THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# Planning Citizens: Putrajaya and the 21st Century Malaysian

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Glossary

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bangsa Malaysia | - | Malaysian Race |
| Dataran Putra | - | Putra Square |
| kampung | - | roughly, "village" |
| perankan | - | creole peoples in colonial Malaya |
| Perbadanan Putrajaya | - | Putrajaya City Hall |
| Perdana Putra | - | Prime Minister's Office |
| Persiaran Putrajaya | - | Putrajaya Boulevard |

# Chapter I
# Introduction

A planned capital is one of the best ways for a state to articulate its values and self-image. Putrajaya, the Federal Administrative Capital of Malaysia since 1999, emboddies much of the character of the government which designed it. A great deal about Malaysia's ideals can be learned by understanding why the government felt the need to leave the old capital, Kuala Lumpur. Promoted as an "Intelligent Garden City," Putrajaya is a blend of urban forms and philosophies from the West, from Islam, and from Malaysia. It is intended not only to change its inhabitants, but to transform the entire nation. In 1997, then-Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad declared that the move from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya was "more than a physical migration, it is also symbolic of discarding old legacies and mindsets… we hope this move will set in motion a paradigm shift in our ways of thinking, working, and living." [1]

Simply examining the name of "Putrajaya" gives considerable insight into the motivations and tensions surrounding the new Federal Administrative Capital. Jaya can be roughly translated "successful." Putra, however, has multiple meanings and connotations. The literal meaning is "prince." Officially, the city is named after Malaysia's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, but for a significant portion of the population, the use of the word brings to mind the term bumiputra. Bumiputra, literally "princes of the soil" is a term for what the government recognizes as natives to the Malay Peninsula, Sarawak and Sabah. With the ambiguous reference to race in the name, questions arise concerning whether the new capital really represents all of Malaysia.

Malaysia's multiculturalism has been uneasy for decades. The large, non-Muslim Chinese minority hold a disproportionately large piece of the Malaysian economy while the Muslim Malay majority has held the political reigns to the country since independence,

1 Mahathir Mohamad, "Inventing our common future," 1997, in Joshua Lepawsky, "A museum, the city, and a nation." Cultural Geographies. Vol. 15, No. 1, 2008. p. 119.

causing perpetual tension and occasional violence. Since 1991, Malaysia has endeavored to reach the developed nation status by 2020. The government has made great efforts to transform the economy from manufacturing-based to information technology-based. The new capital is part of these efforts, and government hopes to condition Putrajaya's inhabitants for the 21st century economy.

Before beginning a discussion of the motives for Putrajaya, its goals, and its future, the city must be placed within two contexts. First, I examine Putrajaya's planned capital predecessors, and why nations build new capital cities. Specifically, I examine the garden city capital of Canberra, Australia, and the modernist capital, Brasília, Brazil, as their planners share many ideas with the planners of Putrajaya. Secondly, I briefly review the unique history of race, religion, and politics in Malaysia from the nineteenth century to the present, and introduce the policies and projects that led to the decision to build a new capital.

To understand why the government felt the need to build Putrajaya, it is essential to understand what repulsed them about Kuala Lumpur. I have divided the rest of the thesis into three chapters based on the visions Putrajaya's designers have of a Malaysian "Intelligent Garden City". First, I discuss Kuala Lumpur's congestion and chaotic urbanism and Putrajaya as a garden city and as an ordered space. In these respects Putrajaya seeks to nurture its citizens, environmentally and morally. Second, I take a look at the ethnic and religious struggle for urban space in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya's role in that struggle. In this chapter, I demonstrate how Putrajaya is designed to continue the national ethnic and religious divisions even as the government campaigns to end them. Lastly, I discuss Putrajaya as an "intelligent" city and its self-conscious representation to a Pan-Islamic and a global audience. The last two chapters illustrate Putrajaya's contradictions as it tries to shift from ethnic communalism to market nationalism.

## Chapter II
## Planned Capitals of the 21st Century

Officially designated the Federal Administrative Center of Malaysia in 1999, Putrajaya became the last planned national capital of the twentieth century. It was certainly not the first, nor is it the most recent, with the Myanmar military regime's decision to move the capital from Yangon to the new city of Naypyidaw in 2005. A country has planned a new capital 12 times in the last one hundred years. (See Table 1)

Table 1.

| Year | Country | New Capital | Old Capital |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1911 | British India★ | New Delhi | Calcutta |
| 1924 | Australia | Canberra | Melbourne |
| 1956 | Brazil | Brasília | Rio de Janeiro |
| 1957 | Botswana | Gaborone | Mafeking |
| 1959 | Pakistan | Islamabad | Karachi |
| 1970 | Belize | Belmopan | Belize City |
| 1973 | Tanzania | Dodoma | Dar es Salaam |
| 1975 | Nigeria | Abuja | Lagos |
| 1983 | Cote d'Ivoire | Yamoussoukro | Abidjan |
| 1997 | Kazakhstan | Astana | Almaty |
| 1999 | Malaysia | Putrajaya | Kuala Lumpur |
| 2005 | Myanmar | Naypyidaw | Yangon (Rangoon) |

★British colony, but continued to serve as capital of India after independence in 1947.
Source: Hall, Peter. "Seven Types of Capital City." Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities. David L.A. Gordon, ed. London: Routledge, 2006. p. 13 and Author.

Planned capitals are a medium for the political elite to express their conceptions of statehood.[1] From Versailles to Washington to Putrajaya, the cities put on display the values of their designers, geographically and architecturally. Planned capitals tend to include ostentatious layouts and buildings. Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire contains the massive

1 Edward Schatz. "When Capital Cities Move: The Polictical Geography of Nation and State Building." Working Paper #303 – February 2003, p. 10.

Notre Dame de la Paix basilica, the largest Catholic church in the world. Kazakhstan's new capital, Astana, is a city of impressive arches and illuminated pyramids.[2] Planned capitals can come in relatively modest forms as well, as in the case of Dodoma, Tanzania.[3]

Post-colonial nations often build new capitals in hinterlands with the prospect of brining economic benefits to the region.[4] Peter Hall points out that planned capitals tend to remain specialized political cities, rarely surpassing the old commercial centers in economic power.[5] Planned capitals like Washington, Canberra, and Brasília have developed into major cities, but even after decades or even centuries, they remain somewhat inferior to their countries' respective economic power centers. Relocating the national capital to a planned city has plenty of other risks. Citizens and inhabitants may perceive the new capital as artificial and unpleasant. Abuja, Nigeria has been called "the most boring city in Africa." The first residents of Brasília coined the term "brasilite"—meaning "Brasília-itis"—to describe the everyday urban experiences, or lack thereof, living in the new capital.

Many of the ideas behind the two twentieth century capitals of Canberra and Brasília greatly influenced the plan for Putrajaya. Canberra, the first capital city designed using Ebenezer Howard's Garden City plan, began construction in 1912. Brasília emerged from a very different school of thought, the modernism of Le Corbusier and the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, in the late 1950s.

**Canberra**

Ten years after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, the country decided to build a new capital city. The relocation was primarily due to the political rivalry between Australia's two major cities, Melbourne and Sydney. A site in the bush of New South Wales was selected and launched a competition to design the new capital. The winners, Chicagoans Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, had submitted a design based on Garden City principles. The Garden City, developed by Ebenezer Howard at the end of the nineteenth century, was a response to the trauma of chaotic, dirty, and

2 Erich Follath and Bernhard Zand, "The Peak of Megalomania: The Dubai Tower". *Der Spiegel*. December 17, 2009.

3 Lawrence J. Vale, "The Urban Design of Twentieth Century Capitals." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities.* David L.A. Gordon, ed. London: Routledge, 2006, p. 28.

4 Schatz, p. 3.

5 Peter Hall, "Seven Types of Capital City." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities.* David L.A. Gordon, ed. London: Routledge, 2006. pp. 8-14.

crowded cities of the time. Howard designed his Garden City concept to include large amounts of green space, to be independent and self-reliant, and to contain specialized areas for residential, commercial, industrial, and agriculture.

The Griffin plan featured a series of concentric hexagons connected by axes and nestled into the landscape (Figure 1). The landscape, in fact, played a key role in the design, with buildings oriented toward mountains and the man-made lakes built between them. In Canberra, the water was a key part of the design because, in the words of an Australian Congressional delegate, it "enhances [buildings'] appearance immeasurably" and provides a "grand perspective to a noble city."[6]

The population of Canberra today is about 345,000 people, very close to Putrajaya's goal of 330,000 people.[7] Canberra is generally considered a successful city with its own culture and rich character. In the 1950s, however, the city stagnated. A Senate Select Committee appointed with the support of Prime Minister Robert Menzies found that administrators viewed the capital "as an expensive housing scheme for public servants." [8] Canberra had run into one of the pitfalls of Garden Cities; if they are not allowed to change, they easily stagnate. The solution was to allow the implementation of changes. to accomodate the new lifestyles and technologies, like the automobile.

**Brasília**

Discussion of a new Brazilian capital in the jungle had taken place since 1821, but it was not until President Juscelino Kubitschek came to power in 1956 that the Brasília became a reality. Kubitschek entered office on a promise to bring economic growth to Brazil and bring the country into the modern world, and saw a new capital in the hinterland as the way to bring the hinterland up to the level of the developed southeast.[9] The greenfield site selected for the new capital had the advantage of belonging officially to no one, allowing designers a blank slate. A unified plan designed by Oscar Niemeyer

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6 Christopher Vernon. "Canberra: Where Landscape is Pre-eminent." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*. David L.A. Gordon, ed. London: Routledge, 2006, p. 147.

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Estimated Resident Population, States and Territories - Capital City and Balance of State" Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2007-08, April 23, 2009.

8 Versnon, p. 147.

9 Geraldo Nogueira Batista, Sylvia Ficher, Francisco Leitão, and Dionísio Alves de França. "Brasília: A Capital in the Hinterland." Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities. David L.A. Gordon, ed. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 164-6.

