

CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTING LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES IN BANGSAR, KUALA LUMPUR

Teng, A.S. and Salim, A.*

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Design & Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: azizahsalim.upm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Liveability refers to the health and social quality of an area as perceived by all stakeholders in study area. Bangsar is a residential area which comprised of different level of social classes. Therefore liveability level in Bangsar communities also varies due to its existing condition of public realm in different areas and diversity group of people. Hence implementation of liveable communities in Bangsar is not achievable as a whole. Every community in Bangsar has its own common barrier for implementing liveable communities. Therefore there is a need to examine existing community liveability and common barrier for achieving desired level of liveability in Bangsar. The important key elements in liveable community such as physical structures, natural features and service provisions are examined to understand what constitute a liveable community. The urban morphology and survey research method are used to identify and evaluate the liveability in Bangsar's community. It is carried out to examine the challenges for creating liveable communities and real needs of the residents towards liveable community in Bangsar. The outcome of this study is potential to use as a resource that can assist the urban planning industry in Kuala Lumpur to incorporate health and social outcome in new proposed development.

Keywords: *liveability, liveable communities, physical structures, natural features, service provision*

1 INTRODUCTION

Bangsar (Figure 1) is an affluent residential suburb on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur with clusters of low cost and high cost residential areas. The earliest settlement in Bangsar is formed by railway workers living next to the Kuala Lumpur to Klang railway track and rubber estate workers. The residential areas along Jalan Kurau, Jalan Tenggiri and Jalan Sepat are believed to be the earliest housing development in Bangsar. Nowadays Bangsar grew to include young professionals of various races including Malays, Chinese, Indian and expatriates. Community liveability is a global hot topic to be discussed nowadays and used to evaluate the general health and social wellbeing of communities in an area. It directly influences people who live in, work in or visit an area. Various influencing factors in developing a liveable and healthy community are explored to identify the issues and approaches for sustaining the wellbeing of individual and communities in Bangsar.

Community liveability in Bangsar is affected by its existing condition in public realm which includes public facilities, transportation, land use zoning, opportunity for recreation and others. Every community in a certain area as Bangsar has its own common barrier for implementing liveable communities. Bangsar comprised of communities with different levels of

liveability in pockets of residential area. Therefore implementation of liveable communities in Bangsar is not holistically achievable. A community with higher liveability in an area is believed to improve public health and safety, and it can increase property value and social activity. A real liveable community should promote human health and wellbeing by encouraging the development of environments that provide rich social, economic and environmental benefits. Therefore there is a need to investigate existing community liveability and common barriers for implementing liveable communities in Bangsar.

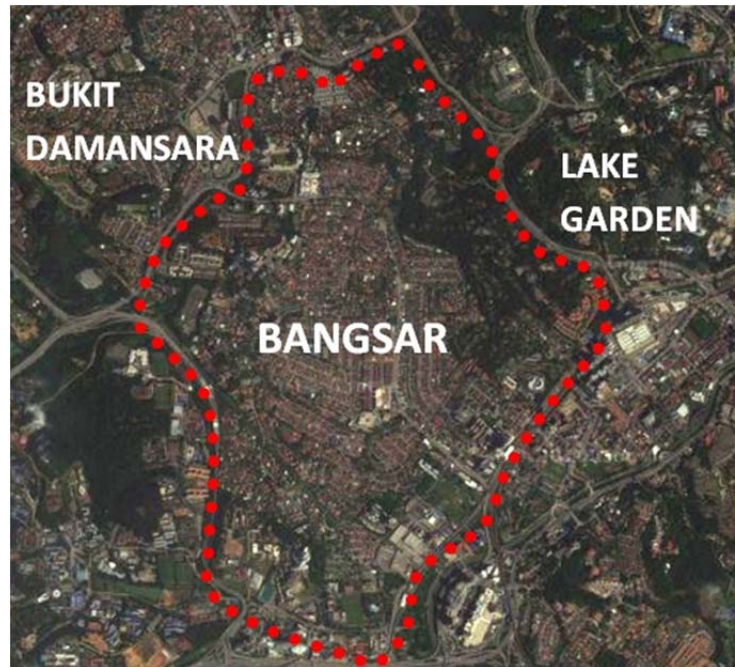


Figure 1: Location of Bangsar
(Adapted from: <http://maps.google.com.my>)

