Malaysian townplan

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PEOPLE-CENTRIC PLANNING

Malaysian townplan

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Contents

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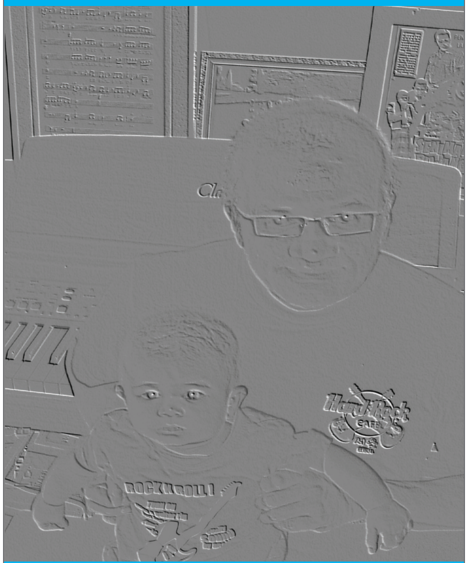
**MALAYSIAN TOWNPLAN
DECEMBER 2008**



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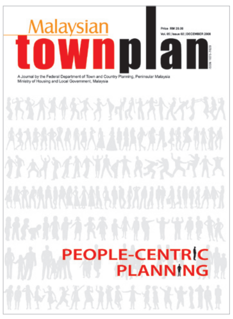


People Centric Planning – A fresh look at planning based on public opinion and values. The white background demonstrates a fresh approach while the silhouette represents energetic and healthy visions to achieve excellence in future planning.

‘POWER TO THE PEOPLE’

In this last issue for the year Anno Domini 2008, we take a hard look at the involvement of people in the planning process. In fact the main objective of physical planning itself denotes planning for the masses. Town planners should no longer be the elitist clique in society as far as Malaysia is concerned. Three articles lay testament to this – Dr. Dahlia’s *The Role of Focus Groups in Enhancing Public Involvement and Sustainability in Development Plans* and *Social Impact Assessment: Consolidating a People-Centric Approach in Planning,* and Dr. Zainah’s *Focus Groups as Group Interviews in a Research*. Despite slight deviations in certain details, these articles do have something in common - they both advocate strongly for people to be involved early in planning – and suggest how.

There are two schools of thought where the public can participate in the planning process. One that people must be made to be part of the planning process as many non-governmental organisations would approve, and the other, public involvement remains an irritant if not detrimental to the development process.

Local Agenda 21 however will see that the first school of thought prevails. Mercy Malaysia in their community work in tsunami-stricken Acheh and Sri Lanka involved the affected (including women folks and children) even as to the siting of their relocated settlements.

Time can be a determining factor in any development process. Thus those that argue against heavy involvement of the people in the planning process will use time as a basis for minimal involvement. But we have to choose between quantity and quality. Quality here means the project itself must be accepted by the people as they are the ones who will be living and be affected by it. We are living in the age where transparency is the catch phrase for the day!

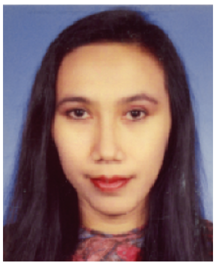
The last article is as ‘people-centric’ as the earlier three, although with a different twist. Fadzli’s *A Case for Cycling in Malaysia* supports strongly for the reintroduction of this mode of self-powered transport.

This issue’s Planning Palaver entitled *Planning People Please* takes a look at Wisconsin’s Washburn City public participation plan. We often look at dissenting views as an irritant but developed countries take it positively. Dare we?

Thus in the spirit of John Lennon, I’d say,

**“POWER TO THE PEOPLE,
POWER TO THE PEOPLE, RIGHT ON”!**

Mohamed Jamil Ahmad
Chief Editor



SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: CONSOLIDATING A PEOPLE-CENTRIC APPROACH IN PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the context of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in sustainable communities, the early activities and players in the SIA process in Malaysia, partnerships in improving practice, the existing institutional framework, and the main streams of SIA application in Malaysia. It highlights the initiatives of the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia, as the pioneer for incorporating SIA in Development Plans, the consequential legal mandates for SIA and other initiatives from agencies related to social impact concerns. It also describes SIA paving the way for supporting and complementing activities, such as Local Agenda 21, and successful techniques like the Focus Group Discussions to support community involvement and people-centric approaches. This paper further highlights how SIA has developed into a tool to support Corporate Social Responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Social Impact Assessment as a Planning Tool in Sustainable Development

In 1972, The Human Environment Conference in Stockholm for the first time formed an environmental community to discuss the degradation of the environment and its consequences, including social implications. The Stockholm Conference consequently resulted in the formation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development, 'Our Common Future'. It was also in the 1970s that the first formal and procedural SIA for a gas pipeline was prepared. In 1992, world leaders met in Rio and Agenda 21 was conceived. This was followed by the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Indeed, sustainability has become the pillar of development and is assuming profound implications for the quality of life and livelihood of local communities. Sustainable development can 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. It is within this context of sustainable development that the interest in Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and its use as a sustainable development tool has been reinforced.

