

HUMAN SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT: VIEWS FROM MALAYSIAN LADY PLANNERS

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ABSTRACT

The human settlement development is an important component in defining the quality of life because of its relationship with living experience. Town planners role should be aimed at improving the conditions and opportunities that the human settlement development environments can present whenever possible. Malaysia has been undergoing rather rapid urbanisation since the beginning of the 20th century and resulted in the development of more human settlement areas. The research was limited to the satisfaction level from the view of Malaysian lady planners. Women form almost 50 per cent of the total population of 23.3 million as reported by Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2000. It important to note that lady planners play a significant role in planning and development programmes to improve the quality of human settlement development. The research analysis produces a result showing their preferences of settlement environments. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of the human settlement environments. No one can deny that a good human settlement environment provides the person a better quality of life.

Key words: human settlement, quality of life, settlement environments, lady planners.

Introduction

The research focused on factors related to human settlement development. Among the factors were housing, community facilities, infrastructure, mobility, safety, daily activities and others. There are three planning issues in this research. Firstly, the role of lady planners in human settlement development planning and the influence on the quality of living environment. Secondly, project developers should be made aware of the implications of human settlement development and thirdly, human settlement environment should be well planned so as to meet the desired quality by the community. The research was on the views from Malaysian lady planners. These lady planners are attached to government departments either at the Federal, State or Local level. Some of them are public agencies employees working as lecturers, as planners at private sectors such as planning consultants or project developers' organisations. There are also lady planners who prefer to be self-employed and involve in business as principal of companies. The research focused on the quality of human settlement development which would reflect the quality of life. The research was also aimed to gather information related to urban planning and development approach in the country. The government should make appropriate provision to monitor the impact of strategies on marginalised groups with particular reference to the needs of women.

Literature Review

Human Settlement

Among the most significant transformations of human settlements are rapid urbanisation, the concentration of the population in large cities, the sprawl of cities and the rapid growth of megacities. In 1950 the world urban population was 29.8 percent, but by the year 2020 it was estimated 57 percent will live in cities. In the process of urbanisation, policies and programmes for the development of human settlements require good governance working in partnership with all stakeholders. Sustainable human settlement development gives full consideration to the needs of achieving economic growth, social development and environment protection. Agenda 21 sets out sustainable development principles for planning, developing and improving human settlements.

A human settlement policy must seek harmonious integration or co-ordination of a wide variety of components, including population growth and distribution, employment, shelter, land use, infrastructure and services. Governments must create mechanisms and institutions to develop and implement such a policy (United Nations: 1976). Sustainable human settlements planning and management very much depends on adequate resources being made available. Indeed, it is probably a futile exercise, even if good intentioned, to attempt to plan and productively and effectively manage cities and towns without adequate spatial data and information (Don:2001).The overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor as stated in the UN report on ‘Promoting Sustainable Human Settlement Development’. Such improvement should be based on technical cooperation activities, partnerships among the public, private and community sectors and participation in the decision making process from community groups and special interest groups such as women, indigenous people, the elderly and the disabled.

Human settlement involved all the elements of a technical infrastructure and of all necessary functions and services of the economic and social system if it was to be effective and successful. In many countries that infrastructure of good communications, water, waste disposal, employment, social opportunities did not exist and would have to be created. Thus at the heart of the problem lay the whole issue for development and the task of reducing the vast gulf that stills separates the majority of humanity from the minority. Without this, matters such as scattered rural population, shanty towns, urban pollution and health hazards could not be met (United Nations: 1976). In most Western European countries human settlements development has generally been seen as an integral part of socio-economic development. The relative importance of the different aspects of human settlements development has varied over time (United Nations: 2005). Recall that, one of the overriding intentions of human settlement development is to humanise the living environment by creating lively locations for a balanced settlement structure with housing areas and an urban diversity of shopping, services, recreational and cultural facilities.

