier on through the Literature chapter.

To summarize this association, park user identity is neither merely ‘out there’, nor ‘in here’, but it comes in the form of simultaneous outward-inward movements.

6.1.5 Park users at the city scale

Fifth, to investigate at what ‘scale’ park user generalisations may be applied to, research investigated the characteristics of park users and use shared between the two cities. Considering the differences of park user perspectives (in social experiences) and socio-economics, results indicate that park users are better characterised by the park user *group* as the descriptive axis at the city scale.

In more detail, park users in either city tended to stereo-type others in the park more than they strictly observed each other. An important difference is that Kuching park users, along with more given stereo-typing responses, also responded more positively; whereas in Calgary, park users responded less positively.

Other than that, park user responses were defined largely along lines of who formed the group. In either city, as far as what characteristics are shared, ethnicity, gender and age are important bases for those characteristics. Due to scope and limitations of the research, detailed definition on group composition vis-à-vis park use is not done here.

Park user characteristics also appear to differ according to place, as might be expected. In Kuching, park users appear more defined along lines of ethnicity and the socio-economic features that come with it. In Calgary, park users appear more defined along lines of the park user group rather than ethnicity, as in whether the park user was joined by females or males especially, as well as children, and dogs.

6.2 Terminal Hypothetical Statement

The following statement for characterising the park user continues the interpretative, momentary and undecided ‘tone’ required of more valid and relevant qualitative research. So, with this in mind:

Understanding park users, and therefore giving purpose to the public city park space, primarily requires an investigation of the ‘park user group’ especially in relation to how the park user (socially) connects with the social space. Park user attributes are informed more distinctly by whom they are with in relation to all other (viz. secondary) characteristics.

In this statement, ‘park user’ and ‘city park’ may apply to ‘people’ and ‘space’ in general, too. However, considering the socio-spatial park-centred evidence analyzed, this cautious claim is restricted to park users here.

6.3 Summary Recommendations

Recommendations are targeted for designers, the municipality, and researchers with emphasis on community and neighbourhood-scale park conception, and socio-economic access.

6.3.1 Design for park users

Results showed that park users did not often look for particular park content, say a park designed especially for higher intensity activity in the park space. Instead, users sought a place that was generally personal, calming, and alive with social activity. Park features such as benches and toilets appeared to be more of a necessity than a motivating reason to go there, with good maintenance and availability important.

In contrast, behavioural and other materially-centric research would be the better perspective to make empirical comments on park design, at least from the physical aspect—such as where things should go and how much of it. In doing this it is important to remember, though, that park experiences are not only physical, so such perspectives should not be overblown. Instead, there is critical need to understand what park users are doing and

experiencing from their own perspectives, their voice helping to ensure resources are used to build efficiently and relevantly.

In effect, therefore, parks should be designed with nearby residents in mind, at least for those who use or would use the park. Their local needs and wants can be tailored to them by surveying them in the applicable space. Although obvious, generalisations and building to form do work somewhat well in some places, but apparently less so in others. Designing for localities is key, and is discussed below.

6.3.2 Municipal policy and planning

Municipal parks departments will have more relevant sociological understanding of park users' needs through asking users directly. Indications are that looking at park users in context of the people accompanying them, as in a social investigation, appears to be the most fruitful method for this undertaking.

In this regard, it is recommended that Calgary and Kuching municipalities continue involving citizens as essential partners to park space design and operations. While this study found evidence that city-people were involved in design, for the sake of emphasis, designing parks only from drafting tables, planning only from municipal offices, and building only with municipal worker hands is an attempt to create recreational park spaces without people.

In the city comparison, observations throughout the research indicate that Kuching municipalities conceive of and involve its citizenry in park provision much less than the City of Calgary did. In any case, for better recreation services, more concrete engagement is required.

6.3.3 Community and neighbourhood

Parks appear most relevant according to their ‘place’ in the neighbourhood and city context, and less so in national or global/ universal contexts.

To achieve this relevance, what park users seem to share most is their intent to go to the park and enjoy their visit, more often in a relaxed low-intensity manner, and this gives back a personal yet connective experience. The park-going activity is somewhere between an extrinsic outer experience and a lonely intrinsic-abstract experience or expression.

