

EDITORIAL NOTES

ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability. The dictionary defines this term as “to maintain or endure” while the UN Brundtland Commission elaborated the term sustainability as a development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (2010). For so long this vital concept has been discussed and this time we will look into its relation to the environment as a whole; covering ecological issues, its management and policies; and specifically on the urban environment; mainly urban planning, neighbourhood and community, housing the poor and economic attributes.

Starting with the needs for coordinating sustainable urban infrastructure between society and the natural environment, which is essential in ensuring their endeavours are more compatible with the interests of environmental, economic and social aspects, the triple bottom line of sustainability. Another method of creating a balance between community and the environment is through integrating renewable energy with micro architecture that focuses on healthier sanitation, higher security, improvement of comfort, increase of knowledge and sustainability; while the aspect of technologies encompasses energy, clean water generation, waste management as well as a living space that is secure, comfortable and yet remains similar to the natural habitat. Following the Sustainable Living in Malaysia (SLiM) model,

the research hopes to improve the efficiency of rural development. Meanwhile, a research on the application of the circular economy to Malaysia, which is a concept of minimizing excessive consumption by re-using and recycling spent materials, seeks to explore the potential and the challenges of applying this method and whether this is the best approach for Malaysia. Moving into sustainable recreational, there is a need for local involvement in ensuring a more sustainable development of recreational forest landscape. This is to assure that they understand the rationale behind the planning decisions that have been, are and will be implemented, and for the authorities agency to understand their needs. This could potentially lead towards local economic benefits, active citizenship, and raised awareness of the locals’ and long term sustainability of ecological and aesthetic values.

Turning now to the quality of public open spaces, which is another vital component of a sustainable built environment. Our quality of life significantly depends on open spaces; therefore, a comprehensive public open space categorization is required in preparing sustainable policies and fulfilling the development of structure plan. This could be achieved by using classification system for Malaysia. Apart from that, a study has been conducted to analyse the state of existing selected public spaces in the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Region against a set of recognised universal evaluative criteria for tropical

design followed by identifying a set of measures to remedy existing deficiencies. This is to ensure that development no longer neglect the local traditions, the natural settings and the local tropical climate which has a detrimental impact on the surrounding public space. One way to improve the public urban open spaces is by introducing vertical greenery as public arts in these areas. . This is due to various benefits gained by implementing vertical greenery in terms of the aesthetic, economic and environment aspect. A researcher explored on the experts' views regarding the integration of vertical greenery as public art in Malaysian cities and the findings revealed that all experts in the study believed that there is high potential for vertical greenery to be integrated as public arts in urban spaces.

In regards to ecological issues, a study has been conducted on how to restore the Tajan River in Iran through an ecological design approach. This is due to the current urban river development and riverfront maintenance projects that have neglected the natural organisms and urban ecosystem. Ecological approaches and suggestions were made to rehabilitate the health of the river's ecosystems and the proposed approaches may affect the ecosystem's balance and ecological improvement of Tajan River. Besides from that, an understanding of a practical and ethical issue of post-disaster research is crucial in handling disaster response after a natural disaster. This is especially

challenging when faced with a great number of victims such as in highly dense urban areas. However, designing a research for post-disaster shelter and settlement is not without challenges. Therefore, a support-tool has to be developed based on the issues discussed.

The final section of this preface will now summarize on the assessment methods used in relation to sustainability. Recreational and tourism industry may have a great impact on sustainable development of a country in which one of the important components is the arrangement of the physical environment. An assessment has been made on the existing conditions of short-term vacation in three agglomerations of Kazakhstan and the findings can be used to enhance the current architectural and planning practice. Another assessment looks into the public involvement in urban governance where Putrajaya were chosen as a case study. The study assesses the social impact of this new planned city of Malaysia 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. This is to assure that migrating communities are able to adapt to the new physical urban design, the economy and social activities.

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