Definition of Social Impacts

There are many definitions and interpretation of 'social impacts'. The Interorganizational Committee for Guidelines and Principles of Social Impact Assessment (1994) defines 'social impacts' as:

> …the consequence on human populations of any public or private actions - that alter the ways in which people live, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society.

Examples of social impacts include 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 structures, disruption in social networks, and impacts on public health resulting from programmes, projects, policies or plans (Burdge, 1994).

Most SIA models have common elements: Community and stakeholder participation, identification of options, establishing baseline conditions, scoping of significant issues, predicting likely impacts and community response to impacts, choosing or redesigning options/ choosing development options, and development of mitigation strategies (Becker & Vanclay, 2003; Branch et al. 1994; Burdge, 1994).

LEGAL MANDATE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The basis for SIA in Malaysia is located in two operating procedures that provide the existing legal mandate and institutional framework for SIA. These are the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures under the Environmental Quality Act 1974, and the land use planning procedures under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 or Act 172. At the same time, international management systems and performance standards operating as a non-statutory requirement are playing an increasingly important role as the main driver for SIA initiatives in corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Town and Country Planning Act 1976

The focus of an SIA should be a proactive one which shapes development in order to achieve better developmental outcomes rather than a preoccupation with negative or unintended outcomes. It is in this spirit that SIA has been incorporated in land use plans by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsular Malaysia, in assisting communities and stakeholders to identify development goals and ensuring that positive outcomes are maximised.

The legal mandate for SIA in Malaysia was expanded with the amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 in 2001. The Act now has significant requirements relating to SIA: Section 21A (1A) requires Development Proposal Reports (DPRs) to include an analysis of the social implications of a proposed development, thus involving SIA as a tool. In addition to DPRs, SIA had been interpreted at policy level by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning to incorporate the SIA process in Structure, Local and Special Area Plans, and potentially in the National Physical Plan review. There is also a provision for public participation in the Town and Country Planning Act which supports the SIA process. Of late, these mechanisms have improved community involvement and initiatives towards Local Agenda 21.

National Corporations and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The key driver for conducting SIAs in the private sector is the need to be seen as operating under responsible business practices and upholding corporate reputations. People are becoming more aware and have high expectations with regard to responsible business practices. Positive reputation is thus critical to big corporations. The perception of key stakeholders of the relative appeal of the company to an agreed standard is important when stakeholders need to judge and decide whether or not to take stakes in a corporation. Thus, corporate concerns are now competing to be recognised as players in CSR, since they are ranked and vetted by banks and other financial institutions.

Environmental and social agendas, such as Agenda 21 and MDGs, are key drivers churning environmental and social responsibilities into initiatives. 'Sustainability reporting' has also contributed to ensuring social accountability. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), an international body, promotes voluntary reporting by organisations of the economic, environmental and social impacts of their activities.

There are other International Management Systems and Performance Standards that provide a wide range of organisations with practical guidance for implementing social responsibility (Delmas, 2002). The ISO 14000 environmental management standards helps organisations in managing impacts to communities and the surrounding environment, and is potentially a vehicle to increase the recognition of social issues. The ISO 2600 and the ISO 2000 set the standard for organisational performance with regard to the social environment in which the organisation operates. On human rights in the workplace, International's SA 8000:2001 is an auditable standard suitable for organisations of all sizes anywhere in the world which provides a framework for assuring social accountability.

Perhaps one of the significant drivers towards SIA is the Equator Principles (EP) launched by ten of the world's big banks in 2003 and designed to measure and mitigate the social and environmental impacts of all new large-scale projects. EP requirements cover aspects of projects such as public consultation, independent reviews, grievance procedures and regular reporting in relation to performance standards, including social and environmental assessment and management systems. Equator Principles Finance Institutions (EPFIs) will only provide significant loans to projects that conform to Principles 1-10, including the assessment of community health and safety.

International Finance Corporations (IFCs) also benchmark performance standards on social and environmental sustainability by multinationals. There exist various sustainability indexes that can benchmark corporations, such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, where every market sector is benchmarked against its peer, and the Goldman Sachs Environment, Social and Governance Index (ESG). The Social Responsible Investment (SRI) fund amounting to US$3 trillion can only be used to purchase shares in companies deemed socially responsible. This clearly demonstrates how important identifying and managing social issues are to multinational corporations.

Malaysia too has felt the effects of awareness of social responsibility. The BURSA Malaysia has a CSR Agenda, requiring companies to furnish reports on the environment, community, workplace and marketplace.