The main aim of this study is to examine the reason why Bangsar failed in implementing liveable communities as a whole. This study is also focus on the challenges for creating liveable communities in Bangsar and what constitute a liveable community. Key elements and principles in liveable communities are needed to be study to understand the frameworks and guidelines for evaluation on the liveability in Bangsar's communities. The real needs of the residents in studied area toward liveable community are also examine in this study. The common barriers that Bangsar's communities confront to create a liveable community are needed to be examined in this study.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Liveability is most often used to describe the diverse aspects of society, surroundings, and shared experiences that shape a community (Elizabeth L.S, 2012). It is the various factors to improve a community's quality of life and wellbeing which is including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities (Elizabeth L.S, 2012). However, the subjective nature of quality of life and wellbeing of people adds to the imprecision of a definition for liveability. Moreover, every community circumstances and resident profile in certain area are unique; therefore the definitions of liveability are varying due to different response of community members.

A liveable community that recognizes its own unique identity and places a high value on the planning processes that help manage growth and change to maintain and enhance its community character (Diane G, 2005). A real healthy and liveable community should promote human health and wellbeing by encouraging the development of environments that provide rich social, economic and environmental benefits. Due to the research of "Building Liveable Communities in the Lower Hunter Region" by Wells V. et al. (2007), she identified there are four key elements of liveable community for example physical structures, natural features, service provision and social principles. In a healthy and livable communalities or

neighbourhood, the natural environment is contributes to our sense of place, sense of community, and feeling of attachment or belonging, all of which are health promoting and each impacts on people's health, enjoyment and general wellbeing (Wells V. et al., 2007). This shows that positive health impacts of the natural environment which highlights its importance of creating neighbourhoods or communities that are both healthy and livable for the people within.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study site will focus on the residential area and public spaces in Bangsar Utama (Figure 2). There are five elements in liveable communities to be measured to identify the liveability in the studied area, such as public space with community facilities, pedestrian and bicycle paths, green open spaces, public transportation and medical services. Different research methods are used to identify and measure the availability of different key element in liveable communities for the studied area.

Urban Morphology is the study of the form of human settlements and the process of their formation and transformation. It is used to understand the spatial structure and character of a town area by examining the patterns of its component. In addition, it is also used to study on urban fabric which discern on the underlying structure of the built landscape. It is emphasizes on the study of relationships between components of the studied area.

Urban morphology method is used to identify the location of activity spots, and availability, connection and distance of public space, pedestrian and bicycle paths, green open spaces, public transit and local basic services (health and education) from the residential area. The mapping study is carried out to indicate the location of the studied elements and it's accessibility for people in Bangsar Utama. In addition, observation is part of this research methodology for collecting the data such as the physical characteristic and existing condition of public space with community recreational facilities, pedestrian and bicycle paths, green open spaces,

public transit station, recreation sites and local basic services in the studied area. It is also tend to observe and understand the relationship of the built environment with behaviour of people and how people use of the facilities or spaces provided. Furthermore, the common barrier for implementing liveable communities is also need to be observed and record in this method.

Survey is a systematic method of collecting data from a population of interest. It tends to be quantitative in nature and aims to collect information from a sample of the population such that the results are representative of the population within a certain degree of error. The purpose of a survey is to collect quantitative information, usually through the use of a structured and standardized questionnaire. Surveys can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed.

Survey method is carry out to understand the efficiency and existing condition of public spaces with facilities, pedestrian paths, green open spaces, public transit, medical services in the perspective of residents in the studied area. The survey is conducted by questionnaires on the target groups who are residents at Bangsar Utama and Bukit Bangsar. This method is also leading to understand the real need of the residents in their living environments for creating a liveable community.

The two types of research methodologies which are urban morphology and survey methods are only implement and focus at residential area (Pangsapuri Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad and Flat Sri Pahang) , public spaces and commercial area at Bangsar Utama. Flat Sri Pahang residential area is comprised of 3 blocks of flats with 16 storeys each at Bukit Bangsar whereas Pangsapuri KTMB is comprised of 3 block of flats with 14 storey each at Bangsar Utama. Malays make up the majority of the population and minority of the population is India. The key elements in liveable communities that are needed investigate for evaluating liveability of particularly at Bangsar Utama. The target group for survey are residents in this area.



