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Review Paper

Sports Facilities in Urban Areas: Trends and Development Considerations

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ABSTRACT

Sports and sports facilities development have improved rapidly over the past years in Malaysia. However, such improvements are inadequate compared to the overall development of sports at international level. Through preliminary interview with the managers, it was learnt that the sports facilities are underutilised and people do not use them. In addition, an increase in the amount of public money being spent on the sports facilities, as well as the increase in the number of sports facilities, necessitates the demand to investigate issues surrounding sports facilities development. Universally, there is a current sports facilities development boom. Recent developments are providing new roles for sports facilities in urban areas. However, it is accompanied by changing the cities strategies for large scale development. Although there are many research findings, there are still on-going debates on how to effectively use public money for sports facilities development. Through reviewing the current literature, it can be concluded that the impacts of sports facilities and the ability to affect urban surrounding areas depend on a wide range of factors, including location, context, and usage of the facilities, as well as the culture of sports among people. The aim of this paper is through reviewing the current literature on sports facilities worldwide to identify the gap and address issues on the development of sports facilities in Malaysia. The paper argues that simultaneously with the current interest on sports and sports facilities development in Malaysia, there is a need for a new perspective and a new approach for sports facilities development in the future.

Keywords: Sports facilities, development, urban areas

INTRODUCTION

The definition of a sports facility is different from open recreational areas, such as golf courses to indoor arena, dome, and single-purpose or multi-use stadia. Traditionally, sports facility was a modest facility with a capacity of perhaps a few hundred, serving a small local community and forming part of the social fabric, along with the religious building, and town hall. The new Olympic movement was proclaimed in 1894 and held its first competition in Athens in 1896. Ever since, sports have emerged in their modern forms and the facilities have evolved into one of the greatest public building forms of the twentieth century, regarded, at its best, as an essential and positive element of civic life (John

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et al., 2007). For the purpose of this study, sports facility is defined as any big enclosed facility for competitive sports, where sports are played, can host sports events, require public money for the construction, maintenance, and big enough to need ancillary construction.

Sports facilities have changed through the years from functional facilities, adapted facilities, state-of-the art facilities to centre of business and regenerating area facilities. Historically, the first generation of sports facilities aimed to cram as many spectators as possible with very few amenities, while in the second generation, they considered to improve and to provide greater comfort for spectators. Security has become a central issue for the third generation. Digital television, satellite communication, and internet have turned sports facilities into media-oriented. This global consideration on sports and sports facilities, on the other hand, given the increased pressure on cities to adopt an entrepreneurial stance to attract mobile global capital, have changed sports facilities at present. In the recent years, they have considered their abilities to shape new cities or regenerate decaying areas of old cities. However, over the past 20 years, investment in the sporting infrastructure at national level in cities was not primarily aimed at getting the local community involved in sports, but instead aimed at attracting tourists, encouraging inward investment, and changing the image of the city (Gratton *et al.*, 2005).

A lot of research has been conducted on sports facilities, looking at both the positive and negative impacts. On the other hand, there are some studies that have explicitly examined the ability of sports facilities as an urban change agent to spur redevelopment in dilapidated districts or to catalyse new development in emerging suburban areas. These studies are considered different indicators for the purpose of studying urban development to determine whether or not this has occurred. This is crucial in ensuring the long-term sustainability of such a huge investment. Although many studies have been done, there is still an on-going debate on the impacts and ability of the sports facilities in urban areas.

In Malaysia, sports and sports facilities developments have improved rapidly over the past years. However, such improvements are inadequate compared to the overall development of sports at the international level (National Sports Policy, 2007). During informal interviews, through preliminary data gathering, it was learnt that sports facilities in Malaysia are underutilised and people do not really use them. However, they are not economic-oriented and the policy of the government is to serve people and they are tax-exempted. An increase in the amount of public money being spent on sports facilities, as well as the increase in the number of sports facilities necessitates the demand to investigate issues surrounding sports facilities development in Malaysia.