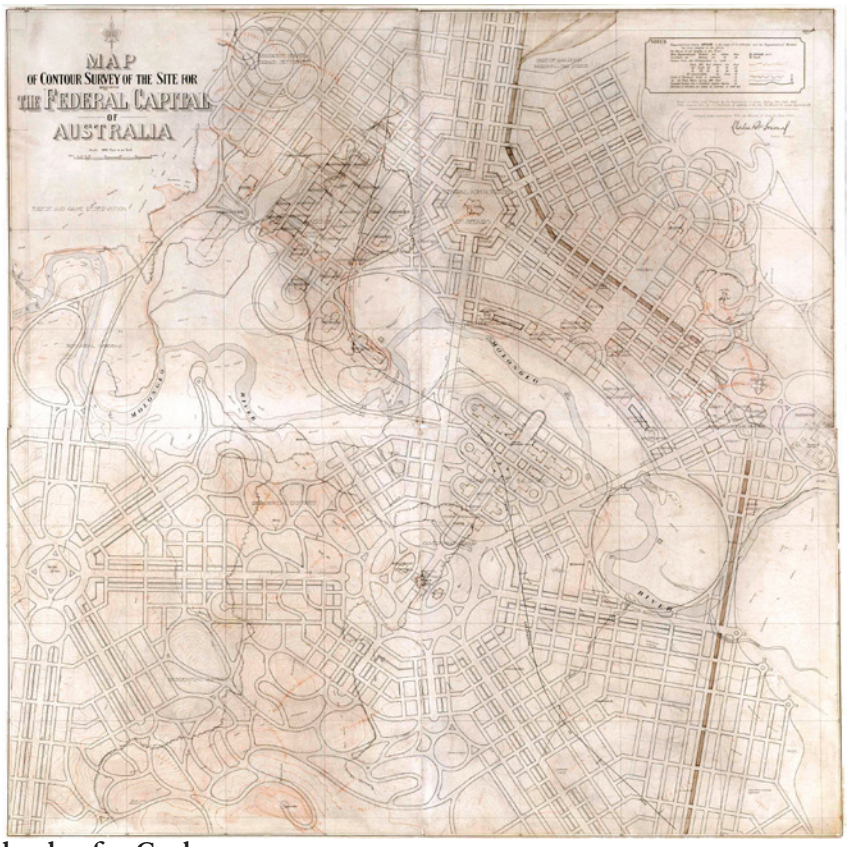


**Figure 1. Early plan for Canberra.**

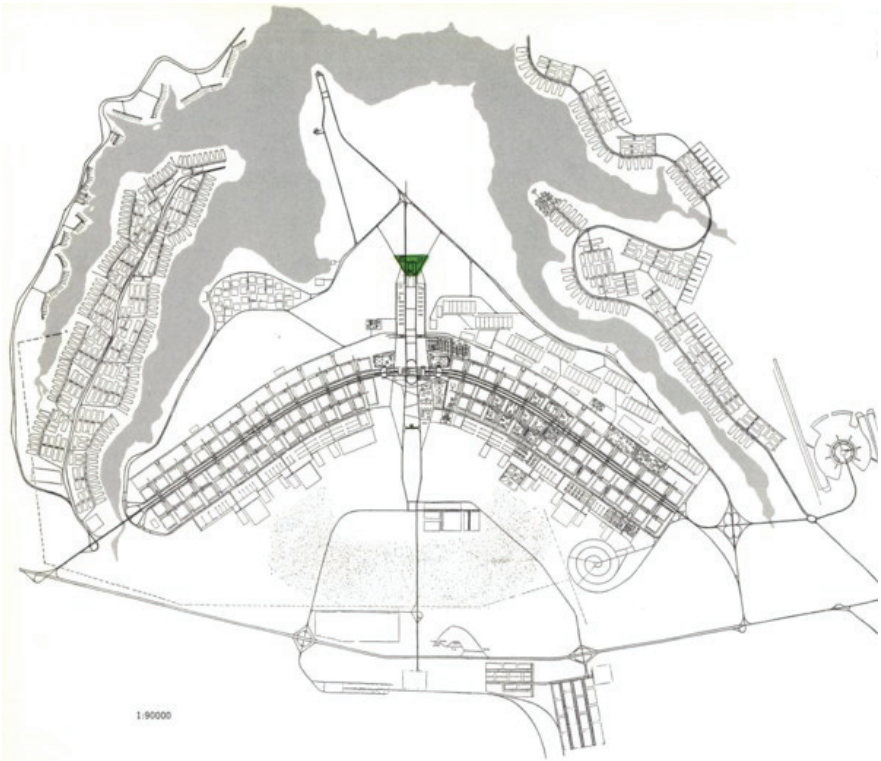


**Figure 2. Original plan for Brasilia.** Source: City Noice < http://citynoise.org/article/8716>

and Lúcio Costa was chosen in a national competition as the winner, and took the form of two intersecting axes, one governmental and one residential (Figure 2). Niemeyer and Costa, both great admirers of Le Corbusier, believed their plan would not only eliminate annoyances of everyday urban life like traffic jams, they believed it would "stimulate family and civic virtue."[10]

Kubitschek embraced the modernist idea that Brasília would be utterly divorced from Brazil's history. James Scott writes that,"…the whole point of the new capital was to be a manifest contrast to the corruption, backwardness, and ignorance of the old Brazil."[11] The echoes of Brazil's past, as chaotic and complex as any country's, would be absent from the new capital. Brasília was to look as if it could be anywhere. Brasília was also supposed to change every aspect of its inhabitants lives, from work and dress to how they socialized.[12]

Brasília's initial housing proved particularly radical. The massive apartment blocks, known as *superquadra*, are absolutely identical in size and design (Figure 3). Radical egalitarianism and was the idea behind their design—high ranking bureaucrats living in exactly the same housing as gardeners and clerks—"perfect social coexistence," as the official literature promised.[13] Residents of Brasília struggled to understand the new and unfamiliar kind of city. On the one hand, the city was easy to read in its design with its separation of functions and simple layout. On the other, it was nothing like the old bustling cities Brazilians were used to. The uniform *superquadra* housing blocks created anonymity rather than equality among residents. "For [residents]," writes Scott, "it is almost as if the founders of Brasília, rather than having planned a city, have actually planned to prevent a city."[14] Residents began to, in the words of Holston, "familiarize a defamiliarized city."[15] The primary reason for Brasília's growth in the last half-century is the breakdown of Costa and Niemeyer's plan (Figure 4). The city has sprawled outwards to accomodate the people required to run a city like Brasília, people the original plan neglected to accomodate. Instead of egalitarianism, Brasília's elite occupied the superquadra while lower class resi-

10 James Holston. *The Modernist City: an Anthropological Critique of Brasília*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 12.
11 James C. Scott. Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 119.
12 Scott, p. 119.
13 *Brasília* 1963. Quoted in Holston p. 20.
14 Scott, p. 126.
15 Holston, p. 24.

**Figure 5.** ***Superquadra*** **in Brasilia.** Source: City Noice < http://citynoise.org/article/8716>


**Figure 4. The breakdown of Brasilia's original plan.** Souce: Google Maps.

dents were forced to live in suburbs.

There are, of course, many differences between Brasília and Putrajaya, not least that they are products of different nations in different eras. Kubitchek built Brasília hundreds of miles from any other major city on a truly empty space, while Putrajaya was built only 25 km outside the older capital on former oil palm plantations. Although Putrajaya bears little resemblance to Brasília superficially, it draws on similar utopian philosophies and therefore deserves closer inspection. Both cities were planned with the intention of transforming its inhabitants and leading the nation into the "modern" world. Both cities reject the past and its perceived backwardness by government elites. While Brasília intended to disconnect itself completely from the past and embrace a rational, modernist future, Putrajaya seeks to reinvent its past to support its vision of the future. Brasília goes farther than Putrajaya in its utopian visions. For example, the planners of Brasília hoped to create a completely classless, egalitarian society through uniform housing units in uniform blocks.

**Naypyidaw**

In addition to the precedents for Putrajaya, a quick look to the only planned capital since Putrajaya might prove interesting. Construction began on Naypyidaw, Myanmar only in 2002, yet it already has an official population of over 900,000, though the number is likely exaggerated.[16] The case is unlike Putrajaya and the others discussed in that Myanmar's military junta has power far beyond Malaysia, Australia, or Brazil, yet Naypyidaw still shares some similarities. The city is still largely incomplete, full of empty roads and boulevards, and lacks any of the bustle or vibrancy found even in the tightly controlled cities of Myanmar.[17] Like Putrajaya, the junta's decision to move the capital had much to do with a struggle for urban space in the old capital, Yangon, as controlled as it is. The 2007 "Saffron Revolution," in which monks led spectacular anti-government protests, demonstrates this struggle vividly.

Hall identifies three possible forces for change related to capital cities in the next couple decades—political, technological, and economic—all of which Malaysia has ad-

16 "Construction of Myanmar new capital continues." Peoples Daily Online. December 24, 2009. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/6851523.html>

17 "Living in a Ghost Town." Bangkok Post. October 18, 2009. <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/investigation/25872/living-in-a-ghost-town>

dressed in some form. Politically, Hall recognizes a re-emergence of nationalism. UMNO's agenda has always been Malay-centric, but its drift towards Islamism has led to a bond between patriotism and piety that is stronger than ever in the nation's history. Hall sees the information economy and high-speed rail as the emerging economic and technological forces with the most impact on 21st century capitals.[18] Malaysia has eagerly sought to expand its information technology sector as evidenced by the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), of which Putrajaya is the center. The Multimedia Super Corridor is also the site of Malaysia's first high speed train. By placing Putrajaya only 25 km outside the largest city, the government has allowed the new capital to take advantage of its busy airport, though it remains to be seen whether it can draw any major economic benefit from Kuala Lumpur. Interestingly, Hall argues most national governments these days are unwilling to compromise their top city or cities' efforts "to attract top-level global activities, transnational capital and elite populations" by creating a new capital city.[19] For the Malaysian government, however, that is almost the point. Putrajaya, not Kuala Lumpur, is the new site for a multitude of conventions and festivals, technology innovation (ideally), and luxury hotels.

18 Hall, pp. 11-12.
19 Hall, p. 14.

# Chapter III
# The Malaysian Context

Understanding the motives behind Putrajaya necessarily means understanding its context in the history of Malaysian politics, economics, race, and religion. Beginning with the contentious history of the different peoples on the Malay Peninsula and their relationship to one another, I discuss the formalization of race by British colonial authority and the economic consequences. I provide some background on the first decades of independent Malaysia, and the rise of Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad. After an explanation of the Multimedia Super Corridor, of which Putrajaya is part, I examine two distinct but overlapping views of the "ideal Malaysian society."