In human settlements development, the government should continue to play the role of enabler. This applies particularly to the national government whose main focus should be policy setting and policy implementation monitoring, along with its responsibilities for national spatial and environmental planning. Local government should play an operational role through support actions related to land supply, local spatial planning and infrastructure delivery, as well as through a conducive regulatory framework (United Nations: 2005). As mentioned by Zainuddin (2002) the future of sustainable human settlements development lies in three prospects which are a) it requires further integration of environmental considerations in land use planning and all

levels of decision making; b) it should be based more increasingly on multi-dimensional approach and c) it should be open to new innovations and adaptation, with a keen eye on the physical, social and economic development trends. Planner has a role of strategic thinking in dealing with corporate strategies and policies towards sustainable solutions.

Town Planning and Town Planners

The main function of planning has always been to provide a good or better physical environment, essential for the promotion of a healthy and civilised life (Zainuddin: 2002). From the ideologically inspired models of the 19th century utopian planners to the technically oriented specialist town planning officials of the industrial revolution period, the driving motive for town or settlements planning was the protection of public health, public safety and economic and social well-being (Don: 2001). City or town planning has laid the foundation for the science of human settlements through an evolutionary process that started during the Industrial Revolution (Gurel: 1995). Based on reports by the United Nations, human settlement conditions in many parts of the world, particularly the developing countries are deteriorating. This is due to the low levels of investments in the sector attributable to the overall resource constraints in these countries. In the low-income countries an average of less than 10 per cent of central government expenditure went to housing, amenities, social security and welfare.

The main aim of town planning is to avoid conflicting landuse. The planners are to ensure continued economic growth and also creating human settlement environment for all residents. As the rate of urbanisation increases the urban community also goes through a state of constant transition, the change being not merely industrial but also social well being. The improving standards and higher level of living of the urban community should bring higher quality in the provision of services. Planning and development need to provide a human settlement environment that is socially beneficial with sufficient and optimum provision of infrastructure, utilities such as clean water supply, amenities such as cleansing, electricity and drainage systems; public facilities, recreational spaces and commercial and industrial centres. The rapid economic growth has given rise to new planning issues. The planning standards were to make sure that human settlement development should be relatively well self-contained and self-sufficient in terms of the facilities provided. These standards basically reflected the population threshold levels for the provision of various types of facilities. Both the public and the private sectors town planners contributed to the quality of life of residents through the designs and planning standards applied. Town planners formulated planning guidelines, planning standards and design criteria to create environments in which people had opportunities to interact and socialise with others. In general, most human settlements development reflect various degrees of forethought and conscious design in the layout and functioning.

Town planners have a major role in helping to manage urban growth through physical plans, which encompasses economic, social and environmental considerations. Town planners involve making long and short-term decisions about the management and development of human settlement development. Town planners have involved themselves in a holistic manners of human settlement development. Besides planning and urban design, undertaking regional, state and local studies, planners are also involved in getting stakeholders participation in local development, in project implementation as well as in social capacity building. Planners are trained to see the cause and effect of development as well its impact upon society. Their ultimate aim is for sustainable human settlement development for the benefit of society. It is to balance the demands of housing, commercial, industrial, infrastructure, public facilities, recreation, transport, agriculture, and the environment by allowing appropriate development to take place. In addition effective land use regulations will benefit residents for decades by providing environmental protection along with

economic development. Some town planners may specialised in enforcement or development control and need to take into account the views of a wide range of people. Through public participation the town planner strives to manage growth and promote the highest quality of human settlement development by articulating the community vision, providing information and creative recommendations based on sound planning practice. Jamil (2003) stated that Chinese planners are in the midst of vigorously reviewing their master plans to accommodate millions who want urban fringe settlement development where housing units are more spacious and healthy.

Malaysia has had a long history in planning profession and practice and amongst developing nations that has a Town and Country Planning Act (1976), and Malaysia Town Planners Bill (1995) to regulate and streamline the practice of the profession. The planning service and the profession of town planning have been recognised as a crucial factor in determining the country's objectives towards achieving balance and sustainable development. In Malaysia town planners are playing a significant role in charting the future course for the country. The Malaysian Town Planners Bill (1995) stated that every registered Town Planner shall be entitled to:

- (a) prepare development plans such as structure plans and local plans for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Act 1976;
- (b) carry out urban, rural and regional development planning studies, and feasibility and environmental impact assessment studies relating to land use; and
- (c) prepare and submit applications for planning permission, sub divisional layouts, drawings and planning reports to any person or public authority for the purposes of developing any land.