Figure 2: Study site- Flat Sri Pahang and Pangsapuri KTMB.
(Adapted from: <http://maps.google.com.my>)

Data collection was carried out through two procedures. Firstly, the land use zoning and the location of public spaces with facilities, green open spaces, pedestrian and bicycle paths, public transportation and local basic services (school and health) were identified in mapping study. The linkages and distance between housing to that studied common spaces were also carried out in the mapping study. Existing condition and other findings on studied elements in research site are needed to be observed and record.

Secondly, data collection was through survey method by questionnaire applied on the respondents at Bangsar Utama. The spot areas for conducting this survey will be focus at residential area such as Pangsapuri KTMB and Flat Sri Pahang, commercial area such as restaurants and grocery stores, and public transit station. The respondents who are participate in this survey method are select randomly regardless of age, gender, race and others to ensure equal chance of being selected.

The data collected in mapping study and observation through urban morphology method is to identify the availability, accessibility, connectivity

between each other. The data collected is further use to evaluate and analyse on the existing liveability of the communities in Bangsar Utama. The evaluations on the liveability are also conducted through analyse on the observations and findings of the existing condition of studied elements. This survey method was to analyse and understand the relationship between studied elements provided in common spaces with the activities of the respondents. The level of satisfaction, efficiency and adaptability of the studied elements can be identified through this survey by questionnaire.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to general observation and mapping study, every liveability indicators that are studied to investigate liveability in study site have its own barrier for achieving desired liveability level for the communities. In addition, the studied key elements in liveable communities are mutually support each other for achieving level of liveability in study site. For example, public transportation system in Bangsar Utama is generally meet the resident's need and the transit stations are located within walking distance from flats, however it's accessibility are affected by the poor condition of pedestrian paths.

Furthermore, the provision of green open spaces are being restricted by the compact developments of residential blocks and become a forgotten issues while earliest stage of housing planning for both flats. Low quality of walking environments especially surrounding flats area are definitely decrease the liveability level of the communities. The residents are seemed to be accustomed to the community recreational facilities that should be under maintenance and improvement (See Figure 3). They are being adapted to the suboptimal and unsafe conditions of the community recreational facilities and pedestrian paths that are available in their neighbourhood area. The built environments are significantly affected the residents' behaviour and the growth pattern of daily activities based on general observation on site.

The survey revealed that different studied elements as liveability indicators for evaluation on the liveability of communities in study site are less unity and inconsistent in performance due to the perception of the residents. Respondents most commonly noted community recreational facilities as the most important elements of a livable community. Various liveability indicators for the quality of community recreational facilities should be taken into account during survey.



Figure 3: Lack of maintenance on the pavement and refuse area

However, the provision of community recreational facilities in both flats are insufficient to cater for the size of population therefore it is failed to enhance liveability of the communities in study site. Hence the survey on the importance level of community recreational facilities as rated by the residents can be act as reference while addressing issues of shortcoming on it. In addition, the findings from the survey on existing pedestrian paths reflected that it is pedestrian unfriendly due to its poor connectivity and failed to encourage people to walk to their destination (Figure 4). Existing pedestrian paths are one of the common barrier for implementing livable communities and health promoting activities since the path's condition made the walking environment more uncomfortable and treacherous over time. Overall conditions of pedestrian paths are needed to be improved to create pleasing and safe sidewalks for the residents.



Figure 4: Poor condition of pedestrian paths in Bangsar Utama

Green open spaces are also insufficient (Figure 5) to cater for resident's need in participating outdoor recreational activities for promoting healthy lifestyle. Similarly for existing pedestrian paths, it's shortcomings are need to be take into account to achieve the desired level of liveability as perceived by the residents. Elements which are important in improving the existing condition of green open spaces can be carried out in accordance with resident's needs and expectation.



