Constructing a Proposal for PhD Research

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What we get at end of this workshop?

1. To learn what is required in a PhD research proposal; and

2. To learn why a good proposal will lead to a good thesis.
What is a PhD Proposal?

- It is an outline of your proposed project that is designed to:
  1. Define a clear question and approach to answering it
  2. Highlight its originality and/or significance
  3. Explain how it adds to, develops (or challenges) existing literature in the field
The Journey

Year 1
- Research Conceptualization;
- Preparation of Research Proposal; Literature Review, Problem Definition

Day 1
- CP1

Year 2
- Data collection and analysis
- CP2
- CP3
- JP1

Year 3
- Thesis writing
- CP4
- JP2
- JP3

Submit thesis

Viva-voce
Content of Research Proposal

1. Title (5-9)
2. Introduction/Scenario (10-13)
3. Issues or Research Problem and Research Gap (14-19)
4. Research Aim, Objectives, Questions, Hypotheses (20-24)
5. Assumptions and Delimitations (25)
6. Theoretical Framework including Underpinnings (27-28)
7. Background and Scope of Study (29-31)
8. Research Design and Methodology (32-34)
9. Research Significance (35-36)
10. References
11. Timeline
Title

• It is the prelude information of a proposal.
• Its content reflects the research aim of a study.
• E.g.
  (1) Affordances of School Grounds for Children’s Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning
  (2) Affordances of Home-school Journey as a Play and Learning Environment for Rural Middle Childhood Children
Affordances of School Grounds for Children’s Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

Research Aim: To identify the influential factors affecting the actualization of affordances and children’s preferences on the use of school grounds for outdoor play and environmental learning

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Faculty of Built Environment
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1 October 2014
AFFORDANCES OF HOME-SCHOOL JOURNEY AS A PLAY AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR MIDDLE CHILHOOD CHILDREN

This phenomenology research investigates children’s experiences during a home-school journey in the rural environment in order to identify the actualised affordances which stimulate their performances.

NOOR AIN YATIMAN : MB113011
SUPERVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. DR. ISMAIL SAID
Question

Research topic

Urban Morphology at Historical Urban Riverside Settlement Area: Rebuilding City’s Identity Through Morphology of Historical Area
Answer

Research Aim

To identify the morphology of riverside settlement in Palembang for the rebuilding of the city as a historical place.
Introduction/Scenario

• It is a prelude that explains what is the concern of a study.
• What do you plan to study?
• Why it is important to study the subject?
Introduction

Affordances of School Grounds for Children’s Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

• The quality of life and of the environment can never be improved without an understanding of the person-environment relationship.

• There is a need to understand children’s perceptions about their environment as perceptions are a good predictor of people’s behaviour in some contexts (Ball et al., 2008) when the psychology behind their behaviour remains unexplained by the objective measure approach (Ward Thompson, 2013).

• An understanding of children’s perceptions will lead to an understanding of their emotions, needs, preferences and interactions.

• It is an essential part of the process of creating a child-friendly environment that will offer more meaningful experiences for children through an encouraging engagement and interaction with the environment.
Bring these words into a theme

DNA-based computational systems
Global internet
Ordinal biological world
Engineering tool-kit
Turing Test
Smart configuration system
Artificial intelligence
Biotechnology
Speech recognition
Synthetic biology software
Nanorobots
Computational biology
INTRODUCTION

HOME-SCHOOL JOURNEY

Home, school and recreational facilities are referred as institutional triangle in children's lives.

The settings are created by adults that are embedded with rules about how and where the children should play and learn with limited engagement of outdoor environment.

Concerned with this situation, this study recognized home-school journey as a part of children's everyday routine place that allows children to play and stimulates three aspects of children performance which are physical, cognitive and social.
Issue or Research Problem

• The fundamental matter that you like to solve.
• You get the research problem for synthesis of literature and/or from your expert observation.
• Easy to elicit data.
Defining research gap

• Once a problem is encountered, a researcher foresees the gap of study that he or she would like to bridge through empirical investigation.

• A review of literature can ensure a researcher to define his or her study gap by analyzing what previous studies had examined and what have not been investigated.
Research Problems

Affordances of School Grounds for Children’s Outdoor Play and Environmental Learning

PROBLEMS

1. SG DESIGN
   - Conventional school grounds
   - Limited spaces and landscape features for children’s play
   - Children’s views in planning and design are generally ignored

2. SG CULTURE
   - The regulations restrict children from playing at certain times and places
   - The creative, widespread use of school grounds for outdoor play were viewed as hazardous and irrelevant

Design

- Courtyard (paved area)
- Field
- Backyard

Culture

- Restrictions and the issues of accessibility
There has been a variety of research about school grounds, but most studies have focused either on the impacts of the physical environment on children’s behaviour and levels of physical activity or on children’s perception of their school grounds environment.