The global environment change is providing a magnificent opportunity for planners to take a proactive role (Morris:1997). Town planners should incorporate sustainability and greater social responsiveness in all planning activities. Malaysian planners are confronted with the challenges of creating sustainable human settlement development. A holistic approach town planning was developed in Malaysia with the application of the Total Planning Doctrine which is an action plan focusing on the concept of sustainable development and enhancement the quality of life (Dasimah: 2002).

The Total Planning Doctrine

The Federal Government of Malaysia has endorsed the concept of holistic development for land use planning known as The Total Planning and Development Doctrine in 1997. It was prepared by the Town and Country Planning Department, Peninsular Malaysia as the results of the sensitivity towards the significance of human development in national development. The objective is to create a balance between physical development and human development in terms of spiritual and noble universal values for the sustainable progress of the country. The doctrine has given rise to new emphasis on planning practice and it sets out guidelines in physical planning terms. It is a new approach to the planning and design which is expected to guide the physical planning system focusing on the concept of sustainable development (Dasimah: 2004). There are 14 principles and development implications of the Total Planning and Development Guidelines as summarised in Table 1 below (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Malaysia: 2001).

Table 1: The Principles and Development Implication

| Principles | Development Implication |
|---|--|
| Man and the Creator | |
| 1. Justice | Giving each what is rightfully his at the respective rate. |
| 2. Compassion | Inner feeling, sensitivity to the environment and other creatures, which have their own roles and functions. |
| 3. Trustworthy and credibility | Planning based on facts and consultation. |
| 4. Unity | Togetherness in purpose – city of purpose, civic sense of unity but diversity in processes. |
| 5. Respect for knowledge and conscious of the Creator | City as centre for learning. Provision of education space and opportunities. |
| Man and Man | |
| 6. Respecting privacy and division of space | Provision of spaces for private, semi-private and public. Protected from physical and visual intrusion. |
| 7. Encouraging interaction and acquaintance | Conducive atmosphere of cooperation, peace and harmony. Neighborhood interaction. |
| 8. Peace and security | Creation of peaceful, safe and healthy city. |
| 9. Respecting the right of individuals | Planning needs regulations. Interdependence among members of community should be encouraged. |
| 10. Cooperation, sensitivity and mutual respect | Positive integration of society regardless of income, religion and ethnic group will lead to perpetual development of a friendly, sensitive and civil society. |
| 11. Consultation | Planning requires consensus and comprehensive public participation. |
| Man and the Environment | |
| 12. Cleanliness and beauty | City and living environment should be clean and beautiful. |
| 13. Preservation of the environment and sustainable natural resources | Protection of the environment from pollution and destruction and sustainable use of natural resources. To enable future generation to live in peace, comfort, safety and harmony with his environment. |
| 14. Economic and effective use of resources | Effective use of resources will reduce costs and wastage. |

Women Participation in Malaysia

Women formed more than 49 percent of the total population in Malaysia as shown in Table 2. Majority of them are in the active working age group between 15-64 years old (Raja Zaharaton: 2005). Table 3 shows the distribution of labour force in Malaysia for year 1995, 2000 and 2003. The figures indicated that there was about one percent growth of women’s participation between 1995 to 2000 and 2003. However, the rate of un-employment among women also increased by 0.2 and 0.3 percent in those years (Raja Zaharaton: 2005). There is frequent debate in the print media about the new ‘working woman’ and about the pressures and costs of ‘juggling’ work and home (Edwards and Roces: 2000). Through New Economic Policy, the government intensified the development projects and emphasised on the participation of women in a wide range of economic-based projects (Maimunah: 2000). Malaysian women are living their everyday lives in a context in which the ‘family’ is highly politicised.