In this regard, it is recommended that Calgary and Kuching park providers continue to ‘envision’ and build most parks at the neighbourhood scale, thereby making these spaces relevant to immediate local contexts rather than building generally to format. While some urban parks are iconic and exert a ‘citywide context’, and while others are environmental-cum-recreational regional hybrids, most city parks are populated by regularly-attending locals. Hence, involving local residents in park design wherever possible will be superior to engaging general city-workers or non-local planning experts according to national or provincial/state guidelines.

To compare, Kuching neighbourhoods appeared more diverse than Calgary ones. This is apparent in the observable ethnic and socio-economic differences seen in the research, the separated municipalities managing the Greater Kuching Area, and the observable disparity of the conditions of parks across each municipality. In effect, Kuching municipalities could represent much greater neighbourhood diversity in parks based on the already-diverse populations there.

In contrast, the City of Calgary appears to build parks on a more generic functionalist format that seems to represent a rather bland Calgarian-Canadian at a regional level. The City should pursue an understanding of communities from their respective needs and wants

more qualitatively, and then express that in park form to improve relevance in recreational experiences.

6.3.4 Implications for socio-economic access to space

The research found a useful generalisation applicable to park users that speaks to the ‘spatial justice’ critique of access to city spaces. While public parks are (usually) free, having no entry fee does not mean suddenly everyone is free to go there or able to travel there, or that they feel comfortable using the space vis-à-vis other users. This was most apparent in respondent comments, as well as evident in researcher observations of the more popular parks.

As presumably different parts of the city are populated by different people, one community will have varying recreation time, recreational needs, work time, hobbies, and so on compared to another community. Hence, parks in some areas will function better as retreats from urban bustle as a quiet corner to escape into—perhaps as how alcoves act as shelter at sea; alternatively, other community parks will do much better when they facilitate through-travel as a refreshing alternative to city streets. Some parks do both. In any case, what people can and want to do is unique to their location, so the city and its designers should investigate accordingly based on a socio-economic profile at community scales or smaller.

Within such scales a park must be as reachable as possible. Being free-of-charge is essential but insufficient for inclusivity as, despite busses, free parking, or sidewalks, some residents still need to travel too far to get to the park, or the route is hostile with bad neighbourhood walkability. So, if a park is supposedly designed for mixed use, then people and uses need to be able to mix, feel safe, and still provide the same recreational experience.

To gather the information required on community and neighbourhood residents, due to the interpenetrative nature of socio-economics in all areas of sociological life involving a

complex array of potential social connections, a simple answer from either a material or non-material perspective alone is insufficient. Here, a mixed methodology would appear to be best, say including the behavioural with a qualitative socio-spatial one to compare what works efficiently with what can be verified among park users.

6.3.5 Research going forward

Park users differ primarily according to social characteristics and secondarily according to socio-economic, behavioural, and physical experiential ones. Understanding should be enriched by focusing on *who* rather than *what*.

Designing, building, and operating ‘local’ parks means understanding the ‘potential park users’ populating the neighbourhood. In this regard, for Calgary and Kuching, it is recommended that municipalities go out regularly to study social (group) characteristics, socio-economic means (alongside cultural factors), behavioural and recreational needs of park users, as well as the sources of joy and calm (rather than danger and stress) for local people in the park and trying to reach it.

The resulting analyses should be more informative than generically-applicable textbooks and expertise, hence moving rigid principles of ‘urbanisms’ away from a primary influence in form to refocus on the user instead.

Convivial and healthy park spaces may be constructed thus.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaires

Park User Survey	Anonymous Qualitative Survey
1. The Park User Are you a park user? ☐ Y - ☐ No Are you a city resident? ☐ Y - ☐ No Park use Frequency	<i>*Your consent is taken for this survey when you agree to participate in the survey. The survey is 'anonymous' in regards to your personal private information. Please ask the researcher for full consent, disclosure and ethical information, guidelines and for a copy. And thank you for taking your time to help with our study.</i>
2. Expression (a) How did you get to this park today? What part of the city did you come from? (b) Where do you go after? (c) How do you travel through or around this park to get to this spot? What route or path did you take (d) What are you doing in this park today?	
3. Identity (a) I want to know how people identify themselves as park users. For example, what do you think about when you think of the park? Or, how do you regard your park use compared with others? (b) In your own words, how would you describe your income group/ status?	

