



**THE MORPHOLOGY OF PLANNING AND ITS IMPACT ON
PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: A PRELIMINARY STUDY
OF THE CITY OF JOHORE BAHRU, MALAYSIA**

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THE MORPHOLOGY OF PLANNING AND ITS IMPACT ON PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE CITY OF JOHORE BAHARU, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

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In many respects, the City of Johor Baharu represents an urban area in which several of the panaceas of contemporary town planning theory have been tested and successfully implemented. Although urban poverty has not been fully eradicated, planners and policy-makers have continued to experiment with textbook prescriptions on service hierarchies, public housing and integrated transport to control urbanization pressures and channel growth, according to a planned spatial distribution of land-use activities. There are obviously numerous economic and environmental benefits. This paper has been inspired by a similar research which traces the morphology of development plans within a physical planning regime in the Singapore Republic. Due to the City's linkages in terms of physical location and development, a study carried out locally would help to guide similar long-term development towards the achievement of specific planning goals and also to monitor its impact on property development in and around the City areas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization in essence could be seen in as a positive manifestation of development and progress and there is little doubt that the rapid growth which is the characteristic of cities in the developing world has severely stretched the capabilities of many, giving rise to mass pre-development poverty and chronic housing shortages and problems. In this regard, the Johor Baharu City is not untypical, with a city centre characterized by obsolescence and dilapidation and, even more problematically, peppered with slums and squatter colonies; and yet, within the space of a single generation, the urban fabric has been completely

transformed to be one of Malaysia's most prosperous cities. This paper traces the morphology of the development plans that have helped to shape the city today. Physical planning has been employed to control the degenerative processes of urbanization so often characteristic of the free play of market forces, with urbanization pressures explicitly directed towards a preferred spatial pattern to ensure a more efficient locational arrangement for urban activities. Within such a controlled operational environment, and with almost unconstrained zeal, planners and policy-makers have also been able to experiment with idealistic textbook prescriptions in planning theory. The resulting economic and environmental benefits are a glowing testimony to a planning regime that has delivered all of its promises, including living standards that are now amongst the highest in the country.

The main aspect in Regional Development Strategies Plan in Johor focused at existing area of Johore Bahru city development. Obviously Johore Bharu city development area located near Singapore, Johor Bahru city would be affected by the rapid development of the country. The main objectives underlies in fast growth of the services sector. In addition, Johor Bahru has the potential to be developed as international education centre that is capable of supporting southern Singapore and Indonesia. With the implementation of several projects such as the enlargement of the Senai airport, development of new Technopolis in the area of UTM Skudai would internationalized the town of Johor Bahru. Consistently the population living in urban areas is increasing rapidly according to the Malaysian Housing and Residential Survey within 1980-1991 estimated at 5.1% average rate of population growth concluded to be the highest population growth compared with every town in Johore. It is often assumed that urban growth is caused by in-migration from rural to urban areas. However natural population increase and changing definitions of urban boundaries are the main components of population growth in many cities (Sethuraman 1997). In fact, increased urbanization has been accompanied by increased urban poverty and manpower. Consequently the needs of the challenge to reduce existing poverty, while extending basic physical and financial services and increasing human resources needs by creating employment opportunities for a rapidly increasing population as adopted from National Development Policies and vision 2020 purposed by government.

2. PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

City development strategies are grounded in current development thinking, which in turn draws on past experience. With this in mind, this section of the literature review looks at the several approaches to city development plan with particular reference to the last 40 years. The main concern is with city development strategy consists physical planning and main development strategy. Reinvestigation of Planning and Development State of Johore in physical planning revealed that Concentrated Dispersal Strategy had obtained by State Government as a framework of planning and development in Johore. This strategy covered by two concepts of Regional Development Planning whereas Polarization and center of growth. In addition State Government of Johor via Operational Master Plan (1996) formulated several development strategies involved Structure Transformation through industrialization, Modernization in agriculture and existing well-built services sector and Globalization in development towards international city as they searched for increasing development in services sector and high tech industry. With the establishment of technology park in Skudai located close to UTM would be enlarged as a largest development instead of high-tech industrialization with supports by scientific community. More efforts were to be focused on the greater provision of higher education on science and technology and also on research and development in order to develop the knowledge based economy.

The role of cities as drivers of the national economies is already great and is likely to rise with increased urbanisation and globalisation. Recognising this, Cities Development Strategies initiatives aim to achieve economic growth by maximising the benefits to be achieved through developing a city's comparative advantage (GHK 2000). City regions are perceived as the fundamental spatial units of the global economy and as political actors on the world stage while major cities have found new roles as world trade and banking centers and act as command points of the world economy (Sassen 1994). Besides the current development in neighboring Singapore has obviously affected the state's economy. As of June 2001, Singaporeans formed the biggest number of investors in Johore and made up of almost 90 % of tourist arrivals (Property Market Report 2003).

While the emphasis on economic growth remains, more recent CDSs have taken a more explicitly poverty-focused approach. With the context of current development policies, New Development Policy (DPB) set by Malaysian Government in the context of long term vision of development strategies intended to achieve economic development in terms of poverty reduction. The most important strategies launched by government through these policies are:

1. Redeveloping poverty reduction strategies toward poverty reduction among a very poor civilian and relative poverty
2. Concentration to manpower existence and development rapidly in trading and industrial sector for Bumiputra as an effective strategy for increasing participation of Bumiputra
3. Enhancing private sector involved in rearrangement process of residential by creating a larger opportunities
4. Focusing at human resources development as a primary target to accomplish enlargement objective with fairly dissemination.