Table 2: Malaysian Population Size by Gender for 1991, 2000 and 2004

| | 1991 | 2000 | 2004 |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Population (000) | 18,547 | 23,495 | 25,673 |
| Male | 9,417 | 11,966 | 13,079 |
| Female | 9,130 | 11,529 | 12,594 |
| 0-14 years | 3,357 | 3,890 | 4,089 |
| 15-64 years | 5,413 | 7,143 | 7,929 |
| 65 and above | 361 | 496 | 576 |
| Population (% of the total) | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Male | 50.8 | 50.9 | 50.9 |
| Female | 49.2 | 49.1 | 49.1 |
| 0-14 years | 18.1 | 16.6 | 15.9 |
| 15-64 years | 29.1 | 30.4 | 30.9 |
| 65 and above | 1.9 | 2.1 | 2.3 |

Source: Raja Zaharaton Raja Zainal Abidin, 2005

Table 3: Labour Force Distribution by Gender in Malaysia

| | 1995 | 2000 | 2003 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Total Labour Force ('000) | 7,893.1 | 9,616.1 | 10,239.6 |
| Female (% of total) | 34.1 | 34.7 | 35.9 |
| Male (% of total) | 65.9 | 65.3 | 64.1 |
| Total Rate of Participation (%) | 64.7 | 65.5 | 65.2 |
| Female | 44.7 | 46.7 | 47.7 |
| Male | 84.3 | 83.3 | 82.1 |
| Total Employment ('000) | 7,645.0 | 9,321 | 9,869.7 |
| Female (% of total) | 33.9 | 34.7 | 35.9 |
| Male (% of total) | 66.1 | 65.3 | 64.1 |
| Rate of Un-employment | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| Female (% of total) | 2.8 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| Male (% of total) | 3.8 | 3.2 | 3.6 |

Source: Raja Zaharaton Raja Zainal Abidin, 2005

During the Eighth Malaysia Plan period, efforts will continue to be undertaken to further enhance the role, position and responsibilities of women so as to increase their participation and involvement in the social and economic life of the country. In implementing the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, the Government will continue to ensure that strategies and programmes implemented are consistent with Malaysian values, religious beliefs and cultural norms. One of the main objectives of the National Policy on women addressed by Sharifah Zaleha (1998) was to integrate women in all sectors of development in accordance with their capabilities and needs in order to enhance the quality of life, eradicate poverty, ignorance and illiteracy, and ensure the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous nation. Various mechanisms is instituted to enable women to participate in decision-making processes at all levels. This is to ensure the incorporation of the needs of women in the formulation of policies and the development of strategies and programmes for the further advancement of women. Gender analysis training and sensitisation for policy-makers and planners and programme implementors will continue to be implemented in the public and private sectors. Greater efforts also undertaken

to ensure the systematic collection and compilation of gender disaggregated data to facilitate analysis, create awareness and formulate appropriate and effective follow-up action on gender issues (Government of Malaysia: 2000) With the provision of equal access to healthcare as well as educational and training programmes and improved employment opportunities, women made advancements in various fields of development. The Government provide the enabling environment and supportive mechanisms, including the implementation of gender sensitive programmes, to enable women to reach their full potential in the social and economic fields of development.

Lady Planners

Lady town planners play a very important role to enhance the quality of human settlement development of the community. They are responsible for shaping the environment where people live work and play. Lady town planners are expected to lead in creating sustainable human settlement environment and should be able to translate the need of the society into a sustainable plan. The perspectives from lady town planners are important for any analysis of human settlement development conditions and trends. This is because men and women experience and respond to living environment in different ways as a result of gendered constraints and opportunities on issues around health, safety, education and the family, linked to women's work. This study demonstrates why a lady town planners' view is important to understanding living environment by highlighting gender preferences in key sectors. It focused on the sustainable human development environment which would reflect the quality of life and also concerned with the manner of delivery of the services.

