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Assessment of Public Involvement in Urban Governance: Case Study in Putrajaya

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ABSTRACT

Background: The urbanization process in the 21st century has no longer suitable for the rehabilitation of existing cities as it is already dense and complex and has very limited development potential. Therefore, the new planned cities or township has become better option as it is more organized and well-planned. However, the creation of planned cities should be made more rigorous and comprehensive as it involves migration of communities who have to adapt to the physical urban design, the economy and social activities. **Objectives:** The purpose of this study is to assess the social impact of this new planned city of Malaysia – Putrajaya including the satisfaction level regarding to physical urban design, socio-economic as well as their involvement in decision-making process in urban governance towards sustainable living environment.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of urbanization in Peninsular Malaysia was recorded as early as the 19th century. Research by Abdul Samad Hadi *et al* [1] suggested that there are three phases of urbanization transition, namely nascent, pseudo and the rise of mega urban region. According to research done by Shahameh Parhizgar, [2], urbanization process could be considered as a revised approach to public policy and governance as a set of principles for creating pleasant, efficient, and functionally coherent neighborhoods. This process has encouraged the creation of diverse, vibrant, walkable, pedestrian-friendly, and compact communities in the form of integrated and sustainable neighborhoods.

In the twenty-first century, global urbanization must be shaped and managed to achieve its potential to increase prosperity and social cohesion, improved standards of environmental efficiency, citizen health and well-being, and strengthen international relations. Emilu Moir *et al*, [3] stated that the inefficiency of managing this new urbanization will become a major threat to both modern society, and to the world's environmental fabric. The future city will not only impact on society, but will also influence wider global environments and economies.

According to WHO (2014), cities in the developing world face the toughest challenges: the vast majority of urban growth over the next 30 years with more than 70% of people will live in cities. Future cities will need to adapt to, or in some cases work to mitigate against climate change, population growth, globalization of economy, demographics, risks and ecologies dependencies, technological developments, geo-political changes, human mobility, ageing populations, inequality and social tensions, insecurity of energy, food or water and the changing of institutional and governance frameworks.

In early 1980s, the sustainability concept was introduced with the philosophy of preserving the nature for future generation during Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. With this concept, Dahlia Rosly [4] in her research suggested that sustainability has become the pillar of development and is assuming profound implications for the quality of life and livelihood of local communities. This concept was then adapted by many country, including Malaysia.

On 29th August 1995, Putrajaya was officially launch as the aspiration and realization of Government's decision to develop the new Federal Government's Administration Centre. This new planned-city was developed in line with government desire to distribute the physical development of Kuala Lumpur to other adjacent cities in Klang Valley in improving the quality of urban environment and quality of life by ensuring a more orderly development in the Klang Valley.

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Named after the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, this planned-city was covered the area of nearly 4,400 hectare adjacent to Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) was developed with city-in-a-garden and intelligent city concept.



Fig. 1: The location of Putrajaya with other major cities in Klang Valley area.

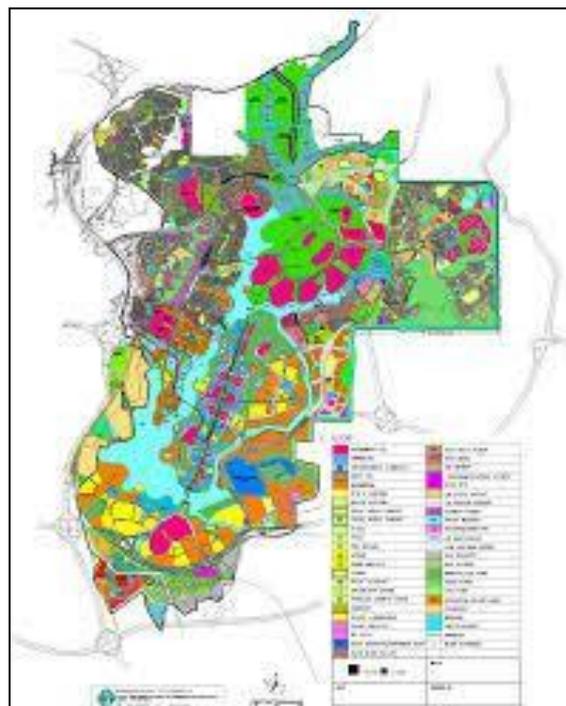


Fig. 2: The Master Plan of Putrajaya at its early development.

Located 25 km south of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya served as the new federal administrative centre of Malaysia. The shifted from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya was due to overcrowding and congestion in the existing Kuala Lumpur area. Nevertheless, Kuala Lumpur remains Malaysia's national capital, while Putrajaya became Malaysia's third Federal Territory after Kuala Lumpur and Labuan.