The emphasis was to strengthen the process of restructuring society in order to correct the economic disparities among the major ethnic groups. The main process in restructuring the society, so as to meet one of the objectives, was the government's efforts to urbanise the Malays. They were encouraged to migrate into urban areas. This resulted in tremendous need for housing in urban areas and the creation of new town as reflected the population threshold levels for the provision of various types of facilities.

3. DISCUSSION – PLANNING ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The rapid economic growth has given rise to new planning issues. The introduction of the Town and Country planning Act in 1976 ensures that uniformity of laws and policies relating to town and country planning in local authority areas. As for the 21st century, the planners are facing with the challenge of not only ensuring continued economic growth but also creating a living environment embracing the concept of

sustainable 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.

In Johore, land use planning for all property developments were guided by the planning standards and planning guidelines applied by the related state and local planning authorities. Since there were no specific planning standards or planning guidelines for new towns development, the same planning standards were used in the planning of the new towns by the State Economic Development Corporations during the planning approval process. The planning standards were to make sure that new towns development should be relatively well self-contained and self-sufficient in terms of the facilities provided. 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 socialize with others. Research into the urban quality of life of these new towns is aimed at providing useful insights of the contested and complex nature of concepts of developments such as community, land use distribution, rules and guidelines, places of interest, infrastructure, homes, community facilities, safety and other attributes.

Since the implementation of the New Economic Policy in the early 1970's, urban fringe new towns were more rapidly developed. Most of them have been developed along the fringes of large urban areas such as Johor Bharu city and town. These urban fringe new towns are developed by the private and the public sectors. There are several new towns developed by the private sector and the public sectors throughout the state. These new towns are the property development projects with the status of completed, on going development or have obtained approval but was postponed to take off. The public sector exercises direct power for natural resources allocation through a series of public investments such as those undertaken by the State Economic Development Corporations. The State Economic Development Corporations have played an important role in promoting urban development in the respective states, including the implementation of new town development.

However rapidly development in property development project would caused a several impacts to development environments. Uncontrolled development of land use caused by greater provision of urbanization and economy development seemed to be a greater impact on environment, traffic, esthetic value and quality of life in residential area. Conflict Rezoning and Sectioning have made planning an issue for public discussion, media publicity, and professional conferences, but debates have tended to focus on planning problems, such as improper land use factor as they impact to environment by operation of plant, workshop and others industrial unit, development pressures caused by rapid urbanization as they impact to development change of farming area to housing scheme and development of newly cleared forest areas for agriculture or in building infrastructure in mountainous or hilly terrain. There would be an effective approaches set by state government as they proposed for preventing problems at every stage of planning development with fully consideration and conscientious way in total coordination particularly in projects approval with largest scale of development. The rearrangement and reposition of contradicted land use activities such as workshops, factories and others industrial unit should be revised in order to improve quality of life.

These are among the terms which have been employed in research on the quality of life (Rogerson:1999; Edwards:1993). The impact of the comprehensive planning of any property development including the new towns on the social life of the future residents ended at the design stage. The growth magnetism of urban life is not only due to technological and industrial growth but also due to the opportunities that the town offers for commercial advancement, educational facilities, recreational space and community facilities. As the rate of urbanization increases the urban community also goes through a state of constant transition, the change being not merely industrial but also social quality of life. The improving standards and higher level of living of the urban community should bring higher quality in the provision of services. Rabinowitz (1988:p.249) state that 'economic and social forces affecting real estate development require developers and planners to take rigorous approach to all aspects of a project'.

4. CONCLUSION

There are many more issues on planning development in Johore Bharu city that needs to be examined. The various satisfaction levels of the urbanization achieved by the residents in the city is evident. There is also evidence on the relationship between the physical characteristics of the city and the quality of life achieved. The creation of new development in the city by the State Economic Development Corporations was to satisfy the national policy where the social service objectives supersede the profit making objectives, and this explains partly the slow growth of the other new towns.

The city is intended to provide a more pleasant and efficient urban environment than in existing towns. Land use distributions, transportation systems, housing, employment, shopping, community facilities, open spaces as well as environmental considerations could be planned in relation to one another from the early stage. The ways in which the urban quality of life is influenced by planning activities at this early stage that bring about changes in the physical reality are of profound importance in town development.

Planning in Johor Baharu is essentially a top-down process, with the political hierarchy setting goals which the state bureaucracy then translates into policies and programmes for subsequent implementation. In this way, social and economic change has been carefully shaped to ensure political stability and continuing national prosperity. This is the institutional context in which physical planning has been accepted as a significant instrument of national economic development and employed to provide a structured framework for the unrelenting pace of the country's modernisation programme. Some commentators have questioned the resulting urban design concepts, suggesting that these have produced a drab and colourless environment lacking in any indigenous expression of the local culture. When compared with the squalor that preceded self-government, however, such criticism appears almost churlish, and any objective evaluation of planning in Johor Baharu must necessarily acknowledge its undoubted success. Slums have been cleared and the urban fabric completely transformed, with almost the entire population rehoused within the space of a single generation. Against the backdrop of a such massive relocation of population, planners and policy makers have not only been able to achieve all of their key spatial objectives, but also to experiment in implementation with a range of more

idealistic policy prescriptions usually only found in textbooks to optimise the effectiveness of the strategic intent and ensure sustainability.

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