In Malaysia, planners have contributed significant efforts towards the development of the country especially the urban environment. There are 135 lady town planners registered with Malaysian Institute of Planners. Lady planners formed only 20.5 per cent of the total registered planners. The Malaysian Institute of Planners was formed in 1972 to promote the science and art of Town Planning for the benefit of the public. It is a professional institute that is a membership-registered organisation. Its members are fully qualified professional town planners, working as planning officers with various federal, state and local authorities, as town planning consultants, lecturers in universities or as planners for developers and various organisations with significant land banks. Today planner are faced with the many challenges that demand planning excellence.

The need and emphasis for balanced and sustainable built environment are becoming a key concept in development.

Objectives of the Research

1. to identify the views of Malaysian lady planners regarding the quality of human settlement development
2. to identify indicators for future research
3. to suggest proposals

Research Methodology

The questionnaire survey was the primary method of measuring the perceptions or views of the lady planners. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions where respondents were required to indicate how they felt about the current situation of human settlement development using a four point scale of completely satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and completely dissatisfied.

This is to characterise the perceived quality and to give a better picture of how respondents feel about the human settlements environment.

The research was carried out based on the following steps:

1. Formal application was made to Malaysian Institute of Planners for the latest list of lady planners including names and addresses.
2. A pilot survey was conducted among the lady planners working in Shah Alam.
3. Postal survey by sending questionnaires to lady planners by mail to all lady planners; 135 survey forms were sent out to all of them based on the Malaysian Institute of Planners year 2000 list.
4. Reminders were made through phone calls. A period of three months was allocated for the survey.
5. 65 forms were returned using the researcher's self-addressed envelopes which was 46.6 per cent of the total. Majority of the respondents were from Selangor and Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. From each state at least a questionnaire was received.

Summary of Analysis and Findings:

Respondents' Profile

The analysis was based on the 65 forms returned by the lady planners. The research found that more than 60 per cent of respondents were full time government staff, 36 per cent with private companies while 4 per cent were not employed. The majority of them that was 84 per cent were married while the other 16 per cent were single. It was found that 46 per cent of the respondents aged ranged between 30-40 years old, 37 per cent between 41-50 years old, eleven per cent were below 30 while only five per cent were above 50 years old.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis found that 78 per cent of the respondents stated they were satisfied with human settlement development in the country. The challenge for planners and especially lady planners is how to achieve the 100 percent satisfaction level of the community on human settlement development. Planners need to respond appropriately to the changing needs and deliver the optimal solutions. The sustainable human settlements require efficient and systematic planning and development with emphasis on balancing the social, economic and physical development. The needs of the people change over time which leads to needs of cities are ever changing as they grow in size and diversity. This requires the physical built environment to also change to accommodate these new needs. Therefore human settlement development consists of people and the spatial requirement which are dynamic entities. The two must harmonise, and be mutually supportive and symbiotically dependent (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Malaysia: 2004).

About 75 per cent of these lady planners were satisfied with the livable quality of human settlement development. The concept of liveable human settlement should encompass several elements for it to be sustainable. Among them are the provision of quality services, utility and infrastructure and tackling the safety issues required by the community while the focus on the preservation and conservation of the environment should be given utmost priority. In this country there are enough policies and guidelines to manage them. The professionals especially the lady planners must make it happen. One of the United Nations human settlements objectives to

develop local strategies for the improvement of the quality of life and the environment, integrating decisions for land use and land management, investment in public and private sectors, as well as mobilise human and material resources, thereby promoting employment generation which is environmentally sound and protective of human health (United Nations: 2005).

The research found that 72 percent of the respondents stated that housing provision is within the affordability of the house buyers. This is very important in order to meet the targeted aim of United Nations human settlement programme. Local Agenda 21 outlined policy to have access to safe and healthy shelter is essential to a person's physical, psychological, social and economic well-being and should be a fundamental part to national and international action. The right to adequate housing as a basic human right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The lady planners were also satisfied with the overall design of the human settlement development. More than 68 percent of the lady planners responded that the human settlement development was based on good design. The planners should apply the sustainable design taking in ecological consideration and address the principles of economy of resources, life cycle design and human settlement design. Environmental design based good principles is very important in creating good accessibility infrastructure for the community. Well-designed highways and freeways promote better accessibility to all human settlement areas.