The Malaysian peninsula's multicultural roots are deep, as it has long been the most advantageous point for trade in the Asian world. For centuries, Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and many others passed through the peninsula. At the time of British colonization in the mid-nineteenth century, the Malay peninsula was sparsely populated, but contained small groups of Malays and even smaller populations of indigenous peoples like the Orang Asli. As Britain moved in, the economy of the peninsula boomed. Malays poured in from nearby Sumatra and Borneo, mixing with the population already present on the peninsula. Malays in the 19th century would not have recognized a phrase like "Malay nation." A variety of divisions separated Malay communities from one another: place of origin or allegiance to a particular raja kept Malays divided. In fact, it was foreigners like the British who would lump the diverse communities into a single Malay race.[1] Chinese immigrated from Hainan and other parts of southern China to work in tin mines, set up small commercial agriculture operations in crops like coffee or tapioca, or trade goods in urban centers like Penang and Singapore. Indians came to the peninsula largely to work on British plantations. Many of these Indian and Chinese immigrants assimilated into Malay society, often through

1 Joel S. Khan. *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World*. Singapore: University of Singapore Press, 2006, p. 35

intermarriage or religious conversion (in the case of the Chinese). These creole populations became known as *peranakan*, meaning "locally born."[2] Even in the early twentieth century, nationalist leaders were unsure of whether to include the Malay-speaking and Muslim Indians and Arab peranakan as Malays, as many had been living in the peninsula as long as many Malays.[3]

In order to control the peninsula more easily and therefore reap higher profits, the British imposed a racial hierarchy which successfully set up barriers between the various ethnic groups. This meant each group developed its own separate economy, which translated into a racialized urban geography that still largely exists to this day.[4] The Chinese became the most urbanized of the groups, while Malays generally practiced subsistence farming in kampungs (villages) and many Indians lived and worked on British-owned plantations. The economic advantage of being urbanized was apparent to the Chinese—and the Malays—by the time of independence. By granting the Malay sultans certain autonomous authority—on Islamic matters, for example—the British legitimized the Malay claim to the peninsula. At the time of independence, the Malay Peninsula actually had marginally more non-Malays than Malays. Today, the share of Malays has grown to around 60 percent due to higher birth rates.

After WWII, as the path toward independence became clearer, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) came to prominence. In teaming up with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) they formed the Barisan Nasional, or National Front (BN), a coalition which has proved unbeatable in the decades since independence.

In the 1970s, the UMNO government initiated the New Economic Policy (NEP), a dramatic program of affirmative action for Malays. At the time, Malays had disproportionately high poverty levels and controlled only a small piece of the economy. The program had some successes in wealth redistribution, but not without consequences. Helen Ting argues that the outcome of the New Economic Plan was a sense of dependence for many Malays, as "the basis of affirmative action has shifted gradually from political and

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2 J. Khan. pp. 32-33

3 J. Khan. p. 70.

4 Farish A. Noor, *What Your Teacher Didn't Tell You: The Annexe Lectures*. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Matahari Books, 2009, p. 73.

socio-economic necessity to an argument of indigeneity and historical entitlement."[5] The program remains in place today, but focus of government economic policy has shifted to the Vision 2020 program.

Vision 2020, which includes the plan for Putrajaya, was the idea of Malaysia's longest serving and most influential prime minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, in office 1981-2003. Voted out of parliament and expelled from UMNO in 1969 for essentially blaming the May 13 Incident, a major race riot in Kuala Lumpur, on Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's poor governance in an open letter, Mahathir set to work articulating his thoughts on race and politics in Malaysia. His book, The Malay Dilemma, continues to influence the discourse of Malaysian politics even today, and its ideas are realized in the New Economic Plan, Vision 2020, and not least, in Putrajaya. The book has three themes: the origins of the Malay people, modernization, and the future of Malaysia. Controversially, rather than a scholarly inquiry into these themes, The Malay Dilemma is a work of generalizations and personal observations. Mahathir blames the Malay economic inferiority on the idea that Malays enjoyed generations of plenty, instilling an inherent laziness and a tendency to give away goods to easily. Meanwhile, according to Mahathir's theory, the Chinese endured centuries of starvation and war, endowing them with an aggressive nature more suitable to business. Many of Mahathirs ideas influenced Abdul Rahman's successor, Tun Abdul Razak, the prime minister responsible for the New Economic Policy. Mahathir brought a clinical style of leadership into the prime minister's office, with little sentimentality toward the past and a great deal of ambition for Malaysia's future.

Speaking in 1991, Dr. Mahathir declared that Malaysia should strive to be a "fully developed nation" by the year 2020, and layed out nine challenges that Malaysia must meet to acheive the goal. Wawasan 2020, or Vision 2020, as it became known, has been the driving force of Malaysian economic policy in the two decades since. Mahathir believes Malaysia must become:

- A united Malaysian nation—instead of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, the creation of "Bangsa Malaysia," the Malaysian race
- A psychologically secure and confident Malaysian society
- A model of mature democratic society
- A "fully moral and ethical" society, with strong religious and spiritual values

5 Helen Ting. "Malaysian history textbooks and the discourse of ketuanan Melayu." *Race and Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*. Daniel P. S. Goh, ed. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 50.

- A tolerant country where all are free to practice their customs and culture
- Creating a scientific and progressively innovative society
- A strong, family-based collectivist society
- An equitable and economically just country, where the same economic opportunities are available for all—specifically, race should not be associated with economic status
- An economically competitive and prosperous country[6]

Although it addresses the primary goal of the New Economic Policy—an economically just society—Vision 2020 concerns all Malaysians. The program directs its message at not only the "politically hegemonic, economically backward Malays," but at the regional economy dominated by Chinese (in Malaysia and abroad) and growing cultural Westernization. [7] Despite its major social and political ambitions, the program only lays out objective economic targets. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and its mega-projects is the most conspicuous government actions towards Vision 2020.

**Multimedia Super Corridor**

The Multimedia Super Corridor stretches approximately 50 km from the Petronas Towers and Kuala Lumpur City Center (KLCC) Park south to Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). Putrajaya and its sister city Cyberjaya fall in the middle (Figures 5 and 6). The corridor serves as a showcase for Malaysia's high-tech megaprojects (KLCC, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, and KLIA), though the government hopes the projects will prompt significant private investment and innovation in information technology. Mahathir announced, "...we are offering our Multimedia Super Corridor as a gift to the world. We are endeavouring to create the world's best environment for harnessing the full potential of multimedia without artificial limits."[8] Silicon Valley without the social ills of high divorce rates and deviant sexual behavior.

If Putrajaya is the new national capital, its neighbor Cyberjaya is intended to be a capital of information and communications technology. The government relocated several technology univeristies to Cyberjaya and the surrounding area to act as catalysts

6 Mahathir Mohamad. "The Way Forward." 1991. < http://www.wawasan2020.com/vision/p2.html>

7 Ross King, *Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya: Negotiating Urban Space in Malaysia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008, p. 130.

8 Mahathir bin Mohamad. "Forward", in I. Ariff and C.C. Goh, Multimedia Super Corridor: *What the MSC is all about. How it benefits Malaysians and the rest of the world*. Kuala Lumpur: Leeds Publications. quoted in King p. 134.


**Figure 5. Location of Putrajaya.**

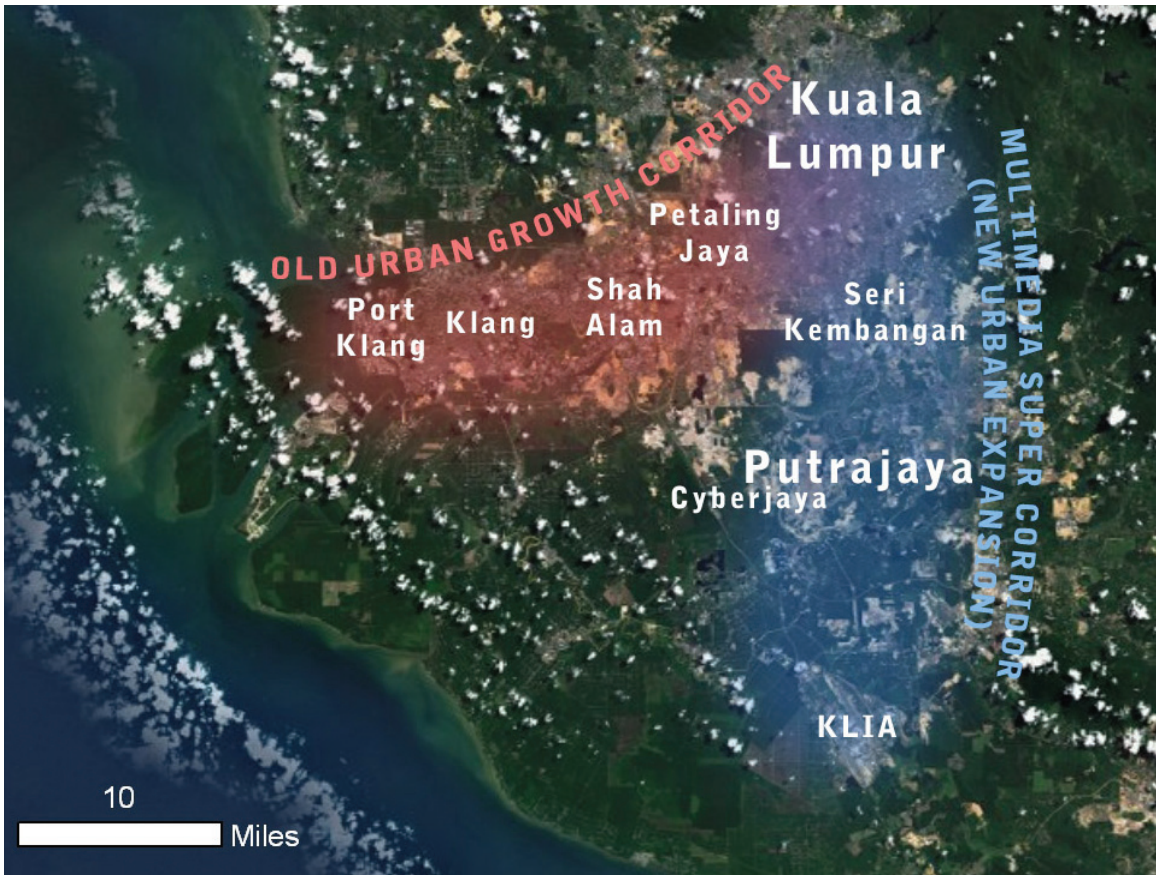


**Figure 6. Old (pre-1990s) and new urban growth corridors in the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area**

for innovation, but few private companies have shown any real interest in new city. The development of Cyberjaya lags significantly behind Putrajaya.