Putrajaya, which was originally Perang Besar Estate – a palm oil plantation, was planned as a city-in-a-garden and intelligent city, with nearly 40% of the area is reserved for green spaces by emphasizing the enhancement of natural landscape. This area covers 4,391 hectares which comprises the landuse for government's office (4.57%), housing accommodation (14.42%), commercial (2.83%), public amenities

(6.98%) park and open spaces (39.15%), infrastructure and utilities (9.79%), roads (18.40%), services and industry (0.23%), special used (2.80%) and others (0.83%).

Government offices dominate the building area in Putrajaya with 3.8 million square meter while commercial with 3.4 million square meter. There are also 63,600 units of residential building with building used 55% for government quarters, 36% for public buyer and 13% of it is meant for low income group. The city was divided into 20 precinct with the urban area at the central spine whilst housing residential area scattered outside the spine area which developed with neighbourhood concept; where each residential area supposed to be self-contained. Each residential have their own public facilities and amenities such as community hall, open spaces, sports and recreational facilities as well as convenient shops.

As a model of sustainable city in Malaysia, Putrajaya play a vital role in implementing the sustainable concept, both in city development and urban governance. Starting with the concept of city-in-a-garden concept and intelligent city concept, Putrajaya has constantly sustain the momentum of its sustainability and later transformed into Green City Concept, a strategic action plan and blueprint towards Putrajaya Green City by year 2025. According to Perbadanan Putrajaya [5], it is to further strengthen the existing programs and to develop them further as a scope for long-term initiatives. This Green City concept is defined as a city planned with the principles of sustainable development with programs and initiatives to preserve the environment and natural resources in the view to reducing the negative impact of human activities onto the environment.

Methodology:

In executing the community involvement in urban planning, the establishment of urban social profile is a must. Zainah Ibrahim [6] in her research suggested the primary background data such as demography, socio economic background and many related data is prerequisite and categorized into the various elements of community involvement and participation and determining the roles of the community in the planning process. Research by Micheal Pacione [7] suggested that in order to attain the goal of liveable city, a wide range of social economic and environmental needs must also be fulfilled and satisfied eventhough the Greeks thought that the good city was one in which all the free man could participate in face-to-face government.

Clearly, there is a strong relationship between the urban form and the liveability of the city based on study done by Noraziah Abdul Aziz *et al*, [8]. On the environmental aspect, different study has stated that by incorporating efforts to evaluate how human cultural elements interact to alter urban ecosystem processes. However, research by Caren B. Cooper *et al*, [9] suggested that although human capacity to change the environment is responsible for accelerated losses of ecosystem attributes and functions, ironically, this capacity to implement change can also be tapped to address conservation problems in residential and urban landscapes. According to study done by Jennifer Lynn Wardle [10], in the social and demographic trends in the future, social isolation and loneliness will be extremely challenging problem for planning as many seniors may be living in the city. The existing city planning however, inadequate for meeting their physical needs and also inadequate for meeting their social and emotional needs.

Social Impact Assessment study need to carry out in the case of planned city, Putrajaya to evaluate the sustainability of the city as well as to rectify and mitigate the social impacts. The social impact assessment includes population change, influx of temporary workers, relocation of individual and families, changing occupational opportunities, disruption in daily living and movement patterns, introduction of new or different social class, alteration in community structure, disruption in social networks, and impacts on public health resulting from programmes, projects, policies or plans. The sustainability concept must be seen as serving many social objectives, including those related to social impact aspects, concern for the disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, the requirement for community involvement and other people-centric concerns.

Conclusion:

In integrating and practicing sustainability throughout the urban planning and urban management process, the readiness of both community and the government is a must. Proper collaboration and commitment must be put in place as both entity shared the same aspiration and vision towards sustainable quality of living environment. According to Mohd Yazid Mohd Yunos *et al* [11], the nature of public participation is both to share and gain benefits for individuals, groups and the environment. It is often encouraged the determining factor and objectives must be outlined and monitored to ensure the achievement and successfulness of the sustainable objective.

The existing Government's regulations and programmes such as Town and Country Planning Act (Act 172), Local Government Act (Act 171), Local Agenda 21 Programme and Safe City Programme can be used as a guidance and framework to ensure that both urban managers and urban community clearly understand the sustainability concept outlined by the Government. It is also agreeable as research done by Fatimatul Azariah Safee *et al* [12] that great urban theory must consist the element of community life, sense and identity of place, livability, sidewalk and pedestrian, built environment connection, density size and environment.

Sustainability, however, is a long-term commitment, which is very difficult to achieve results in a short time period. Hence, it is necessary to assess and review it constantly to integrate continuous improvement in sustainability goals and vision of the city and ensure its effectiveness.

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