This paper was written based on the review of the current literature. It is structured as follows; the next section focuses on the theoretical background of the sports facilities development in urban planning. It provides a brief overview on the recent trends of sports facilities development and identifies the development considerations. The third section concentrates on the sports facilities in Malaysia to address issues according to international considerations in Malaysia. Finally, the conclusions argue that with recent interest on sports and sports facilities development in Malaysia, there is a need for a new perspective and a new approach for sports facilities development in the future. In addition, there is a requirement for further research on the sports facilities in Malaysia.

RECENT TRENDS OF SPORTS FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

There is a current sports facilities construction boom universally. These facilities are for hosting sports mega-events, such as Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, or for smaller scale activities. Most of the literature on sports facilities come from the North American experiences as their professional sports facilities are very popular. The US context, involving national sporting league with big crowds at each game and team franchises which are mobile between cities, in addition, the rises of the

so-called 'entrepreneurial cities' enhance the competitiveness of cities within the framework of a globalising economy. Sport has transcended the boundary from being considered as an active leisure pastime to being recognized as having considerable social and economic influence in contemporary society (Davies, 2005).

There are various trends and rationales utilised to supports sports facilities development. However, they could provide better public subsidization. Although many researches have done studies to investigate their claims, there is still an ongoing debate on whether to build new sports facility with public funds (Sam and Scherer, 2008). It is due to the requirement of a large amount of money for construction, almost certainly with substantial public investments, and which involve too much money as compared to the cost benefit analyses. There are also the needs for ancillary construction which are often built at public expense with every provision of a new facility. In addition, there is a high cost for maintenance, and the truth is that it is now very difficult for a sports facility to be financially viable without some degree of subsidy (John *et al.*, 2007).

There are a wide range of positive and negative impacts that sports facilities construction have on their surrounding areas and wider cities. In particular, they may have political, economical, social, physical, legal, environmental, and safety impacts. At the same time, they require huge public investment and there is a need to reconsider whether there is enough justification for their funding. Some examples of physical impacts include generating new construction in the district, reusing of vacant building, changes in land use, and spin-off development. Furthermore, there are capabilities to provide substantial social benefits. They might create community, improve interaction, provide recreation, intangible benefits, and alleviate deprivation. In addition, improved transportations could lead to benefits for local communities. On the other hand, congestion, litter, traffic, vandalism, noise, and wrong kind of clientele are some examples of the negative impacts that sports facilities generate on their surrounding areas.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATION

A review of the current literature indicates that it is ascertained that the impacts of sports facilities and the ability to affect urban surrounding areas are dependent upon several considerations. Location, context, culture, and usage are directly affected to achieve sustainability in the sports facilities development.

Location

In the earlier trend, sports facilities were located in urban dense neighbourhood, with an intentional high degree of accessibility to their working class and middle class fan base (Chapin, 2000). As cities decentralised, so did sports facilities. John and Sheared (1997) and Vickery (2007) discussed a major trend of the sports stadia construction in 1960s and 1970s, i.e. the building of large stadia on out-of-town locations, where crowds, whether well or badly behaved, would create fewer disturbances to the everyday lives of people not attending events. Such locations would also reduce land costs and increase ease of access by private cars. However, the next significant step in the development of the stadium occurred in 1989, with the opening of the Toronto Skydome in Ontario, Canada. The public authorities in Toronto had recognised the problems of out-of-town sites and decided to take a brave step by building their new stadium in the very centre of their lakeside city.

Within the past twenty years, there seemed to be a massive return of sports stadia to the city central. Chapin (2000) discusses the location invariably tied to three sets of decision-guiding factors, namely technical factors (e.g. site characteristics), economic factors (e.g. land costs), and political factors (e.g. economic development initiatives). The classic location theory suggests that sports facility location be directly linked to the location of their core market over the time. On the other hand, the locational shifts to the central city sites could be resulting from a host of factors. These factors include the growing importance of the public sector in the site selection process, the linkage of sports facilities to economic development

initiatives, and the changing economics of major league sports. Meanwhile, the third factor is to identify a new fan base, i.e. corporations. These locations provide a much better location fit for this new market, providing easy access for these fans. The recent wave of sports facilities construction has been marked by a migration of such facilities back to the urban core. This shifting of the location of sports facilities into the cities provides the new role as catalytic buildings and for spur development.