Unlike Cyberjaya, the Multimedia Super Corridor's two anchoring mega projects, KLCC and KLIA, have been quite successful by most measures. The giant Kuala Lumpur International Airport has won numerous "Best Airport" awards. Designed by Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa, the building is meant to aesthetically imitate the surrounding jungle. In fact, one terminal actually contains a small piece of jungle passengers may wander through. In the middle of Kuala Lumpur, on the site of an old racecourse, the KLCC Park's most notable features are the Petronas Towers. They held the record for the world's tallest buildings from their completion in 1998 until they were surpassed by the Taipei 101 building in 2004. The towers sit on top of a four-story high-end mall, Suria KLCC.

Of the four mega-projects of the Multimedia Super Corridor, Putrajaya is the largest and most complex. Groundbreaking for Putrajaya occured in October, 1995, on a former oil palm plantation at Perang Besar. On March 1, 1996, Parliament incorporated Perbadanan Putrajaya, the city's governing body and local planning authority. Perbadanan Putrajaya and Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd, the principal development company, worked furiously to promote the city and complete projects in time for the declaration of Putrajaya as the Federal Administrative Capital in 1999. Capital relocation often gets caught up in patronage, and Putrajaya is no exception.[9] In both Canberra and Brasilia, the plan for the new capital was chosen in a competition, the plan for Putrajaya was handled exclusively by the government and close allies in the Malay-owned business world. The principal developer is Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd. The investment capital for Putrajaya Holdings comes from the government investment arm, Khazanah Nasional Berhad (40 percent), Petronas (40 percent), and the Kumpulan Wang Amanah Negara (20 percent). The city hopes to reach a population of 330,000 and has been designed accordingly. In the original plan, Putrajaya is supposed to support a workforce of around 211,000 people, with 76,000 in the public sector and 135,000 in the private sector.[10] The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis struck a blow to development and many projects were slowed. Fortunately, Malaysia escaped the worst of the Crisis.

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9 Schatz p. 8.

10 Perbadanan Putrajaya "Putrajaya: Federal Government Administrative City." 1997.

**The Ideal Malaysian Society**

The permanent exhibition at the National Museum (Muzium Negara) is split into four time periods: Neolithic, the Malay Kingdoms, Colonization, and modern Malaysia. In the Malay Kingdoms gallery, the exhibits focus on the millennia-old history of Malays on the peninsula, the rise of Islam, and the cosmopolitan and harmonious nature of some of the Malay Kingdoms. On this last point, the descriptions of the social culture of the Melaka Sultanate in particular echo the ideal of the present-day's government. It points out that Melaka's busy port drew traders not only from the region, but as far as Portugal, but it goes on to stress that the foreigners usually conformed to Malay customs and the Malay language. Malays sometimes adopted foreign customs, the exhibition says, as long as they did not go against Islam. This description of Melaka's social culture echoes the modern governments own sentiment. In the modern Malaysia gallery, emphasis is placed on the cooperation of the three ethnic groups in the form of UMNO, MCA, and MIC in gaining independence. "Together we stand, divided we fall," reads the title of a display about the importance of racial harmony. On a display about the declaration of Malay as the national language in 1967, the exhibit states that the language is a "symbol of national identity and aspiration," and that it "becomes the common channel of communication and unity for the multi-racial communities in Malaysia." The National Museum projects an image of harmonious multi-racial society, but a society with Islamic Malay values.

The Telekomuzium is a museum run by Malaysia's gargantuan private (and Malay-owned) telecommunications firm, Telekom Malaysia (TM). It is a museum dedicated to the past and future of communication and technology and the "myth of modernization" in Malaysia. Like the National Museum, it selectively retells history to create "an apparent stability to citizenship and nationhood in contemporary Malaysia."[11] The Telekomuzium provides a different view of the ideal Malaysian society than the National Museum, however. One exhibit in particular, the giant diorama of a city, epitomizes the museum's message. At first glance, the city appears to be Kuala Lumpur, but it is a model of no one city in particular. The diorama includes suburbs and office towers, and surrounds a giant communications tower. Interactive components around the outside of the diorama allow museum patrons to explore how telecommunications has revolutionized Malaysia by

11 Lepawsky p. 121.

"listening in" on the telephone conversations of an ethnically diverse group of successful young adults. A few yards from the diorama is a backlit map from the mid-1990s that reads "Malaysia's Communications Network extends to every corner of the nation, by land sea, and air." Included on this map is the as yet un-built new capital, Putrajaya. (Figure 7) The Telekomuzium creates an ideal of an information age society, defined more by class than by race or ethnicity.

The UMNO government's actions regarding race send a confusing message. Efforts are simultaneously made to dissolve racial lines (e.g. the current Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak's 1Malaysia program and the promotion of bangsa Malaysia) and enforcing them (e.g. the New Economic Policy, Putrajaya). UMNO's sentiment towards Malaysian multiculturalism is that Indians and Chinese are welcome, vital parts of Malaysian society, but they owe it to their generous Malay hosts to conform to Malay customs. Since the introduction of Vision 2020, the discourse has been shifting from race to class. Joshua Lepawsky writes, "Old notions of ethnic communalism are meant to give way to a meritorious Malay(sian) professional middle-class competing 'globally' and on par with their fellow citizens no matter what their ethnic affiliation."[12] The old ethnic nationalism is necessarily exclusive. If the future of Malaysia lies in market nationalism, however, the belief that through hard work one can improve their socio-economic status offers the perception of inclusivity.

12 Lepawsky. p. 122.


**Figure 7. Telecommunications map of Malaysia at the Telekomuzium. A high-tech, interconnected nation. It includes "Putra Jaya", despite pre-dating the new capital by several years.**


**Figure 8. The complexity of public space in Kuala Lumpur.**

# Chapter IV
# Chaos and Order

Putrajaya unabashedly boasts of its Garden City influences. In this chapter I discuss the layout of Putrajaya as a reaction to the layout of Kuala Lumpur. I also examine how Putrajaya qualifies as a Garden City. Congestion and inefficiency of the old capital is routinely cited as justifications for constructing new capitals, including Putrajaya. [1] While congestion may be a serious problem in former capital cities, it is rarely the only motive for transplanting the government.

Nearly everything about the urban environment in Kuala Lumpur is chaotic. The streets wind around hills, intersecting with and merging into other streets in an virtually illegible and haphazard way. Public space is not well defined—pedestrians move freely between sidewalks and streets, maneuvering between parked and moving cars, restaurant tables and various goods that spill out of storefronts (Figure #). Most neighborhoods are mixed-use, containing buildings of different ages. Aside from the pristine new KLCC Park, Kuala Lumpur contains very few parks in the Western sense. Green space in the city is ubiquitous and informal. Jungle covers the hillsides and any other non-inhabitable areas, and trees, often massive, rise from courtyards and sidewalks. Neglected property quickly becomes absorbed into the jungle.

In accordance with Garden City design, space in Putrajaya is highly specialized. Administratively, Putrajaya is divided into twenty presincts (presint). Each precinct specializes in only one or two uses. The central precincts are mostly occupied by the federal government offices, with outer precincts containing residential zones. Some precincts have specializations outside of housing and government. The Putrajaya Wetlands occupies all of Precinct 13, the Diplomatic Precinct makes up a section of Precinct 15, the area around the Putrajaya International Convention Center in Precinct 5 is slated to become a sort of

1 Hall, p. 13.

recreation zone, Precinct 7 contains many city services including the train station, hospital, and police headquarters, and Precinct 20 is occupied mostly by cemeteries. Several precincts, such as P-12 and P-17, have yet to see much development and remain largely empty. (See Appendix A: Precincts and their specializations) No precincts specialize in commercial uses. Instead, some of the residential precincts contain small commercial centers, often a single large building with retail and restaurant facilities on the ground floor with office space above. Some of the neighborhood commercial buildings replicate the chaotic commercial streets of KL in a controlled fashion. The result is familiar, yet in keeping with Garden City formality. (Figure 9) In addition, the new Alamanda Putrajaya mall serves a majority of residents' commercial needs. The official city literature defends the strict zoning rules by stating that, "These guidelines are formulated to:

- encourage and promote healthy community living and social interaction;
- provide ease of movement through efficient public transportation;
- facilitate an information-rich society through the IT application
- sustain, [sic] a pleasant and invigorating environment;
- promote efficient conduct of business and economic activities." [2]

Also in the tradition of garden cities, green space in the form of gardens, parks, and wetland make up 37.5 percent of the city's land. [3] The parks, in contrast to the wild and unmanicured green spaces of Kuala Lumpur, take the form of sprawling, pristine gardens. (Figure 10) Putrajaya requires an army of landscape maintenance staff, and in most parts of the city, the only people to be seen are trimming hedges and sweeping up palm fronds.

The northernmost edge of the city holds the man-made wetlands. Although conscious of its ecological and environmental value, the wetlands are designed for "various uses including recreation, fishing, water sports, and transportation."[4] In addition to their ecological and recreational purpose, the wetlands serve an important aesthetic function. They are used to filter the water flowing into the lake, upholding the city's pristine image.

Putrajaya is oriented around a central 4 km north-south axis, the *Persiaran Putrajaya*, or Putrajaya Boulevard. The boulevard begins in front of the Putrajaya International

2 Perbadanan Putrajaya "Putrajaya: Federal Government Administrative City." 1997.
3 "Green Intelligence." Architecture Malaysia. Vol. 17, No. 1, 2005. p. 26.
4 Perbadanan Putrajaya.