Planners are also involved in getting stakeholders participation in local development, in project implementation as well as in social capacity building. Majority of respondents believe that the community must be given the opportunity to participate in decision making. The research found that 64 percent of respondents agreed to the statement. Town planners are ones who can see development in a holistic manner, who are trained to see to the cause and effect as well its impact upon society. Ideally, there should be a four step process to involve communities and other stakeholders in the process of decision making:

- a. Consultation which involves informing communities what governments intend to do to implement certain policies and projects;
- b. Participation which involves asking communities and other stakeholders what they want and taking their views into consideration in the formulation of policies and projects;
- c. Engagement which allows communities and civil society to make limited decisions about matters that effect local or national interests and to become involved in the implementation of projects under the umbrella of government;
- d. Co-Governance, which involves functions and powers of governments to communities and business to take actions on behalf of government (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Malaysia: 2004).

Safety issues within human settlement development need to be addressed. About 63 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the safety issues. The government is aware of the importance of a safe human settlement environment. The respective ministries must apply more drastic and effective measures to improve the safety of community. The challenges for planners are how to harness the human settlement environment which could support and enhance the creation of civil and caring society to mitigate social problems. This also requires a multi-disciplinary approach by stakeholders. It can succeed if residents' associations, business people, individuals and chambers, NGOs, ordinary citizens partner the local government and the police to work together to fight crime. The ultimate aim is to make a human settlement environment which is stress free, community and especially, children friendly, healthy, safe and crime free.

However, only 41 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the level of maintenance of public facilities. The rapid urbanisation in the country has posed challenges to the provision and maintenance of public facilities to existing human settlement areas. The government development plans have not sacrificed the principles of sustainable development. The federal and state governments have introduced legislations and guidelines to balance economic, social development and environmental protection. The improving standards and higher level of living of the community should bring higher quality in the provision of services. Planning and development need to provide a human settlement environments that is socially beneficial with sufficient and optimum provision of public facilities. The National Physical, Structure and Local Plans are all designed to guide development towards sustainable development. The National Physical Planning Council with the Prime Minister as the chairperson has been set-up to oversee developments from the national perspective. Therefore town planners including the lady planners must lead the role in addressing these issues by implementing environmental design to achieve zero opportunities for social degradation of public facilities and services.

Creation of the outdoor public space or recreational areas helps build identity and also be a unifying factor for the community. The quality of the areas is very important in the development of human settlements. However the research found that only 39 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of public space or outdoor recreational areas. The quality of the environment must be preserved and free from pollution. Majority of respondents stated that recreational activities are important in life. Recreational areas often visited were within driving distance from their houses. They suggested the outdoor recreational areas needed within 1-5 kilometers radius from human settlement areas including neighbourhood park, quite secluded natural areas, large open space, footpath, lake, badminton/tennis courts and golf course. The provision of outdoor recreational areas is creating spaces for the positive interaction of communities. The government imposed a 10 percent requirement for any development to be public open spaces. These can be in the form of parks and gardens and also public plazas. However, in most cases public spaces are not well maintained. The conversion of open spaces to other land uses is prohibited. Public spaces or outdoor recreational areas are meant for what they are planned for and must be properly maintained and protected.

Conclusion

In the age of globalisation, and greater urbanisation, town planners including the lady planners have a major role in helping to manage human settlement development expansion through sustainable planning, which encompasses economic, social and environmental considerations. The research found that the majority of lady planners were satisfied with the quality, livable environment, housing provision, community participation and design of the human settlement development. About 63 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the safety issues. However majority were not satisfied with the maintenance of public services and the provision of open space or outdoor recreational areas. Human settlements must be properly planned. Town planners especially lady planners need to lead the role in achieving a harmonious, attractive, convenient and healthy human settlement environment. The future research should focus for the improvement of the quality of human settlement environment so as to meet the highest desired level of very satisfactory by the community.

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