Context

Empirical studies revealed that sports facilities on their own are not enough for urban development. The visual and physical connections of sports facilities to their urban environments are significant because they have begun to establish a linkage between the prospects of the stadium or arena and the land around it. At the same time, cities have also begun to approach redevelopment at a geographic level rather than at the individual project site (Chapin, 2002b). Meanwhile, research also indicates that district-level planning with an expressed goal of catalysing district development is important to realizing development outcome (Baade, 1996). The most important way to spur surrounding development is by generating coming and going, drawing people through the urban environment into the facility and later discharging them back into the environment, as well as creating opportunities in both occasions for the visitors to patronize other buildings.

However, many scholarly studies conclude that sports facilities have no significant positive economic impacts (Baade, 1996; Chapin, 2002; Coates and Humphreys, 1999; Richards, 2005; Siegfried and Zimbalist, 2000). In his article in response to Baade, Chema (1996) argued that context is the key and the value as catalyst for economic development depends on where they are located and how they are integrated into a metropolitan area's growth strategy. He further suggests that "the key to sports venues being a catalyst for economic development is locating them in an urban setting and integrating them into the existing city infrastructure."

In 2005, Santo pointed out that this is a dangerous generalization that ignores the importance of context which is very important. He concluded that the ability of a facility to give impact on its local economy is tied to its context. His finding reports new evidence that was derived from recasting the landmark study of Baade and Dye with the current data which contradicted their conclusion, in that context matter.

Therefore, district-level planning has emerged as an important element in linking redevelopment to new sports facilities. The identification of downtown activity nodes and the formulation of a strategy to connect these nodes are central elements to this new approach. Sports facilities can lead to urban generation if they are considered within a larger development strategy. In order to overcome the isolation, the sports facility development needs to be integrated into a local regeneration strategy to enhance the contribution of the sports facility to local community (Thornley, 2002).

Culture

As mentioned before, most of the literature on sports facilities come from the North American experiences as their professional sports facilities are very popular. However, the culture of sports is different there. Sport has become a defining part of life and culture in North America. There is a profound connection between sports and numerous parts of life: language, holiday celebrations, national, regional, city and school identities, school social life, etc. They build new stadiums only for hosting favourite teams in their cities (Rosentraub, 1996). City officials have become enamoured with ideas of constructing the newest and state-of-the-art stadiums (Richards, 2005).

In America, sports facilities have been a staple of the urban redevelopment toolkit and they will continue to serve as major urban redevelopment tools. Undoubtedly, the impacts

and ability of sports facilities in other countries are different. In order to study in different geographical places, it is important to consider the culture of sports amongst the people as it might have a direct relationship with the impacts of sports facilities in that area.

Usage

Another important consideration is related to the usage of sports facility in the years after its construction. However, the sustainability of impacts is dependent upon future usage. Ken Perry (2001) assumes that the benefits can be through attendance, and therefore measuring the change in attendance can in some ways quantify these benefits. Sustainable development refers to maintaining development over time (Elliott, 1999). In the recent years, sustainability has become increasingly important. It is more important for sports facilities as they require a huge amount of money for construction, ancillary needs and constant maintenance costs. However, there are sports facilities which have been built for world-class sporting events that struggle to produce sufficient revenue to sustain annual operating costs after the event. The sustainability of the impacts and longer term effects are largely dependent upon future usage and the ability to affect the local community (Davies, 2005). In addition, sustainable development seems to be more efficient, especially for developing countries which are faced with strong economic, social, and environmental needs.

SPORTS FACILITIES IN MALAYSIA

During 1950s, in Malaysia, many national sporting associations were formed in the preparation for the 1956 Olympics. At that time, however, the involvement of the government in this sector was very rare and indirect (Aman, 2005). After independence, the government supported the development of sports because it believed that sport could integrate people, and therefore fulfil the national objectives of promoting national unity, the well-being of the people, their sense of nationhood, national identity and political stability (Aziz Derama, 1984).

According to Aman (2005), since 1988, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has been the central administrative agency for sport and recreation in Malaysia. The National Sports Council (NSC), Sports Division and Malaysian Leisure and Recreation Council are the three sub-agencies working for the Ministry. NSC (high performance sport) and Sports Division (for mass sport programme) are the co-ordinating machinery in Malaysian sports. The Ministry of Youth and Sport, NSC, the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) and National Sport Organisations (NSOs) work in union with the federal and state governments to implement sport policy.

