

Urban planning and the quality of life in Putrajaya, Malaysia

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Abstract

The overriding principle of urban planning is to provide the best quality of life for every one to live, work and play. The quality of life process offers an opportunity to have more input in the urban planning process. The underlying aim of the Total Planning Doctrine is to develop a community that should be able to meet changes in values within society and be able to contribute to improving the quality of life, especially in a new town development including Putrajaya. This paper is based on research that has explored the social and physical characteristics of Putrajaya in order to measure their relative impacts. A perception survey was carried out to evaluate the level of quality of life experienced by the residents. The analysis sought to uncover information relating to community life in Putrajaya which was specifically planned to provide a good quality of life for its inhabitants continuously until the completion of the development. The findings of this research could be used to address the future development of Putrajaya and also other towns. The findings will be useful in determining the physical planning and quality of life indicators for sustainable development. There is a need especially in Malaysia to have new clearer policies to guide and build sustainable environments.

Keywords: urban planning, quality of life, The Total Planning Doctrine, community life, sustainable environments.

1 Introduction

The Total Planning Doctrine 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. This is a paradigm shift that should enable physical



and social planning to be integrated with moral and spiritual values that will not separate economic growth from social needs and justice that will contribute towards sustainability and increase the quality of life for society. The Government of Malaysia has attempted to provide a policy to keep pace with the rapid economic growth so as to bring about a better quality of life to the people [1]. In this country, it is still not easy to determine the sustainability of a city as there are no standard criteria or measurement tool for urban sustainability. However, as for the urban sustainability concept is absorbed into The Total Planning and Development Principles.

The application of this Doctrine has been included in the development planning of Putrajaya [2]. The trend analysis sought to uncover information related to community life in Putrajaya which specifically planned to provide a good quality of life for their inhabitant continuously until the completion of Putrajaya development. The researcher intended to carry out a research in every three years. This is the second research. The first research was carried out in 2000, the first year of the re-settlement programme of the Federal Government administrative officers [3].

Traditionally, planning was based on physical planning criteria. However, with The Total Planning Doctrine, the future cities and new towns require a new set of planning standards and the final outcomes will be reflected in the design of human settlements. The Doctrine has embedded the underlying premise of attaining sustainable communities. Planning and development need to provide a living 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 underlying aim of the Doctrine is to develop a community who should be able to meet changes in values within society and be able to contribute to improving the quality of life, especially in new town development. The research is to explore the social and physical characteristics of Putrajaya in order to measure their relative impacts. A perception survey is to evaluate the level of quality of life experience by the residents. The findings of this research could be used to address the future development of Putrajaya and also other towns. Comments from the respondents were very encouraging and it was suggested that the research should continue. This is the first research in urban planning and the findings will be useful in determining the physical planning indicators for sustainable development.

2 Urban planning, sustainable development and the quality of life

The overriding principle of urban planning is to provide the best quality of life for every one to live, work and play. The quality of life process offers an opportunity to have more input in the urban planning process. Consideration of the social factors is pivotal for the success of urban development as a social city and this very much related to the concept of self containment. This can only be achieved by policies that take into account the society's needs and through the



building of balanced new settlements rather than the single-use-unbalanced extensions to existing settlements. There is a need for a broader policy for new town development which focuses on the interests of new large communities and their future [4]. The developers, future residents in the vicinity, local authority, state, national government and the larger public are influenced the character of the future growth throughout the state must be considered. If the new town developments were to provide a framework for better life and environment, the planning objectives and strategies must be truly inspired. There is a need to have new clearer policies to guide and build sustainable environments. Sustainability requires specific initiatives and needs to be coordinated. However, in some cases the environmentally desirable urban forms might be less desirable in economic and social terms. Wing [5], in his research on Hong Kong and Singapore, found that there is much to improve on the overall quality of life, cost of living, infrastructure, urban amenities, recreational facilities as well as culture and arts. Urban life is generated by the movement and living function provided by the urban centres which allow people to go anywhere in safety. Rogerson [6] stated that in the list of the world's most liveable cities and various quality of life assessments the highest feature from an urban area is security.