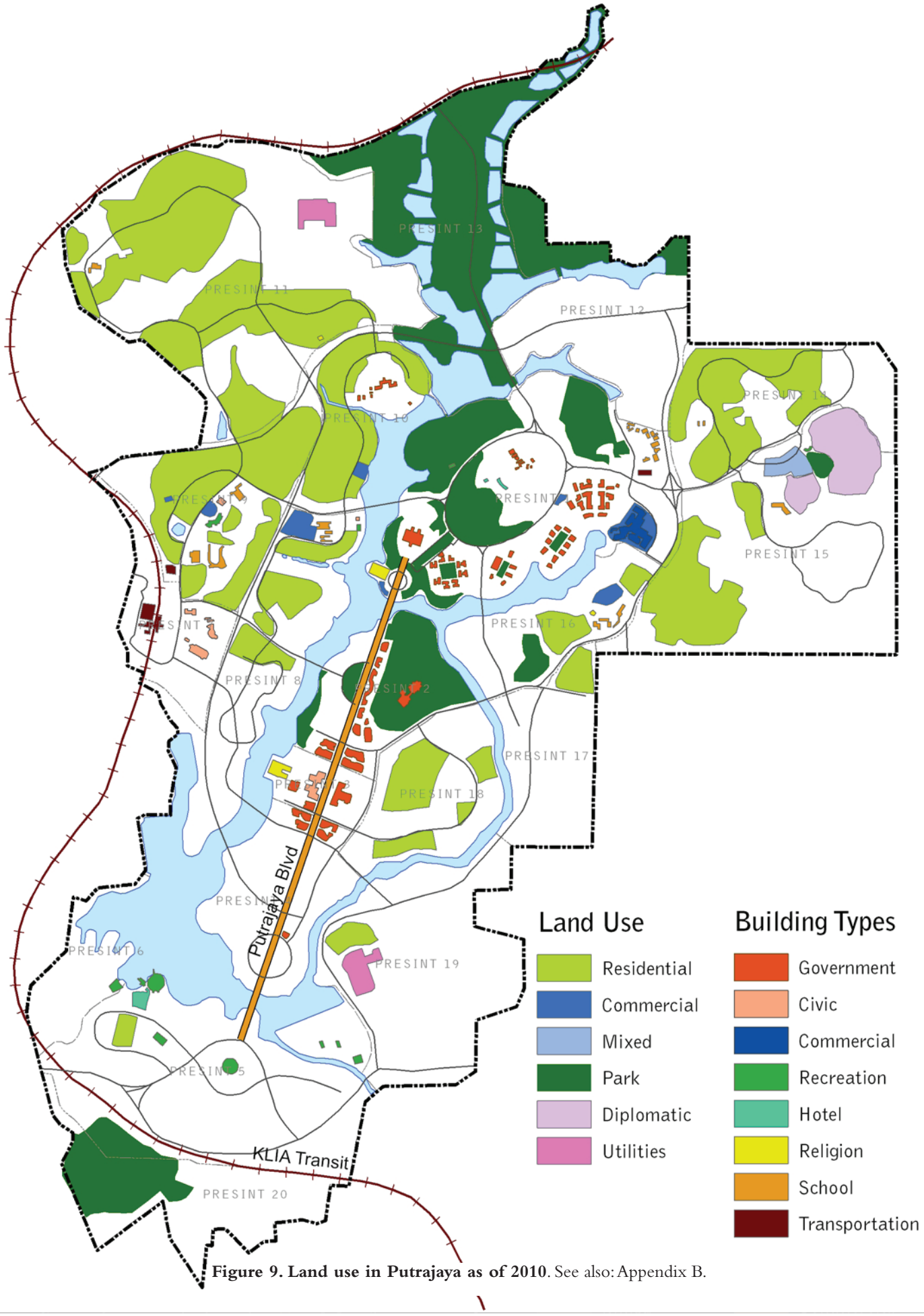



**Figure 9. Land use in Putrajaya as of 2010**. See also: Appendix B.


**Figure 10. Precinct 8 commercial center. Compare to Figure 8.**

**Figure 11. Lakeside gardens in Putrajaya. The only individual present is a gardener.**

Convention Center (PICC), passing though an as-yet undeveloped area around Gemilang Square, the future central business district. From there it runs through a district of monumental government buildings, like the *Perbadanan Putrajaya* (City Hall), Palace of Justice, National Treasury, Ministry of Finance and the offices of Putrajaya Holdings Sdn. Bhd. It continues across the Putra Bridge to the enormous Putra Square, and just beyond on a hill overlooking the entire boulevard, the crown of the axis, is the Prime Minister's Office, *Perdana Putra*. The boulevard itself is, for most of its length, impeccably manicured. During the week, very few people are along the boulevard who are not gardeners or grounds crews. From the center of the boulevard outwards, it consists of a wide, empty pedestrian promenade, two lanes of vehicular traffic in each direction, bike paths, planters, and finally, a generously sized sidewalk (Figures 12 and 13).

In most of the planned capitals of democracies—Washington, Canberra, Brasilia—the main axis draws attention to the legislative body, the representatives of the people. In Putrajaya, the Persiaran Putrajaya brings one to the head of the executive, the Prime Minister's office. Mahathir insisted the government district be at the center of Putrajaya, the rest of the city radiating outward, symbolizing the Putrajaya's political position as the new center of the country. [5]

Aside from green space, residential areas take up more space than any other uses in Putrajaya. The residential precincts are intended to be "'self contained' with full public facilities and other amenities," including neighborhood commercial districts. [6] "The planning and design of Putrajaya's residential areas is intended to achieve a sense of identity through the neighborhood focal points, landscaping, and the treatment of the focal realm." [7] This is presumably acheived by Putrajaya's clusters of identical housing. The city contains range of housing types, from towering apartment blocks to detached single family homes. Unlike the monumental revivalist architecture of the government precincts, the residential architecture of Putrajaya is placeless and generic (Figures 14 and 15).

In spite of government's vision of Putrajaya leading the nation's economy into the 21st century, Putrajaya contains a dearth of private sector operations. If one excludes so-called "government-linked companies" like Petronas and Putrajaya Holdings, the

5 Tim Bunnel, *Malaysia, modernity and the multimedia super corridor: a critical geography*. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 144.

6 "Green Intelligence." Architecture Malaysia. Vol. 17, No. 1, 2005. p. 28.

7 Perbadanan Putrajaya.

**Figure 12. Persiaran Putrajaya, looking north from the center toward the Prime Minister's Office.**

**Figure 13. Persiaran Putrajaya, looking south from the center toward the Putrajaya Int'l Convention Center.**

**Figure 14. Middle class condominiums in Precinct 10.**

**Figure 15. Attached single-family homes in Precinct 8.**

amount of private industry is miniscule. One exception is the Alamanda Putrajaya, the city's only large shopping center, which opened in 2004 to excited consumers. The large mall contains mid- to high-end chains (both Malaysian and foreign), a Malay and Western food court, a bowling alley, and two grocery stores. In contrast to the numerous malls of KL, the Alamanda is almost indistinguishable from an American mall: two stories with the second floor open to the first, and four wings branching out from a central node. In 2009, it provided 90 percent of the shopping needs of residents.[8] The malls of areas like Bukit Bintang in Kuala Lumpur tend toward the vertical. Anywhere from five to ten stories tall, they are designed to fit in the dense urban fabric of Kuala Lumpur.

Precinct 4 is slated to be Putrajaya's central business district, with commercial office towers lining the southern end of Putrajaya Boulevard. Fifteen years after the city's founding, the only buildings currently under construction at the moment are four government office towers. The lack of commercial activity to this point in time may be a consequence of the Garden City design. As Jane Jacobs points out, Howard despised commercial activity as the cause of the chaos of the metropolis.[9] His Garden City plans intentionally stifle entrepreneurial activity and improvement in class standing, so it appears a poor concept on which to propel the nation into developed nation status.

The streets of Putrajaya follow a pattern typical of Garden Cities. Far from the chaotic layout of Kuala Lumpur's streets, Putrajaya's streets have a pattern and are as legible as any American suburb. Arterial roads branch off into neighborhood streets that then branch off into cul-de-sacs. (Figure 16) Neighborhood identity is undermined by the street names. With only a few exceptions, most streets bear only the name of the precinct and a number (e.g. P9-b3).

Putrajaya is emphatically an automobile city. Despite the automobile-centric plan for the city, residents and visitors have complained of a lack of parking. As a temporary solution, parking lots were built on future construction sites. Pedestrian space is far from absent in Putrajaya. Sidewalks and plazas are ample and empty, much like the streets themselves. Despite the quantity of pedestrian space, its utility is rather lacking (Figure 17). As in Brasília, Putrajaya's lack of intersections makes crossing streets difficult and occasionally

8 Ida Suriana Ismail and Madya Shuhana Shamsuddin. "Identity of New Towns in Malaysia: Residents' Perception of Putrajaya." Seminar Kebangsaan Rupa Bandar Malaysia: Mengekal Warisan Membina Identiti. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. November 28-29, 2007. p. 285.

9 Jane Jacobs. *Death and Life of the Great American City*. Random House, 1961, p. 303.

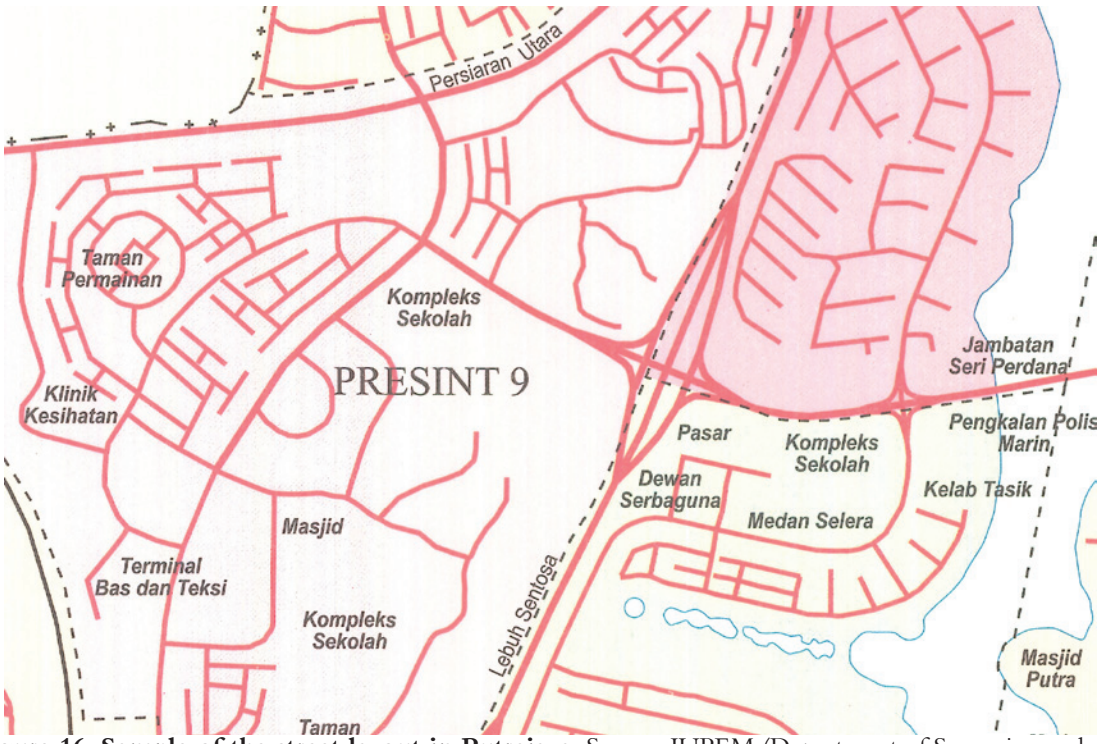



**Figure 16. Sample of the street layout in Putrajaya.** Source: JUPEM (Department of Surveying and Mines)

**Figure 17. Automobile space trumps pedestrian space in Putrajaya.**

dangerous. The city has installed crosswalks across town, yet virtually none are operational. The relatively few pedestrians are served by the 12 routes of the NadiPutra bus system. The final plan for Putrajaya includes two monorail lines to service most of the city. The government halted construction indefinitely because the current population of city does not justify the cost. Unfinished monorail tracks stick out of both ends of Putrajaya Sentral station, terminating suddenly about 50 meters out of the station. The underground portion of the monorail, running underneath Persiaran Putrajaya was actually completed, and the city has marked the future station entrances, even though no entrance is visible. (Figure 14)

**Green City**

The original plan for Putrajaya views Garden City planning as an adequate means toward healthy inhabitants, but in the last decade, Green development and technology has risen dramatically in popularity. The government, in its ongoing quest to be taken seriously by the developed world, has made a big deal out of their new green programs, like creating a Green Technology Council and initiating incentives for investment in green technology.[10] The government has also recognized the potential, whether ecological or political, in turning its new capital into a Green City, and Putrajaya has adopted many environmentally friendly programs. Both Putrajaya and Cyberjaya have been designated low-carbon areas, placing carbon emissions restrictions on activities within the city. Developers operating in Putrajaya must obtain a Green Building Certificate, but are granted tax rebates and other perks in exchange. The government is so eager to move forward, the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water has not even developed a method for measuring Putrajaya's current carbon footprint. [11]

10 Vasudevan, V. "Federal boost for green tech era." New Straits Times. January 27, 2010.
11 "Putrajaya, Cyberjaya aim low." New Straits Times. January 22, 2010.