The National Policy in Malaysia is a sport policy for all. It encompasses both high performance sport and mass sport to achieve national development, unity and continued stability (National Sports Policy, 2007). Mass Sport is a relatively recent phenomenon in the country and the priority of the Ministry of Youth and Sports has recently been to provide facilities for mass sports (National Sports Policy, 2007), including Kompleks Belia dan Sukan Negara (National Youth and Sports Complex), Kompleks Rakan Muda (Youth Friendly Complex) in all states and Pusat Belia Antarabangsa (International Youth Centre). The majority of these facilities are under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) and they are quite new. Following this, the first sports school in Malaysia was established in 1996. At present, there are only two sports schools in the country.

The sports facilities in Malaysia have rapidly improved over the past years, especially after the country hosted the 16th Commonwealth Games in 1998. The 16th Commonwealth Games was the first ever held in Asia and the last of the twentieth century. It was also the biggest sporting event Malaysia has ever hosted. The Games had necessitated the construction of the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur to cater to a wide variety of sporting events at a cost of USD200 million. The first

big world-class stadium in Malaysia, prior to the completion of the Bukit Jalil National Sports Complex, i.e. the Shah Alam Stadium was officially opened in 1994.

In Malaysia, there is currently a tremendous interest in sports. This is while internationally, sport is getting more and more influential and it will continue to grow in importance as the world develops into a global village, sharing the English language, technology, and sports (Majumdar and Mangan, 2005).

Table 1 shows the budget allocation for sports development, under the Ninth Malaysian plan, which is more than double that of the previous allocation, and of the total, 48.3 percent (RM 299.9 million) was dedicated to the construction of multipurpose sports complex. In addition, there are various plans for sports which endorse the government's seriousness and commitment towards the development of sports and a wave of sports investment in Malaysia (Malaysian Sports Industry, 2008).

As mentioned earlier and based on the literature reviewed, the impacts and ability of the recent development of sports facilities are dependent upon several considerations. The following discusses the influence of these factors to the situation in Malaysia.

The first factor is the location of sports facilities, which according to the National Sports Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, is to coordinate planning and distribution of major sports facilities. A 20-year blueprint, in respect of sports facilities based on the strategy to have both high performance sport and mass sport for all strata of the community, is drawn up by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in consultation with relevant agencies and sports associations. The rationale for the need to plan the sports facilities at the state level is to achieve a more balanced distribution of such facilities in both the urban and rural areas. This redistributive objective is to enable the disadvantaged and disabled groups, who need sports facilities and services more than others but may make the least demand to have access to sports opportunities. The provision of sports facilities is considered as an integral part of housing scheme, as well as to be made accessible to all sportspersons and the mass to ensure their optimal utilisation. The classic location theory has suggested that the location of sports facilities be directly linked to the location of their core market over the time. The above statements suggest that sports facilities should be client-based and accessible by the mass, in line with the theory, and part of the government's policy for the sports facilities in the future. More emphasis was therefore placed to have a more balanced distribution of the facilities in both the urban and rural areas to serve more people. Therefore, there is no link between sports facilities to economic development initiatives for the location of sports facilities.

The second factor focuses on urbanisation and stimulating urban development initiatives. In this context, urbanisation refers to a demographic change and it is related to historical growth. It can be illustrated in terms of a geographical pattern or statistical figures (Dasimah, 2002).

TABLE 1
Development expenditure and allocation for sports programmes, 2001-2010
(RM million)

Programme	8MP expenditure	9MP allocation
Sports complexes	188.0	299.9
Upgrading and maintenance of sports facilities	113.2	280.9
Athletes development programmes	6.0	40.0
Total	307.2	620.8

Source: Malaysian Economic Planning Unit, 2006

The involvement of the government is usually required to enhance the efficiency and quality of life within the urban centres, apart from maintaining law and order (Cohen, Muylaert and Rosa, 1997; Clammer, 1996). The interaction and relationship among these factors affect the growth and development of urban centres, stimulate the development and expansion of urban activities and often evolve the development of the secondary (industrial) and tertiary (services) sectors (Cohen, Muylaert and Rosa, 1997). On the other hand, Asian cities are re-imaging competitive in the global marketplace. The range of strategies often seems to mirror developments in the Western cities (Yuen, 2008). However, bricks and mortar approach, which has started from US, has centred on entertainment, tourism, culture, and arts (Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989; Rosentraub, 1995). This strategy equates economic development with new construction and generates activities in different districts of the city. However, it needs to be considered within a larger development strategy and integrated into a local regeneration strategy.