3 Background of Putrajaya

Putrajaya, a new administrative capital city for the Malaysian Federal Government was planned as early as 1981. Putrajaya was the first major intelligent garden city developed in Malaysia. The total area is 14,780 hectares where about 30 per cent of the area is for the administrative centre. The physical planning was to ensure that it is a sustainable city providing high quality living to its population. In 1996 the Federal Government set up Putrajaya Corporation to monitor the mega project implementation. Putrajaya Corporation Act 1995 (Act 536) came into effect on January 5, 1996 and listed the power of the Corporation which is to administer and manage the Putrajaya Corporation Area on behalf of the Federal Government. The corporation functions like a local authority to ensure the success of Putrajaya towards 2020 and beyond. When complete, Putrajaya is expected to have 570,000 population where 250,000 will live in the core area and the remaining 320,000 in the surrounding residential areas.

Putrajaya masterplan, based on the Garden City Concept, delineates the area into twenty precincts, of which five are in the Core Area included Government, Commercial, Civic, Mixed Development, and Sports and Recreational. The remaining 15 are precincts of various sizes also known as peripheral area. Twelve of the 15 precincts make up the residential neighbourhoods. Each unit was planned for some 3,000 dwellings or 15,000 population with a mix of low, medium and high cost housing and a variety of designs. A total of 67,000 homes of varying ranges, sizes, types and densities have been planned. Each neighborhood is equipped with necessary public facilities and amenities. Among the facilities provided in the residential areas are schools, hospitals, shopping centres, mosques, multipurpose halls, learning centres and parks. This fulfilled



the underlying principle of the doctrine towards more sustainable communities and a better quality of living environment.

4 Quality of life satisfactions in Putrajaya

This paper presents the data analysis and synthesis from Putrajaya's residents perception surveys. The results and the major findings pertaining to the quality of life in Putrajaya development are presented. The discussion in this paper focuses on the components of the built environment which contribute to the quality of life as experienced by the residents of Putrajaya. The research sought to uncover information related to community life in Putrajaya which was specifically planned to provide a good quality of life for their residents. The analysis is presented in two parts. Part one is on the general analysis that discusses the background of respondents and the overall perceptions, part two focuses on the quality of life achieved.

The quality of life in a particular area was a subjective issue and that each respondent may have different views or perceptions with regard to subject matter [7]. It is of theoretical interest to explore the relationship of the built environment and the satisfaction level of different living areas. Campbell [8] addressed the concept of quality of life as measuring the people's perceptions, evaluation and satisfaction. Leitmann [9] listed four reasons for assessing the quality of urban life:

- a. to make comparisons
- b. to identify problems
- c. to develop policies
- d. to monitor and evaluate the implementation of interventions.

For many researchers satisfaction was viewed as more definable, more plausible and more appropriate to measure and compare people's assessments on quality of life experience [10].

5 General analysis

This part is to demonstrate the results of data gathered from Section A of the original survey questionnaire. The data retrieved includes age, race, gender, length of stay, types of houses, employment by occupation, problems faced by respondents and suggestions for improvements. The summary of the results from the respondents to the survey questionnaire is tabulated and discussed below. The analysis was considered important because their perceptions would demonstrate the quality of life there as they experienced living there.

The research found that more than 78% of the total respondents were married. The majority of respondents were having a family size of four which are lower than the national standard of five. This is important in relation to the housing design and community facilities standards. It was found that majority of respondents were in the age group of between 20-40 years old. The distribution of respondents by working categories reflected that the distribution of Putrajaya residents and the highest were those in the Clerical and Related Workers



Category. The data was associated to the provision of the type of accommodation. In terms of duration of stay of the respondents in Putrajaya, it was found that majority were with two years. The highest percentage which was about 30 percent found to have been staying for two years.

6 Residents' perceptions

In this second part, the analysis is focused on Section B of the original survey questionnaires which retrieved information on respondents' perceptions. This is concerning the community facilities, infrastructure services, commercial facilities, open space and surrounding areas, feeling safe in the living area and safety of property, feeling about living in the particular new town, sense of neighbourhood community, adequate comfort in housing, mobility and public transportation service. Their perception is assumed to be an important indicator for a particular new town as an ideal or unsatisfactory place to live in. The respondents had freedom to make choices regarding the environment. The residential environment is important in the analysis of the quality of life because of the role it plays in human experience. This part of the research attempts to measure the effect of the environment on the respondents' life and to compile and compare the quality of life to be achieved in future years. Perceptual evaluation of these indicators were tabled to illustrate quality of life dimensions.