- The studies overlooked the connection between the physical environment and the social context of school grounds regarding the actualisation of affordances and the formation of children’s preferences.

- Research focusing on children’s values of outdoor play for environmental learning in relation to the physical and social contexts of school grounds is less studied.

Therefore, more comprehensive research is required to explore the connection between children’s experiences within the designed school grounds environment with their perceptions of the ideal school grounds for environmental learning.
PLACE MAKING AND MEANING OF *PADANG* AS A PUBLIC PLACE IN HISTORIC CITIES OF MALAYSIA

Nor Zalina Harun (PB073042)
PhD Candidate, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
Research Gap

But amid the resurgence of interest in such researches, literature review indicates that:

1. Very little, attempts at bringing public space contribution to the identity of place and people. Attention was often concentrated on single or dual component of place (physical and activities) with not much is done to integrate whole components (physical+activities+meaning) ; the interdisciplinary nature between urban design and environmental psychology.

2. Although research on both disciplines is recorded in the western countries, it is still minimal in developing countries including Malaysia.

3. Lack of theoretical discussion on the process of place meaning beyond the widely acknowledged three levels of meaning; low, moderate and high levels.

4. The roles of place attachment as a component that give place meanings has not been adequately explored.

5. Even though place literature suggests that place attachment may imply a deep concern about place however there is not much is known about how changes on favorite places affects or disrupts people.
Research Aim, Objective, Question and Hypothesis

• A research **aim** is the purpose of a study
• Must be stated succinctly; a broad statement
• Emphasize what is to be accomplished

• An **objective** emphasize how aims are to be accomplished
• It must be highly focused and feasible

• A research **question** instigates what an objective to attain

• A research hypothesis is the statement created by researchers when they speculate upon the outcome of a research or experiment.
To identify the use of morphology of riverside settlement for the rebuilding of the city identity as a historical river city
Research Objectives

1. To identify the **physical and spatial structure** of riverside settlement along Musi river that characterized the character of the river city,

2. To investigate how **place character** of historical riverside area can establish the identity of river city, and

3. To identify the **interdependency between the urban morphology and identity** of the city to determine the appropriate physical development at historical riverside area.
## Research Questions

| RQ#1: What is the **morphology** at the historical riverside area? | • What are the **types of urban structure and form** are found at Musi historical riverside area based on **physical properties and social value** of riverside community?  
• What are the **changes** of building form and urban structure at Musi historical riverside settlement?  
• What are the **key elements** of old urban structure and how do they influence the current urban structure of Musi historical riverside settlement after the changes happens? |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ#2: How is the <strong>people - place relationship</strong> at historical riverside area?</td>
<td>• What do people <strong>perceive</strong> about the physical and spatial environment at the historical riverside settlement and the city?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| RQ#3: How does the urban morphology can be used **to rebuild city's identity**? | • How do the remaining key elements such as building, walls, square of old urban fabric **promote the character** of riverside urban development and rebuilding the city’s identity?  
• How to rebuild the city’s character by **using the remaining key elements** of historical urban area?  
• What is the **interdependency between urban morphology and city’s identity**? |
Assumption and Delimitation

- An assumption is a thing that is accepted as true.
- An example: River is an important element in both old and modern city’s development. For river city, river was the main transportation mode in the past. As land transportation network becomes more prominent, river transportation is not considered as the main one.
- A delimitation is the definition you set as a boundary of your study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space Syntax Analysis</th>
<th>1875</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>2004</th>
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<td>River axial</td>
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<td>Integration</td>
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<td>River</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical Framework: What is a literature review?

• Literature is a body of information that has conceptual relevance for a particular topic of inquiry.
• A critical look at the existing research. It is a synthesis of your reading materials.
• It is not a summary or annotated bibliography.
• It is synthesizing a subject from a set of previous studies in your own stance.
• *It is a debate: evaluate* the work, *show the relationships* between different work, and *show how it relates to your work.*
Theoretical Framework as part of scope of study

A rigorous literature search and review affords you:

• Finding a research problem

• Defining research gap and situating a research with current status quo of a subject

• Finding underpinnings and developing framework of study

• Searching for research method, research design or research approach, and parameters of study
Theoretical Framework
Modelling of street network connectivity for good wayfinding in small towns in Malaysia

Underpinning 1: Theory of Recognition
- Memory; Dual Process Theory

Underpinning 2: Theory of Space Syntax (Social Logic Space)
- Ports et al., 2006; Batty, 2004; Jiang, Alamont, & Betty, 1999; Jiang et al., 2000; Hillier & Hanson, 1984