Globalisation has significantly modified the sovereignty of the countries, whereby they have to compose with forces whose impacts are beyond their national limits (Aminuddin and Parilah, 2008). Furthermore, globalisation needs to take extra attention in developing countries becoming the focus of debates on urban growth and development. The major cities of Asia, which include Shanghai, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, actively extended their 'culture industries' (heritage conservation, cultural precincts, festival marketplace, iconic cultural centres) in the past, and more recently, their sports infrastructure to promote city regeneration (Olds, 1997; Silk, 2002; Kim *et al*., 2006). Therefore, there is a need for a new perspective and a new approach for sports facilities in the future.

The third and fourth factors are culture and usage, respectively. Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-religious society. In particular, Malays, Chinese and Indians make up the three main ethnic groups in this nation. Arising from this plurality of ethnic cultures, the Government may seek to promote some common cultural practices as parts of its nation building efforts. The aim of the National Sports Policy is to develop an active, health and fit society through sports and physical recreational activities, in line with the overall efforts of the government in nation building (National Sports Policy, 2007).

Based on the preliminary data gathered, it was found that sports facilities are being underutilised and people do not use them more generally due to sports programmes. In addition, the Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey indicated that 70% of Malaysians did not exercise (Ministry of Health, Malaysia, 1997). However, in his study, Aman (2005) confirmed that the opportunities for the Malaysian community to participate in sports and recreation policy and planning are limited. A similar result was also reported by Yusof and See (2008). Since 1991, there has been an increase in the number of stadiums with better facilities in Malaysia. In the 1990s and the early 2000s, the Malaysian government built a total of 12 soccer stadiums, and most of these stadiums came with the seating capacity that could accommodate more than 30,000 spectators. However, the average attendance per soccer match recorded during the same period was only about 2,000 to 6,000 spectators. Nevertheless, no studies have been done to identify the cause for the poor spectators' attendance. It was suggested that the reason for the poor attendance could probably be due to the poor quality of soccer matches.

In America, sports facilities have been a staple of the urban redevelopment toolkit and they will continue to serve as major urban redevelopment tools. Sports have become a defining part of the life and culture in North America. In 2006, the Malaysian government emphasized the importance of sport in nation building in Malaysia, in addition creating sports culture. This contradicts with the situation in the past, i.e. creating a sports culture would have influenced the future development of sports facilities and their role as urban planning tools.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sports and sports facilities development in Malaysia is something new. However, the development of sports and the sports facilities in Malaysia is obviously increasing. The recent interest in the sports facilities development and a wave of sports investment in the country necessitate the demand to study issues surrounding the sports facilities in the Malaysian context. This paper was based on the review of the current literature, on the theoretical background of sports facilities, so as to identify the gap and address the issues pertaining to the development of sports facilities in Malaysia. Based on the review of the empirical studies globally, it could be concluded that the contributions of the sports facilities development to the development of the urban surrounding are determined by a wide range of factors. These include the location, context and usage of the facilities, as well as the culture of sports among the people.

The sports facilities in Malaysia have a balanced distribution to serve the people. Nonetheless, no relationship was found between sports facilities and economic development initiatives. On the other hand, changing the nature of planning and urban development in the cities, in addition to increased globalisation, lead to the changes in the trend of sports facilities in the recent years. The global trend is to use cultural sports and entertainment facilities for urban development initiatives, but most major cities in Asia expanded their culture industries to promote city regeneration. Therefore, in line with the current interest on sports and sports facilities development in Malaysia, there is a need for a new perspective and a new approach for sports facilities development in the future. Apart from creating sports culture, which has been emphasized by the government since 2006, this will also affect the role of sports facilities in the future. Thus, further research is necessary to provide more information on the current situation of the effects of sports facilities and the ability of the different case studies on urban development within the Malaysian context to enhance future development.

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