Figure A: English language field survey questionnaire side 1

Source: Fieldwork 2015

4. Experiences

(a) Please describe important **physical** park features, good or bad:

(b) Please describe non-physical, interpreted features, good or bad, such as feelings, moods or opinions that you get while you are here:

(c) Please point out behaviours or observations about **other people** in the park, good or bad:

(d) Additional comments/ insight, anything not yet covered:

(b) Researcher

Researcher Notes on Features, Interpretations, Social Interaction.

(A) (G) (L)

(F) (B) (R)

(T) (W)

Also: **Note**, events, reflexive (bias), limitations, etc.:

User ID /Park:

Figure B: English language field survey questionnaire side 1

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Questions: Explanation of Methods

The following list describes how the questions were asked in the field. These questions are limited to those used as the dependent variables crucial to answering the Research Questions and inquiry in general. See Section 4.3.3.2.1 for administering technique.

Question (2a)

‘How did you get to this park today?’ ‘What part [roughly] of the city did you come from?’

Open-ended question seeking how park users might ‘do’ or express going to the park.

Question (2b)

‘Where [roughly] are you going after this [park visit]?’ Open-ended question asked in order to help understand how (‘doing’) the park visit fits into the rest of the day following the visit and survey. What the park user was doing before was not asked so to keep in line with a briefer, less-invasive survey.

Question (2c)

‘How did you travel through or around this park to get to this spot?’ ‘What route or path did you take?’ Only the responses from Calgary were analyzed for this open-ended question since an apparent collection error led me to dispose of the Kuching set. The intent here was to look at expression by the path which a respondent took within, to, and from the park. Without Kuching results to set it beside, the Calgary results lack an important aspect of comparability to ascertain whether the data conveys stronger, discrete, or weaker indications.

Question (2d)

‘What are you doing in this park today?’ Open-ended question.

Question (3a)

‘How do you identify yourself [or associate] as a park user?’ Open-ended question. Ideally the question was asked to directly get at how park users identify, as in express and experience park use. Also, the question was intended as a bridge between the separated expressions (Q2) and experiences (Q4). As noted in Encountered Limitations (3.3.5.3), this question required modifying in the field as it initially came across as ‘too abstract’ when asked.

‘How would you describe your income group or status?’ A limited open-ended question asked as a way to check how income or status might connect with park use.

Question (4a)

‘Please describe important physical park features.’ Open-ended question aimed at seeking indications of what apparent physical experiences stand out to respondents. The physical park here includes content and form rather than interpretations or social interactions (unless the respondent specified these in their answer).

Question (4b)

‘Please describe non-physical [or interpreted] park features.’ Open-ended question that sought out interpretative rather than physical or social experiences. Here, the first analysis looked at positiveness, while the second arranged data by type and association respectively.

Question (4c)

‘Please point out behaviours or observations about other people in the park.’ Open-ended question analyzed for positiveness, and separately, for apparent judgement of other park users through the wording of the respondent’s reply.

Judgement of park users’ social interaction

In a subsequent analytic step, experiences were re-analyzed according to my impression as to whether responses came across in more (plainly) observational or stereo-typical terms. While stereo-typing is sometimes referred to as ‘judgementalism’ (as in excessively-critical), stereo-typing people, here, is not at all suggestive of ‘bad’ in itself. Instead, ‘stereo-typer’ is used indifferent to either positiveness or as some moral valuation.

Question (4d)

Park users were asked for any additional comments or insights related to the park or park use. This entirely open-ended question, without any leading or suggestion, meant to draw on highlight-matters on the park user’s mind, whether these items were repeated, related, or entirely new experiences, expressions or other things. As a contingent question, how these results might apply was decided as analysis went on and for this reason its implications are more supportive of other main points rather than axial to the Research Objectives.

Appendix B: Glossary

Descriptive Potential: This term can be used to describe something more or less accurately according to given evidence. For example, if I said that ‘social composition has good descriptive potential’, I would mean that understanding the people in a park user group is crucial in describing them properly.

Experiential (being): As the aspect of conscious and physical being involving experiences that are considered to come from outside the body and self. This includes physical (sensed), non-physical (i.e. thought) and social experiences. Experiences originate in materiality.