# Chapter V
# Ethnic and Religious Space in the Capital

Edward Schatz separates the political geography of capital relocation into two parts, state-building, "the effort to undermine alternative, rival power bases and develop viable institutions," and nation-building, "the effort to secure the loyalty of broad populations inhabiting the territory represented by the state."[1] In relocating its capital, the Malaysian government certainly engages in state-building, undermining the rival economic power base of Kuala Lumpur's Chinese population. The Malay controlled government has always felt uncomfortable governing from a city economically and spatially (but not politically) controlled by the Chinese. Additionally, the Kuala Lumpur is a cosmopolitan, secular city, which has become more of a problem for UMNO as the party has drifted towards Islamism.

Kuala Lumpur has always been majority Chinese city, though the decades since Independence have seen a great amount of Malay immigration. Ross King goes so far as to say, "KL might be described, albeit simplistically, as a 'Chinese' town and, for the Malays, both this perception and the underlying reality of Chinese economic power must be countered."[2] The majestic 1930s art deco commercial buildings in the heart of Kuala Lumpur serve as a reminder to Malays of the Chinese community's long-standing economic control over the city.[3] Even today, more storefronts will display signs in Chinese more than in English, and in English more than Malay (Figure 18).

Just across the river from the glamorous KLCC sits one of the oldest Malay neighborhood in Kuala Lumpur, Kampung Baru ("New Kampung"). The neighborhood was founded in 1900 in response to the "declining culture and status of Malays in KL." Rather, it was an attempt by the British colonial government to partly make up for "colonial

1 Schatz p. 8.
2 King p. 57.
3 King p. 34.

exploitation and Malay enfeeblement," by providing exclusively Malay space in the city. Since then, several other Malay-only districts have been set up in Kuala Lumpur. Despite its position as the first exclusively Malay neighborhood in KL and its symbolic link to traditional Malay culture, the Kampung Baru's history of political volatility has frustrated the UMNO government. It was the source of the May 13, 1969 race riots between Chinese and Malays that led to downfall of founding Prime Minister Abdul Rahman. In more recent history, Kampung Baru has been a hotbed for the Reformasi (anti-UMNO) movement of the 1990s. [4]

The busiest entrance to Kampung Baru is marked with a giant Malay gate with the words "Welcome to Kampung Baru." It unambiguously marks the transition from the multi-ethnic space of Chow Kit, a lower-class neighborhood of Chinese, Indonesians, and Africans, to the exclusively Malay space of Kampung Baru. (Figure 20) The neighborhood bears the marks of government interference to improve the conditions of poor residents. High-rise public housing blocks—dating from a time when such buildings were considered acceptable solutions for housing the poor—tower over the traditional one- and two-story houses. Throughout the neighborhood, beautiful sidewalks, complete with lighting and vehicle barriers have been recently installed. (Figure 21) The new sidewalks are particularly obvious in front of the old and sometimes dilapidated houses frequently found in Kampung Baru.

The struggle for urban space in KL is not only between Malays and Chinese. The traditionally Indian spaces of the city have also come up against Malay claims. The UMNO controlled City Hall has chosen Indian neighborhoods for some of the most dramatic urban redevelopments. In the area around the India Mosque (Masjid India), the city built a covered bazaar that many perceived as more Malay in character than Indian.[5] The construction of the top class KL Sentral train station in the largest Indian neighborhood, Brickfields, has fueled a market for expensive condo towers, out of reach for most of the local population. This kind of gentrification has exacerbated the "common perception that City Hall is on a mission to 'clean up' Hindu areas."

UMNO would have found the idea of leaving behind the ethno-religious struggle for urban space by building a new capital very appealing. Additionally, the land freed from

4 King p. 36.
5 Ross pp. 33-4


**Figure 18. Jalan Alor. Typical Chinese mixed-use area in Kuala Lumpur, during Chinese New Year.**

**Figure 19. Kampung Baru.**


**Figure 20. Kampung Baru Gate. A declaration of Malay-only space in cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur.**

**Figure 21. Kampung Baru. Expensive sidewalks and lighting, often in front of crumbling cement and corrugated steel houses.**

government use in Kuala Lumpur could be turned over for Malay use.[6] As a city planned and occupied by a Malay government and backed by Malay investors, it is not surprising that Malays make up roughly 93 percent of Putrajaya's population. [7] It is uncontestedly Malay space.

**The Islamic City**

UMNO had always been moderate on issues of Islam. When Mahathir bin Mohamad became Prime Minister in 1981, he was perceived as essentially secular. However, he also came to power during a time of rising Islamic power (e.g. the Iranian Revolution), and in 1983 he declared that the Muslim Bloc was more important to Malaysia than the Non-Aligned Movement or Commonwealth.[8] During the 1990s, the party began to face serious challenges from the far-right Islamist Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Mahathir also convinced a young, charismatic PAS leader to join the UMNO government. To undermine the appeal of PAS, Mahathir began openly pushing less secular, more Islamic policies throughout the 1990s. As a result of this gradual Islamization, the government has legitimized previously marginal discourses, such as that of an Islamic State. As Helen Ting writes, "…the state-led Islamisation policy during the premiership of Mahathir Mohamed to deprive the rival Islamic party, PAS, of its Islamic political credentials, has also mainstreamed and legitimized among an important section of the Malay community the discourse of Negara Islam (Islamic State)." [9]

Putrajaya is an Islamic city. The prominent mosques, Middle Eastern architecture, and abundance of Islamic geometrical designs make that clear enough. The planners of Putrajaya, including the director of the Town and Country Planning Commission, Zainuddin bin Muhammad, were concerned about possible negative social effects of such a high-tech city. Zainuddin developed plans based on three relationships: man and his creator, man and man, and man and nature. Inspired by the verses of the Koran describing paradise, he called for Putrajaya to have clean water, gardens, and centrally located

6 King, p. 131.
7 Ismail p. 283.
8 Mohamad Tajuddin Mohamad Rasdi, *Rethinking Islamic Architecture*. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2010 p. 97.
9 H. Ting. p. 51.

mosques.[10] This meshed well with the Garden City plans already in development. However, Janet Abu-Lughod argues that many of the ideas Muslim planners turn to when designing new Islamic cities actually originate from overly generalized accounts of traditional Islamic cities written not by Muslims, but by European Orientalists. These accounts, by scholars like William Marçais and Roger LeTourneau, tended to take a single city, typically in North Africa, and extrapolate the physical characteristics of the city across the Muslim World. One characteristic Marçais identifies is that Islamic cities must have a marketplace near the congregational Friday Mosque, a souq. [11] Whether these works directly influenced Putrajaya or their ideas trickled down through other authorities is unclear, but Putrajaya has determined it must turn to Middle Eastern architecture and urbanism to legitimate its status as an Islamic city. An example of this appropriation of Islamic urbanism is one of the few commercial areas—and the most centrally located—of Putrajaya, is the Souq just outside the Putra Mosque near Dataran Putra. It is the only souq in Malaysia. Marketplaces near mosques exist across the country, of course, but the Putrajaya's Souq is distinctly Maghreb, not Malay. Starting at the south side of the Moroccan-inspired Putra Mosque, the Souq curves along the outside of the Dataran Putra. Down an escalator from the square, one does find a Malaysian interior: a food court serving popular Chinese and Malay dishes, a Malay souvenir shop, and a live Batik demonstration.

The arrival of Islam on the Peninsula five centuries earlier had very little effect on the structure and morphology of Malay cities, so to reach beyond Malaysia in search of Islamic identity illustrates a certain insecurity. [12] The Middle Eastern influences on Putrajaya, particularly the most important government structures at the core of the city, are widespread and obvious, from the onion domes atop the Prime Minister's Office and Palace of Justice to the mosque framed by Perbadanan Putrajaya (Figure 22). Brenda S.A. Yeoh describes how the aestheticization of the urban landscape—"cultural Imagineering of the city"—has become a popular method of generating growth, especially in Southeast Asia.[13] Revivalist architecture like that found in the government districts is generally very

10 Bunnel 2004 p. 101.
11 Janet Abu-Lughod. "The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance" International Journal of Middle East Studies. Vol. 19, No. 1, 1987. p. 156.
12 Kathirithamby-Wells, J. "The Islamic City: Melaka to Jogyakarta, c. 1500-1800." Modern Asian Studies. Vol. 20, No. 2, 1986. p. 336.
13 Yeoh p. 946.