Figure 5: Lack of green open spaces and abandoned green open spaces in Bangsar Utama

In general, the residents in study site are public transport dependent group and satisfied with the services provided by public transport system in Bangsar Utama. This revealed that public transportations are successfully playing its role in creating liveable communities in Bangsar Utama by supporting the resident's daily activities. Medical services are also a key role for implementing liveable communities and promoting public health. There is lack of government medical services at Bangsar Utama but efficiency of Light Rail Train (LRT) provides another alternative solution on it therefore the residents are willing to travel to Kerinchi area obtain medical care in Kerinchi One Malaysia Clinic. Furthermore, the evolution of private medical services in Bangsar Utama has not been a direct path of increased generosity toward the communities in both flats.

The following subsections provide summary of survey results. The scales of level of importance used in the following tables are as follows: 1) Less important, 2) Slightly important, 3) Important, 4) Fairly important, 5) Very Important.

Table 1: Key elements in livable communities

Importance level in creating livable communities	Elements
1	Community Facilities (playground, sport facilities, shelter, public toilet and street furniture)
2	Green open spaces
3	Public transportation
4	Medical services
5	Pedestrian paths

Community facilities are the most important elements in creating liveable communities in the perspective of the residents in study site. The community facilities are included playground, sporting equipment, shelter, public toilet and street furniture in public open spaces. It is important to provide a basic platform to ensure residents have the best opportunity to involve in

community activities and encourage interaction between neighbours hence enhance social cohesion. Green open spaces are the second important elements for implementing a liveable community. A green open space is promotes active living by providing a natural environment for outdoor physical activities and slow down residents from hectic pace of urban life. Public transportation is making communities from different group people such as old adult, low income group, disabled and people banned from driving to be able to travel and access to their destination. It is less important as compared with green open spaces and community facilities because of the automobile dependent phenomena in urban living therefore public transportation might not only choice of transportation mode for residents.

Community recreational facilities in study are not sufficient for the residents. This is because the existing community facilities are not enough to cater for the large population of the residents. The ratio of quantity of provided community recreational facilities is not in line with the size of population in both flats thus failed to meet local needs. 57% of all respondents agreed that they had easy access to public spaces with community recreational facilities in their neighbourhood area. Although the provided community recreational facilities are not sufficient to cater for the residents, however it is within the walking distance from flats and convenient for residents to reach. . Majority of respondents are stay in Pangsapuri KTMB and Flat Sri Serdang more than 20 years, they are in a situation of chronically being used to the condition and quality of existing community facilities. This may influence on the result of the respondent's satisfaction level on community facilities.

Table 3: Importance Level of public spaces with community facilities

Importance level of community recreational facilities in public spaces	Elements
1	Playground
2	Sport facilities
3	Public toilets
4	Shelter
5	Street furniture

Majority of residents are believed that the pedestrian paths play an important role in leading them walk to their destination, however the existing condition of pedestrian path in study site is failed to meet the needs of major residents. Pedestrian paths in study site are hard to get the residents where they want to go and creating the need for many to drive to activity spots rather than walk. Disjointed paths and poor condition of pedestrian paths are affected the connectivity of paths to others destination. Most of residents considered it is to be improved. Existing condition of pedestrian paths are not support the daily activities of residents and they had greater difficulty accessing to activity spots and facilities via walking in Bangsar Utama.

Table 4: Importance level of elements along pedestrian paths

Elements	
1	Covered by roof
2	Street lighting
3	Disabled access
4	Tree
5	Barrier from road
6	Zebra crossing

Flat Sri Serdang have no proper green open spaces for the outdoor recreational activities, the only public open spaces that are provided for sport activities are finished with concrete flooring and lack of greenery. Whereas Panggsapuri KTMB is provided with green open space which equipped with recreational facilities such as playground and badminton court, however the size of area is small for the usage of overall population of residents. the green open spaces in their residential area are failed to meet the basic needs of residents to engage with outdoor physical activities for improving health and enhance social interaction. The existing condition of green open spaces are not facilitate in promoting active living communities by providing good quality of open spaces for resident's physical activities. Hence, the majority of residents in both flats have lost their opportunity in high exposure of physical activities while enjoy natural environment for

relaxation. While respondents reported difficult access to green open spaces, they also indicated that there is no proper pedestrian pathways lead them to green open spaces. It's accessibility may also influenced by age of the respondents especially elderly above 50 years old.