- Cognitive Memory/Spatial Representation
  - Allin (1895)

- Real World Action (Wayfinding)
  - Fast Reaction
  - Slow Reaction

- Recognition Memory Process
  - Familiarity Process
  - Recollection Process

- Street network of Small Town as Context
  - Axial Line
  - Convex Space (polygon)
  - Visibility (Isolost Polygon)

- Human Behavior (Space)
  - Move
  - Interact
  - Visualize

- Human Behavior In Space
  - Recollection
  - Familiarity

- Process
  - Reflection
  - Real World - Wayfinding
    - (decision making/reaction/verbal explanation)
  - Subject (Spatial Knowledge - 3 familiarity factors)
  - Object (Spatial Information - 15 street feature)
Situating a research with current status quo of a subject

Urban Morphology

Urban Element
- Schuller, 1898; Geisler, 1918; Whitby, 1951; Conzen, 1960; Muratori, 1960; Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Forties, 1989; Kropt, 1996; Hall, 1997; Levy, 1999; Canigia, 2001; Jiang and Claramunt, 2002; Chapman, 2006; James and Bound, 2009; Tian et.al, 2010; Topcu and Kubat, 2012

Urban Structure

Urban Setting
- Whitehand and Morton, 2004; Rapoport, 2004; Samant, 2004; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007; Smith, 2008; Rabady, 2010; Ragab, 2011, Kim, 2011

Urban Reminder
- Rodwel, 2007; Kolzlowski and Bowen, 1997; Sevinc, 2009; Wei and Kiang, 2009; Whitehand and Gu, 2010; Albert and Hanzen, 2010; Hillier, 2001

Environmental Psychology
- Tuan, 1974; Steele, 1981; Altman and Low, 1992; Hummon, 1992; Jackson, 1994; Cross, 2001; Guillani, 2003; Willian and Vaske, 2003; Smaldone, 2006; Handal. 2006; Beidler, 2007; Hernandez, 2007; Brown and raymond, 2007; Watson and Bentley, 2007; White et.al, 2008; Liu, 2009; Raymod et.al, 2010; Najafi and Kamal, 2011

Conservation Preservation

Place Familiarity
- Place Identity
- Identity of Place

Place Attachment
- Sense of Place

City's Identity
- Image of the city

City Marketing Culture

Putative

Place Character
- Authenticity

Identity
- Rebuilding City Identity

City Identity
- Place Identity

Image of the city
Research Background

• Explain how you came to be interested in this subject. You can summarise what you know of the existing literature in this area, perhaps identifying where it does and does not provide enlightenment on what you are interested in.
Background of people and their settlements along Musi river in Palembang

The cultural landscape of river city deals with modernity
Local concerns

The richness of Asian cities; features, form and space arrangement

Palembang identity is threatened by the lost of its historical elements

Elimination of old area along the riverside  \rightarrow  Change on urban morphology  \rightarrow  Change on appreciation towards historical elements
What is a research design and methodology?

• It is the way in which you will structure your research and the specific methods you will use.

• Define the parameters, unit of analysis, situatedness or context, method how to elicit and analyse data, triangulation of results from more than one method, and how to display the results.
The interdependency between the urban morphology and identity

Place Identity

The current bonding between people and riverside area

Interview

Stage 4

The new/remaining/disappeared urban elements or setting

The forgotten and memorized elements

Social Character

Physical Character

High vs. low appreciation towards place

IDENTITY OF RIVER CITY
## Research Method

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<tr>
<th>RO#1</th>
<th>RO#2</th>
<th>RO#3</th>
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<td><strong>Interview</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td><strong>Survey Questionnaire</strong></td>
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<td><strong>n=25</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Old Photos</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong></td>
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Research Significance

• The contribution of your study both in practical and theoretical adds-on.
The varying environmental situations of the model are interpreted on the basis of the degree of P-E fit between the potential affordances of the environment and children’s place preferences.

The degree of P-E fit then determined the number of actualised affordances and children’s environmental learning in the school grounds.

The higher the degree of P-E fit between the environmental affordances and children’s preferences, the greater the actualisation of affordances and children’s environmental learning.

![Diagram showing the hypothetical types of children's environment](image)
Novelty and Originality of a PhD Thesis

• Carrying out an empirical work that has not been done before
• Making a synthesis that has not been made before
• Making a new interpretation of known materials
• Bringing new evidence to bear on old use
• Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies
• Adding new knowledge to the current pool of knowledge
Timeline

• An outline of the timescale of the research, indicating how long different tasks are envisaged to take, and the sequence of the project in the time available