**Figure 22. The Iron Mosque framed by Perbadanan Putrajaya (City Hall).**

**Figure 23. The Egyptian- and Persian-influenced Putra Mosque. The Souq hugs the lakeside on the right hand side.**

expensive, but appealing to investors and to architects, who receive higher commissions.[14] Mohamad T.M. Rasdi argues that the very existence of Putrajaya's monumental buildings is not Islamic, and cites the Prophet Muhammad's condemnation of building monuments for personal grandeur.[15]

Sitting on the edge of Putrajaya Lake and facing Dataran Putra at the head of the axis, the Putra Mosque is the grand centerpiece of the Islamic Putrajaya. Its position jutting out into the lake gives it the most prominent non-hilltop location in Putrajaya. (Figure 23) The Putra Mosque is distinctly Middle Eastern, a combination of revivalist Egyptian and Iranian elements.[16] The second most notable mosque in Putrajaya, the Iron Mosque (*Masjid Besi*), is framed by Perbadanan Putrajaya (Figure 22), demonstrating in no uncertain terms the bond between Putrajaya and Islam. Compare these two mosques to the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, conceived from a very different vision of Islam from Mahathir's Putra Mosque and Iron Mosque. The *Masjid Negara*, built in the first years of independence, is modernist, Malay, and impressive but not ostentatious. The building lies relatively low to the ground, with an asymmetrical veranda that covers much of the mosque's surrounding space. Instead of the predictable onion dome, the mosque has a round folded plate roof. The minaret imitates the roof's folded plate pattern. Because the mosque is a low building surrounded by the dense urban and natural jungle of Kuala Lumpur, it is virtually impossible to get a decent view of the building from the ground. All of this points to UMNO's attitude in the first decades of independence. While it agreed to make Islam as the official religion, most party leaders remained relatively secular. The highest priority for the government at the time was building a national identity, and the National Mosque resonated with the new nation in its use of a mix of local and modern features to create a "progressive idea of the mosque."[17] Kuala Lumpur remains stubbornly secular and cosmopolitan, and not a city that presents the governments new-found Islamism to the pan-Islamic world.

14 Rasdi, p. 98.
15 Rasdi, p. 144.
16 Rasdi, p. 95.
17 Rasdi, p. 94.

# Chapter VI
# A New Capital for a New Economy

"New capitals… are designed to highlight the place of the state in the modern economic and political world," according to Schatz. [1] In addition to its role as a Garden City, Malaysia identifies Putrajaya as an "Intelligent City." An intelligent city creates intelligent citizens, and in this way, Putrajaya draws on modernist ideas that a properly planned city can condition its inhabitants to behave in more creative and productive ways. These intelligent citizens will then lead the Malaysian economy into the 21st century and the global spotlight, the government hopes. However, not all Malaysians fit into the fantasy of the country's future expressed by Putrajaya.

National economic growth, like congestion, is often cited as a rationale for capital relocation. [2] Unfortunately, there is little evidence that it works. Usually this rationale is cited, as in the case of Brasilia, when the new capital is being built in the hinterland. Putrajaya is, of course, located only 25km outside of the old capital and still squarely inside Malaysia's most developed region. In Putrajaya's case, the government aims to use Putrajaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor to herald a more advanced economy—the information age economy—not merely to spread the existing one around. Schatz argues that many newly independent states chose to relocate their capitals from old colonial cities because they are "designed to serve the commercial and geo-strategic interests of a colonizing power" and are "ill-equipped for the economic and administrative challenge of independent statehood." [3] Malaysia's reasoning has been similar, Kuala Lumpur was indeed a colonial capital. However, more than the specter of Britain, Malaysia wants to leave behind the twentieth century commercial and geo-political strategic interests and create a city fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

1 Schatz p. 9.
2 Schatz p. 6.
3 Schatz p. 6-7.

As the home of Malaysia's new Electronic Government, Putrajaya was built at the hub of the Multimedia Super Corridor, "allowing it to harness new and emerging technologies," as if it were intended to catch the new and emerging technologies before they get away.[4] A high-speed train, the KLIA Transit links the airport with Putrajaya and KL Sentral Station. The express rail link does not simply pass through Putrajaya. It arcs around the city in such a way that an international visitor can see Putrajaya and its eye-catching buildings for almost one third of the ride from KLIA to KL Sentral. (Figure 9)

Located within Precinct 15, the Diplomatic Precinct is intended to house most of the embassies and high commissions of foreign governments, as well as the embassy workers and their families. Rational-technical reasons for capital relocation tend to impress foreign audiences, who are then more likely to invest. [5] Unfortunately for the Malaysian government, few foreign embassies feel Kuala Lumpur is too congested or backwards for their needs. Most foreign governments are reluctant to build an expensive new embassy when they already have one in Kuala Lumpur, where their nationals are more likely to be anyway. A few governments have purchased lots in the Diplomatic Precinct, like Turkey and the Philippines, but none have announced any plans to build. The one exception is the Iraqi embassy, which sits perched on an otherwise empty hill side. (Figure 21)

The Diplomatic Precinct is also notable for the reason that it is the only mixed use neighborhood in Putrajaya. The heart of the neighborhood consists of about a four block street lined with similar three-story mixed use buildings. (Figure 22) The area is intended to be a cosmopolitan area, where the families of embassy workers will shop and play. The strip lacks an international feel as no foreign diplomatic families have moved in yet. Although still has quite a few vacancies, it has a hint of vibrancy most of the city lacks. A handful of residents walked to the laundromat or grocery store, far more people out on the street than I witnessed anywhere else in the city. Residents tend to drive even to the neighborhood commercial centers. An international school has also been established in the Diplomatic Precinct.

Putrajaya tries to project two overlapping but distinct images—one to its citizens and one to the world, especially the Pan-Islamic world. One example is embodied in Putrajaya's Souq. Outsiders, especially Muslims, are meant to see the Souq as a sign of

4 Perbadanan Putrajaya.
5 Schatz p. 7.

**Figure 24. The loneliest embassy: the Iraqi Embassy.**


**Figure 25. Putrajaya's only mixed-use district, located in the Diplomatic Precinct.**

Malaysia's legitimacy as an Islamic nation. (Figure 23) The fact that the interior of this Middle Eastern market next to a Middle Eastern mosque is familiarly Malaysian, and that on a Malay-language map it is labeled simply "Medan Selera Putra," or "Putra Food Court" indicates the down-playing of foreign-ness to Malaysians.

Putrajaya hopes to use cultural production in the form of hallmark events to develop its global image. That the Putrajaya International Convention Center (PICC) was one of the first buildings completed demonstrates the importance to developers of attracting a global audience. PICC sits opposite the Prime Minister's Office, at the south end of Putrajaya Boulevard, again demonstrating its importance. Ironically, it is the one identifiably architecturally Malay building in Putrajaya, and is also the building most likely to contain the most foreigners at any given time. About a kilometer and a half west of PICC lies one of Putrajaya's two luxury hotels, the Pullman Hotel. The distance appears much less because there are no buildings in between, only roads branching out to nowhere. Putrajaya's other luxury hotel, the Shangri La, shares a hill top with the royal palace. In fact, it is the hotel, not the royal palace, that is aligned with a secondary axis that runs northeast from Dataran Putra (See Appendix B).

The intelligent city sets new standards that marginalize certain peoples and places. In the developed world, urban mega-projects like those in the Multimedia Super Corridor and the iconic architecture like that of Putrajaya tend to cluster in the most already-developed areas of a country.[6] This is certainly true in Malaysia's case. In the first decades of independence, the government pledged to develop the entire country, bringing the economically lagging areas like Sarawak and Sabah in line with the most advanced, the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. With the governments focus on the Multimedia Super Corridor, many citizens of remote, less developed regions feel left out of Malaysia's ascendency into "developed nation status."[7] The kampung is another place not welcome in the 21st century Malaysian economy. Kampung are the traditional settlement of Malays on the Peninsula. Although the word is frequently translated as "village," it carries a great deal more meaning. The kampung is traditionally a small settlement of several families, bonded by kinship and engaging in subsistence farming. While many Malay nationalists draw on

6 Yeoh, Brenda, "The global cultural city? Spatial imagineering and politics in the (multi)cultural marketplaces of South-east Asia." *Urban Studies* Vol. 42, No. 5, 2005 p. 955.

7 Bunnel 2002, p. 288.

the kampung as a symbol of Malay culture, Mahathir's government did not. Mahathir, especially hopes the intelligent city can terminate Malay kampung values "incompatible with modern life." [8] Mahathir may not realize how closely the romanticized image of the kampung and Howard's Garden City resemble each other—both are pastoral, unchanging, and virtually devoid of commerce.

Geographically remote regions are by no means the only ones left out of the government's vision of the future. The site for Putrajaya, a supposed greenfield site, actually contained Tamil plantation workers and a village of Orang Asli. The displacement of these groups, particularly the Orang Asli, was excused in the name of progress toward goals of Vision 2020. The "backward" Orang Asli do not fit into Vision 2020, as there is no room for culturally specific alternative modernities.[9] Many of the unskilled Malaysian and guest workers who began work on Putrajaya were discarded or deported following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.[10]

8 Khan p. 111.
9 Bunnel 2004 p. 144.
10 Bunnel 2004 p. 146.

# Chapter VII
# Conclusion

The Malaysian government hopes Putrajaya, the "Intelligent Garden City," will do nothing short of transform Malaysia and its citizens. Putrajaya's pristine version of nature is intended to nurture its inhabitants physically and morally, the city's Islamic character is intended to instruct spiritually and maintain a collective well-being, and its world-class information and communications technology is intended to allow citizens to realize themselves in the realm of creativity and innovation. While the intentions are clear, the plan for Putrajaya presents some contradictory evidence to the idea that the new capital is an effective tool to meet the Vision 2020 goals—Garden City planning quashes economic growth, the new capital is built to appeal to Malay Muslims over other Malaysians, and Malaysian and international investors have yet to take a serious interest in Putrajaya. Like its predecessors Brasilia and Canberra, Putrajaya may have to let go of much of its plan to thrive.