Table 5: Importance level of elements for green open spaces to encourage outdoor recreation activities

Elements	
1	Size of area
2	Safety
3	Tree
4	Street furniture
5	Network of paths

When correlated by age, younger demographics are more likely to use public transport. Those 50 years of age and over however are most likely to use own transport. This highlights the importance of adequate public transport system and accessibility to transit station for elderly to encourage them utilizes public transport. LRT is the preferable option of public transport as compared to buses especially students. Overall, majority of respondents appeared to be dependent on public transport as their transportation mode. However, minority of respondents are dissatisfied on the public transport system or appeared to be dependent on automobiles especially seniors.

Most of respondents are thought public transports in Bangsar Utama are operate on time. While minority of respondents reported the unpunctuality of public transports, they mentioned that buses are always not operate on time whereas LRTs are operate on time as compared to buses. Younger and those in middle age respondents were both more positive than elderly with age of above 50 regarding access to public transports from their flats. The results of easy accessibility to public transport stations are due to the strategic location of Bangsar LRT station which is within 10 minutes walking distance from both flats. User comfort and safety are considered

well implemented in public transport system in Bangsar Utama which perceived by the respondents. Availability of facilities in transit station such as waiting area, railing, ramp and others have significant influences on the user comfort level and safety especially for elderly and those with disabilities.

There is only a government health clinic at Bangsar Utama which is government clinic for pregnant women and children at Flat Sri Pahang. It is only served for women and children but not for general medical cases. Existing government health clinic in Bangsar Utama was moved to Kerinchi area and named as Kerinchi One Malaysia Clinic. Therefore 62% respondents who did not use government medical services in Bangsar Utama reported that their households are used medical services at Kerinchi One Malaysia Clinic.

Most of the medical services that are available in Bangsar Utama are private medical services. Both Flat Sri Pahang and Pangsapuri KTMB communities are comprised of lower and middle income groups. The results show that the private healthcare services are expensive for the residents because they are profit-driven centres. In addition, the clusters of private clinic in Bangsar Utama are appeared to be served for other Bangsar communities but not mainly served for the communities in Flat Sri Pahang and Pangsapuri KTMB. Most of respondents agreed they had easy access to medical services in Bangsar Utama from their flats. There are six private medical offices are clustered at Bangsar Utama commercial area and within 10 minutes walking distance from both flats. Another government clinic for pregnant women and children are just located at Flat Sri Pahang which is convenient for the residents in both flats especially pregnant women.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nowadays community liveability is an important issue which is related to general health and social wellbeing of communities. Everyone wants to live in a liveability community and it is significantly shaped by the built environment and social quality of an area. Bangsar is residential area which

comprised of different social classes. Therefore liveability level in Bangsar communities is also vary due to its existing condition of public realm in different areas and diversity group of people. Hence implementation of liveable communities in Bangsar is not achievable as a whole. Every community in a certain area as Bangsar has its own common barrier for implementing liveable communities. Therefore there is a need to examine existing community liveability and common barrier for achieving desired level of liveability in Bangsar.

The study was involved urban morphology and survey research method to measure existing liveability in Bangsar's community and common barriers for carry out livable communities. The study site was setting at Flat Sri Pahang and Pangsapuri KTMB in Bangsar Utama. Observation and mapping study are conducted to investigate existing condition, connectivity, accessibility and availability of five studied key elements in creating livable communities. The relationship of the built environment and how people use of facilities or spaces provided are also observed and recorded in the study. Survey method is carry out to examine the efficiency and existing condition of five studied key elements in creating liveable communities as perceived by the residents in study site. The real needs of residents in their living environment to achieve desired level of liveability are also investigated by survey on the residents.

Based on the results from both methods, the studied key elements in liveability communities are existed to mutually support and affect each other in effort on achieving level of liveability in study site. However, every studied element has its own barriers and failed in achieving livable communities as whole. Based on general observation, the residents are accustomed and adapted to the suboptimal conditions of the existing facilities and services on study site such as green open spaces, pedestrian paths and community facilities. In fact the poor condition of its built environment is significantly shaped the growth pattern of resident's daily activities. The survey revealed that the performances of five studied elements in evaluation of community liveability are inconsistent and less unify. Public transportation and medical services are both general fulfilled residents' need however there is barriers existed and influence its quality to

achieve desired level of liveability. In addition, low quality of the majority of studied elements such as green open spaces, pedestrian paths and community recreational facilities at study site are definitely decrease the quality of life and thus diminish the liveability level of the communities.