The findings from residents' perceptions may become one of the ways in getting people involved so as to ensure the continued success of their community. The survey questionnaire asked whether the respondents' perceptions were completely satisfactory, satisfactory, average, unsatisfactory and completely unsatisfactory with regards to the indicators used to quantify the quality of their living environment. Tables 1-9 show the findings of this research. The quality of life would increasingly play a significant role in various planning dimensions and would likely to be a complex one [11].

Table 1: Public facilities.

Public Facilities	Perceptions of respondents (residents)
Primary Schools	Completely satisfactory
Secondary Schools	Completely satisfactory
Smart Schools	Satisfactory
Religious Schools	Completely unsatisfactory
Higher Learning Institution	Completely unsatisfactory
Place of Worship	Completely satisfactory
Entertainment Centre	Unsatisfactory
Police Service	Satisfactory
Fire Service	Satisfactory
Hospital	Completely satisfactory
Clinic	Completely satisfactory



Table 1 shows five of the public facilities listed were rated as completely satisfactory by the respondents which include primary school, secondary school, place of worship, hospital and clinic. These were the five very important facilities been provided by the government to ensure good living environment for the communities [12]. They were satisfied with the provision of smart school, police service and also fire service. They rated entertainment center as unsatisfactory while both religious school and higher institution as completely unsatisfactory. These three facilities were not available during the time of research.

In many cases for place of worship and hospital were rated as completely satisfactory. Based on the findings there is a need to provide more and better facilities for the communities in order to change their perception to reach the completely satisfactory level.

As for shopping facilities the majority from respondents were unsatisfied with the provision of lower and higher order commercial services. (Please refer to Table 2). The shopping facilities especially for the lower order goods should be provided as early as the settlement. Majority of them had to go to Kajang, Bangi and other nearby towns for their daily goods. The research found that their living situation were harder after moving into Putrajaya because many of them were used to living in Kuala Lumpur where shopping facilities were abundance and within easy reach.

Table 2: Shopping facilities.

Shopping facilities	Perceptions of respondents
Lower order goods	Unsatisfactory
Higher order goods	Unsatisfactory

Table 3: Infrastructure facilities.

Infrastructure	Perceptions of Respondents
Electricity	Satisfactory
Water supply	Satisfactory
Telephone	Satisfactory

Infrastructure facilities (refer to Table 3), playground/open space facilities as shown in Table 4 and environment (refer to Table 5) were well served in Putrajaya and are at the satisfactory level.

Table 4: Playground and open space facilities.

Open space/playground	Perceptions of Respondents
Children's playground	Satisfactory
Public open space	Satisfactory
Other open spaces	Satisfactory
Landscaping	Satisfactory



Table 5: Environment.

Environment	Perceptions of respondents
Safety of self and properties	Satisfactory
Aesthetics of the surrounding area	Satisfactory
Cleanliness of the area	Satisfactory
Landmarks	Satisfactory
Signage	Satisfactory

Table 6: Social aspects.

Social aspects	Perceptions of respondents
Social activities	Average
Sense of community	Average
Feelings about living in Putrajaya	Satisfactory

Table 6 demonstrated that majority of respondents rated their social activities and sense of community to at the average level. This may be due to the length of stay, whereby most of them were new to each other and also lack of social programmes and activities being organized for the community. However, they were satisfied with the feeling about living in Putrajaya.

7 Conclusion

The research was intended to study the quality of life through the perceptions of those working in Putrajaya. They were residents of Putrajaya. The perception study of the quality of life were considered as a significant role in Putrajaya for being the first city development in the country to be guided by the Total Planning Doctrine. The findings showed that there are several planning and implementation issues need to be reviewed in order to achieve the planning goals and objectives which lead towards a better quality of life. It is recommended that more research to be done on how to integrate quality of life dimensions into overall Putrajaya development as well as another new developments. It is hoped that our planners could devise better strategies to enhance the quality of life in the communities.

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