Expressive (Being): As the aspect of conscious being of the Self involving the irreducible *I/Me*, expression is a basis for conscious action (of say choice, rather than instinct) and originates in ‘cogito’.

Indicates, Suggests, Implies, Seems, Etc.: These terms signify that the research is structured by qualitative interpretations from observations rather than quantitative empirical proofs or unstructured conjecture. Such terms help strengthen claims made.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic: Both refer to a positional reference of the Subject. ‘Extrinsic’ means to position the subject among external (or externally-perceived) objects. ‘Intrinsic’ means to position the Subject (reflexively) to itself before objects. These terms are used to specify whether the park user is making a direct expressive connection with objects in the park extrinsically, or the park user appears to position her or himself first intrinsically before objects. The main difference between extrinsic and intrinsic here is that the former is more of an observation (movement from

perception to mind) and the latter invokes the self in a stronger fashion (movement from the self, to perceived object, back to mind), or as a kind of judgement⁷⁴.

Judgement: ‘Judgement’ is used in some analyses instead of ‘observation’. For instance, observations, as a methodological norm for this research, involved minimal data manipulation to achieve an orderly description. Judgements, in contrast, involved extended interpretation of the observations.

Monism, Solipsism, Materialism and Dualism: Monism in this paper refers to the elements of existence consisting of / emerging as one source. Typically, monists have argued their perspective from either the solipsist or materialist perspectives.

Solipsism is a monist perspective that, in short, argues that existence consists only of the singular (and lonely) conscious mind—the *cogito*. The (your/ my) conscious thought (of me/ I) cannot be predetermined by materialism since the material study requires conscious consideration.

Conversely, the materialist monist perspective argues that the fundamental building-blocks of the universe, as in physicality, cannot be predetermined by ‘other’ types of being. Modern materialists argue on the complexity of the physical brain and illusory conscious that follows it for the basis of apparent *cogito* or solipsist consciousness.

⁷⁴ To add, by using these two terms I am not trying to suggest that two separated or opposing internal motions are going on. Instead, ‘extrinsic’ and ‘intrinsic’ are used more to emphasize how park users experience and express the park social space. Incidentally, I used these terms to help communicate how experiences and expression ‘moves’ about the self, because after looking at the data, experiences and expressions alone seemed to say little about the park user. Elsewhere experiences and expressions when ‘under the microscope’, so to speak, are rendered dead (static and timeless) without intrinsic and extrinsic relational positioning.

Dualism, rather than monism, attempts to argue that *both* material and cogito fundamental beings exist either simultaneously, equally, or at least despite each other.

Park User: ‘User’ here refers to city people who go to the park for recreational purposes.

‘Park’ refers to urban public green and recreational open spaces provided for by the governing city body for this purpose. Together, ‘park user’ signifies the active and momentary social space emplaced by that person in the park.

Positiveness, Positivity, Negativity and ‘Mindset’: Respondents generally referred to something as being either better or worse, ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and positive or negative either explicitly or apparently in their wording. For instance, indications are that park users are more often found in the park when they have positive/ good/ better experiences. These terms of positiveness effectively represent two different meanings: one as a gradient of cognitive wellness and another as a mindset.

So on this difference, on one hand, positiveness here refers to a scale or gradient between positive and negative experiences. On the other hand, positivity and negativity when referred to as an expression means the park user goes to the park expecting a good/ better time and appears to get as much; this latter fulfilled expectation here is a ‘mindset’.

Proto-social and social: ‘Social’ commonly refers to interactions between people, or as the functional basis for a group. Conversely in this paper, social refers to something more particular—as argued in Literature. Here it refers to the interaction an individual engages in between a person (or social non-human) and absolutely anything else, whether tangible, intangible or social.

The argument for this type of social definition comes from proto-social being. Individual identity is an associative confluence, a movement, between experiences

and expression. Associations start at the reciprocating movement between the *I/Me* and *not-me*, or the Self and Other. This Subject-Objective cyclical movement between expression and experiences is instantaneous and continuous, and forms the basis of physical-conscious context between *cogito* and material. It is also the prototypical basis for which social interaction occurs and makes sense from.

Social: in data, as observable interactions as interpretable evidence; in theory as all possible inter-actions between a Subject and an other. The other may be human, alive, or neither.

Spatial: in data and theory as the context of the park/ place necessary for people that go there and others who build such places.