People walk more when the paths are connected them to key destination therefore it is crucial for enhancing the design of the pedestrian paths and ensure continuity of walking routes. Materials or finishes on the footpaths should consider on pedestrian's safety during walking journey. Paths should have kerb ramps to ensure those with disabilities and elderly are able to follow the path. Furthermore, the location of paths have to be enhance by established the shortest route and linkage between residential areas and activity spots area to enable residents to walk between them. The paths are also need to be unobstructed by parking of motorcycles which are affected the continuity of pedestrian flow. In order to enhance the usability and aesthetic of paths, trees which have large canopy to provide shade are needed to lining the paths so that people are more likely to walk.

Moreover, the access to public transport is needed to be enhanced to assist residents to meet the minimum requirement for physical activity. Public transport routes should provide within comfortable walking distance of 300 to 500 metres from flats. The pedestrian access to reliance public transport is also facilitates by provide direct path to transport stops and improve existing paths and streetscape around public transit stations.

Design to increase use of green open spaces are crucial to increase the interaction between residents and natural environment thus slow down residents from hectic pace of urban life. It is important to ensure there is an adequate amount of green open spaces to engage residents in outdoor recreational activities toward active living. Safety in green open spaces is also need to be take into consideration while providing a good quality of natural environment for residents.

The quality of neighbourhood aesthetic and social wellbeing of residents are able to by providing adequate amount of community recreational facilities for a range and combination of uses and ages. Quantity of community

facilities and size of area of public spaces with community recreational facilities have to be consistent with the size of population in the area to avoid insufficiency and decrease in resident's recreational opportunities and social engagement. Government medical services are important to improve access of lower income group to comprehensive, quality health care services for achievement of health equity for residents. Disparities and limited access to health service are needed to be avoided since it negatively affecting resident's quality of life. Barriers to medical services such as high cost and lack of insurance coverage are need to take into account while improving public health.

This research is potentials to use as a resource that can assist the urban planning industry in Kuala Lumpur to incorporate health and social outcome in proposed development. It is also can be acts as a guide for local government and health professionals interested in assessing the liveability of community in new proposed development. Improving community liveability in urban area is an important concern for governments and private sectors nowadays. Hence it is important to carry out opportunity of being able to deliver positive health and social wellbeing outcome to the community.

REFERENCES

- Wells, V., Licata, M., Mackenzie, A., Gillham, K., Hodder, R., & Butterworth, I. (2007). *Building Liveable Communities in the Lower Hunter Region*. Hunter New England Population Health.
- Jon Sadler, A Bates, J. Hales and P. James. 2010. *Bringing cities alive: the importance of urban green spaces for people and biodiversity*. Cambridge University Pr, Pages: 230.
- Giovanni S., Raffaele L., Mirilia B., Giuseppe C. 2006. Comparison of two different approaches for assessing the psychological and social dimensions of greenspaces. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*, Volume 5, Issue 3, Pages 121-129.
- Anna Chiesura. 2003. The role of urban parks for the sustainable city. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Volume 68, Issue 1, Pages 129-138.
- Sue W., Marnie B. 2008. *A Strategic Framework for Creating Liveable New Communities*. McCaughey Centre, University of Melbourne.

- David A., Dina B., Diane G, William A., James A. M., Barbara A. N., Søren D. S., Ellen V., Daniel W. Livability 101. The American Institute of Architects.
- Vera P. 2011. Capital Commons Quarterly: The Dynamics of Aging and Our Communities, Issue No. 2, Vol. 5. Albany Guardian Society, Albany, New York.
- Todd L. 2011. Evaluating Public Transportation Health Benefits. Victoria Transport Policy Institute.
- Mark K., Dean B., Neha G., Jacqueline L., Parul M. 2005. Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide. Arizona State University, Herberger Center for Design Excellence.
- Rama U. P., Yogesh K. G., Alka B. 2010. A Framework for Evaluating Residential Built Environment Performance for Livability. Institute of Town Planners, India Journal 7 - 4, 12 - 20.