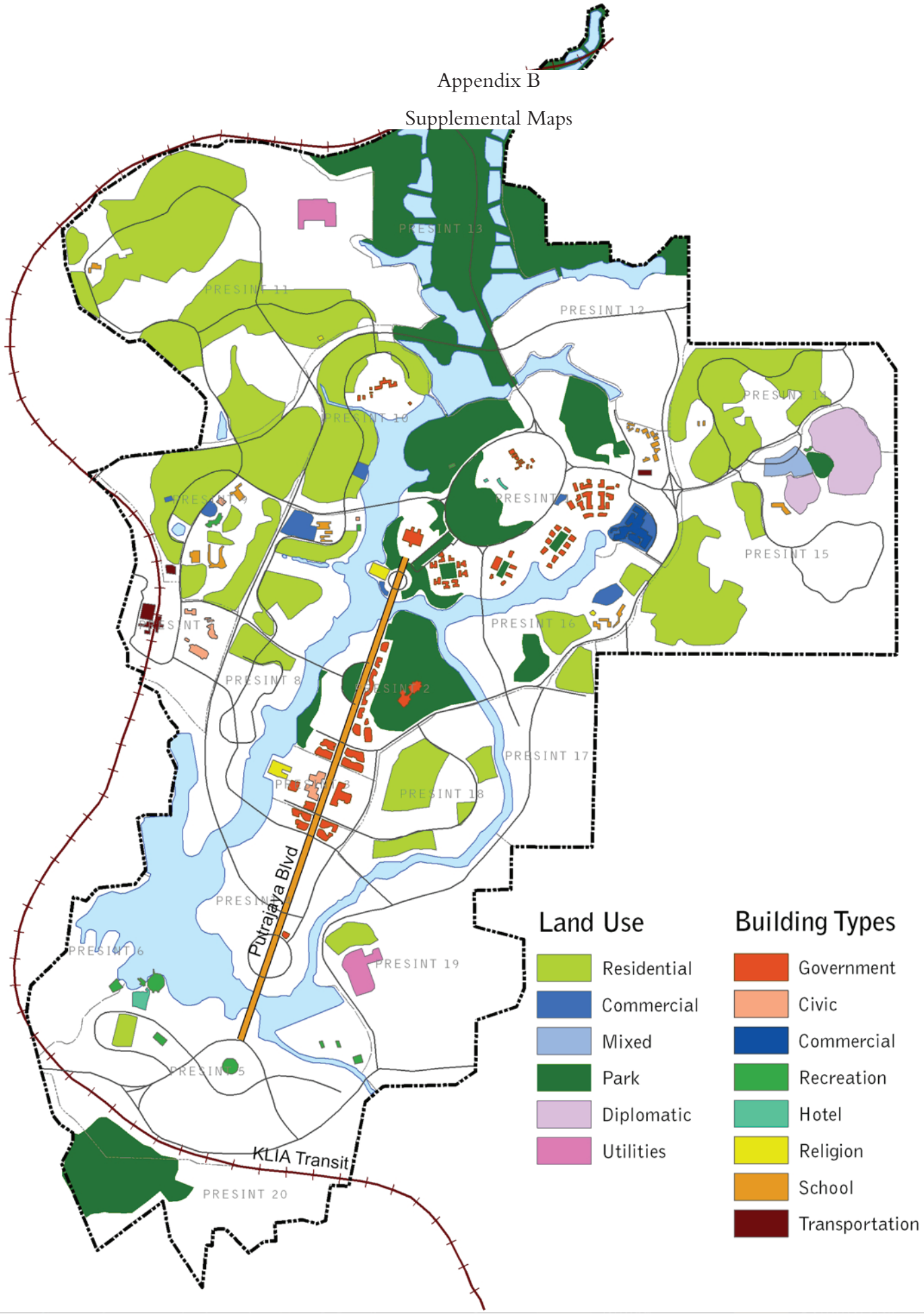
## Appendix A

Putrajaya's precincts and their specializations

| | |
|---|---|
| Precinct 1 | Government. Contains Prime Ministers Office and Government Complexes B-E. Also contains Putra Square, Putra Mosque, Shangri La Hotel, Melawati Palace, Botanical Gardens, and Alamanda Putrajaya. |
| Precinct 2 | Government. Contains Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Putrajaya Holdings Bhd. |
| Precinct 3 | Government. Contains Palace of Justice, Perbadanan Putrajaya, and the Iron Mosque. |
| Precinct 4 | Undeveloped. Planned as a "downtown district" with residential and office high-rises. |
| Precinct 5 | Recreation. Contains PICC, Pullman Hotel, marina, and water sport facilities. |
| Precinct 6 | Undeveloped. |
| Precinct 7 | City Services. Contains Putrajaya Sentral Station, Police Headquarters, Putrajaya Hospital |
| Precinct 8 | Residential. |
| Precinct 9 | Residential. |
| Precinct 10 | Residential. Contains Prime Minister's Residence. |
| Precinct 11 | Residential. |
| Precinct 12 | Undeveloped. Planned residential. |
| Precinct 13 | Putrajaya Wetlands. |
| Precinct 14 | Residential. |
| Precinct 15 | Diplomatic and mixed-use. Contains lots for embassies, an international school, and mixed-use district. |
| Precinct 16 | Residential |
| Precinct 17 | Undeveloped. Planned residential. |
| Precinct 18 | Residential. |
| Precinct 19 | Undeveloped. Planned residential. |
| Precinct 20 | Cemetaries. Contains Muslim, Chinese, Hindu, and Christian cemetaries. |

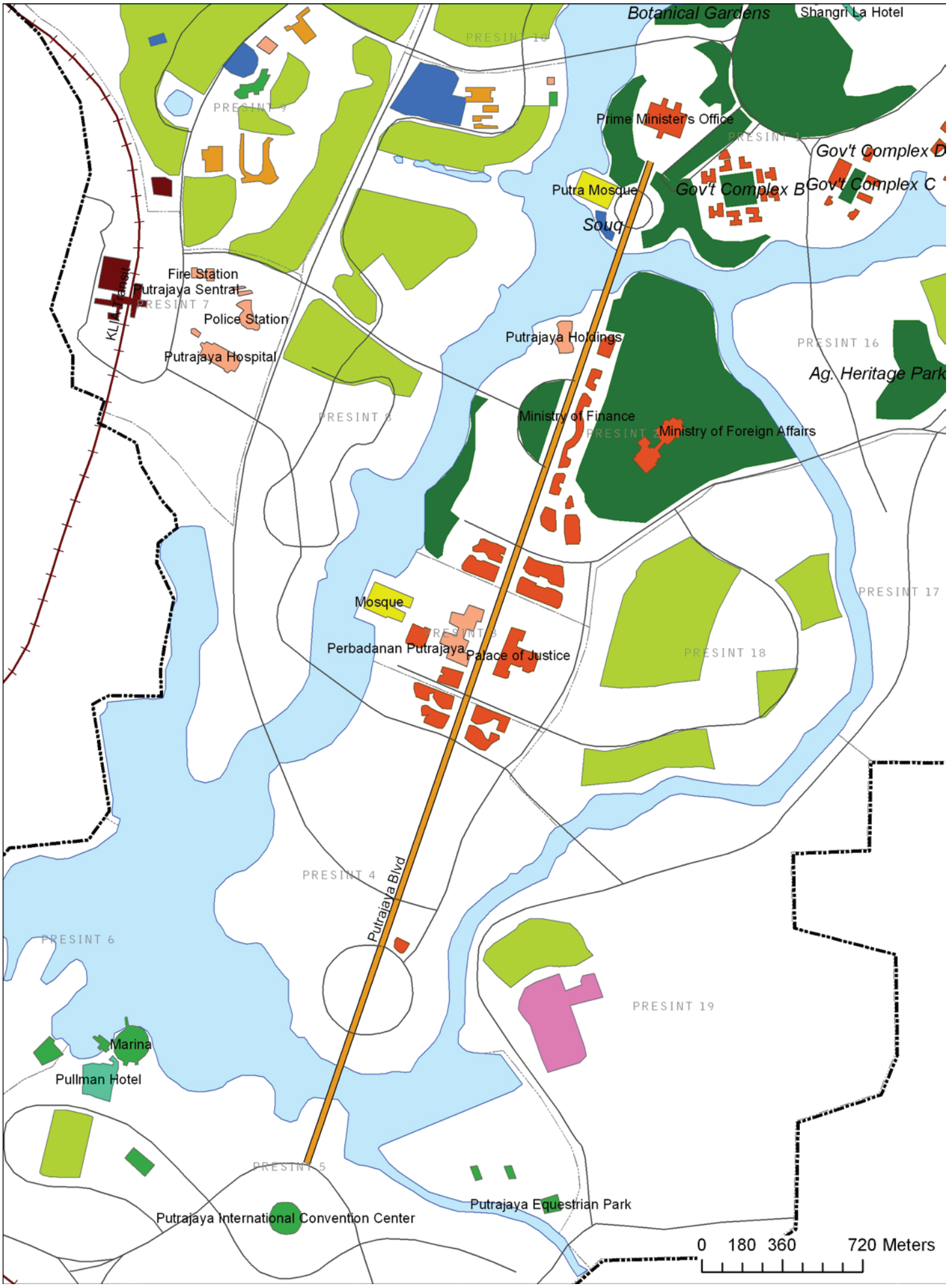
Appendix B

Supplemental Maps




Putrajaya Wetlands
PRESINT 11
PRESINT 13
PRESINT 12
Prime Minister's Residence
PRESINT 10
Botanical Gardens
PRESINT 14
Melawati Palace
Botanical Gardens Visitor Center
Bus Terminal
Shangri La Hotel
PRESINT 1
Gov't Complex E
Alamanda
Prime Minister's Office
Gov't Complex D
PRESINT 8
Putra Mosque
Gov't Complex B
Gov't Complex C
Souq
PRESINT 15
PRESINT 16
Putrajaya Holdings
PRESINT 2
Ag. Heritage Park
PRESINT 17
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
0 135 270 540 Meters


Putrajaya Wetlands
PRESINT 13
PRESINT 12
PRESINT 13
PRESINT 14
Welcome Center
Diplomatic Zone
Mixed-Use District
Bus Terminal
PRESINT 1
Gov't Complex E
International School
Alamanda
Gov't Complex D
PRESINT 15
PRESINT 16
Ag. Heritage Park
PRESINT 17
0 135 270 540 Meters


Botanical Gardens
Shangri La Hotel
PRESINT 10
PRESINT 9
Prime Minister's Office
PRESINT 1
Gov't Complex D
Gov't Complex C
Gov't Complex B
Putra Mosque
Souq
Fire Station
Putrajaya Sentral
PRESINT 7
Police Station
Putrajaya Hospital
KL Monorail
Putrajaya Holdings
PRESINT 16
Ag. Heritage Park
PRESINT 8
Ministry of Finance
PRESINT 2
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PRESINT 17
Mosque
PRESINT 3
Perbadanan Putrajaya
Palace of Justice
PRESINT 18
PRESINT 4
Putrajaya Blvd
PRESINT 6
PRESINT 19
Marina
Pullman Hotel
PRESINT 5
Putrajaya Equestrian Park
Putrajaya International Convention Center
0 180 360 720 Meters


Putrajaya Wetlands
PRESINT 13
PRESINT 11
Prime Minister's Residence
PRESINT 10
Botanical Gardens
Botanical Gardens Visitor Center
PRESINT 9
PRESINT 1
Prime Minister's Office
Putra Mosque
Gov't Complex B
PRESINT 8
Souq
Fire Station
PRESINT 7
Putrajaya Sentral
Police Station
Putrajaya Hospital
Putrajaya Ho
PRESINT 16
0 135 270 540 Meters

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