Thus, it can be clearly seen that CSR has indeed become a powerful driver, perhaps even more powerful as a result of Acts dedicated to SIA.

SIA APPLICATION IN MALAYSIA

Federal Department Town and Country Planning and Land Use Planning

The address of social aspects in Malaysia has a history going back several decades. In land use planning, components of social aspects have been explored through socio-economic surveys in development plans prepared by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning (FDTCP) since the Fifth Malaysia Plan. The championing of SIA in land use planning by the FDTCP can be traced to the first attempts to incorporate SIA in Local Plans in 1998. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for four Local Plans; namely, the Sungai Merab Local Plan, The Cyberjaya (outside Flagship area) Local Plan, Dengkil Local Plan, and Salak Tinggi Local Plan, were designed to incorporate SIA in them.

By incorporating SIA in the initial stage of the study, preliminary proposals and development strategies in the Local Plan can be assessed for their likely social impacts and options chosen to avoid or minimise negative social impacts from the various components, so that positive impacts can become drivers in achieving the plan's strategies. To date, over 30 Local Plans in Malaysia have addressed social impact aspects within the framework of SIA. The fact that the Town and Country Planning Act was amended in 2001 to include at least two rounds of public participation, one before the commencement of plan preparation and one after the draft is completed, is indeed in tandem with participative SIA.

Co-operation with Other Agencies and Resource Network

In the late 1990s, the championing of SIA also came from resource persons specialising in SIA research in the government sectors, who promoted SIA to various government agencies through technical committee meetings or paper presentations at national and international seminars and workshops. Since the late 1990s, the FDTCP has presented many SIA-related papers in collaboration with initiatives by Malaysian universities and development institutes.

The commitment in promoting SIA was further enhanced by FDTCP's involvement in the Klang Valley Secretariat's 'TransIMPACT Study' in 2002 and preparing the TOR and related documentation for the UNDP-SIA project in 2002 which produced the Malaysian SIA Handbook. The commitment of other players was also evident. PETRONAS in adopting the Corporate Sustainability Framework (Othman, 2008) has successfully employed SIA as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) tool. Elsewhere, the High Planning Unit of the Ministry of Works, Malaysia created a Social Impact Assessment Unit under its Project Evaluation Division.

There is considerable opportunity for improving the professional practice of SIA, and of impact assessment in general, in Malaysia. The Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment (MSIA) was formed to augment the ranks of professional SIA practitioners in the country.

SIA AND OPPORTUNITIES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Contribution towards Community Involvement

Section 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 mandates public participation. The introduction of SIA has certainly had a spin-off effect in the way public participation is taking place in Malaysia (Shamsudin, 1994). For the first time in 1998, the focus group discussion (FGD) method was introduced as one of the tools for conducting SIAs in Malaysia (Rosly, 2008). To date, there have been at least 30 focus groups programmes within the framework of Local Plan preparation which have discussed sustainable development issues, including social impacts.

Capacity Building

Among the factors that limit good SIA practice are the lack of expertise of consultants and project leaders conducting SIAs. Thus there is a need for capacity building, particularly at the highly skilled levels of SIA project leadership as well as sharing experiences on the ground, leveraging the existing capacity building which largely focuses on theoretical SIA. The Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment (MSIA) can potentially play an important role in capacity building and consequently facilitate the accreditation process of SIA practitioners. The Federal Department of Town and Country Planning had initiated capacity building through several national and international level SIA workshops participated by public and private sector planners in early 2000. Currently the 'Institut Sosial Malaysia' (ISM) runs introductory SIA training for officers in the Administrative and Diplomatic Service (PTDs) who are involved in planning and administration at the grassroots level. SIA could be further introduced to local authority planners who would eventually be the caretaker of management or mitigation plans of any SIA study in their local authority areas.

Though plan and project SIAs are quite clearly conceived and addressed, there is a need to identify strategic opportunities to apply SIA for greatest leverage within the federal policy-making procedures at all ministerial levels. As such, awareness and capacity building on SIA should also filter into various ministries.

CONCLUSION

SIA within the participatory framework is supported by recent legislative amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act which has created specific new requirements for SIA, generating momentum for greater use of SIA. This is in line with the needs in community involvement and people-centric approaches in the context of sustainable communities.

Emerging CSR tools, such the International Management Systems and Performance Standards, are expected to prosper. SIA would be more effective in achieving its goals if seen as a quality assurance process for industries rather than as a statutory point-in-time assessment of potential impacts (Vanclay, 2006).

However, the limitations of consultants undertaking SIA are apparent and should be rectified through capacity building initiatives. Similarly, project leaders and implementers at the local authority level should be adequately trained before SIA can become meaningful as a tool towards greater social responsibility.

Lastly, incentives for advocates supporting social responsibility initiatives through SIA should be created and their initiatives reported and recognised.

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FOCUS GROUPS AS GROUP INTERVIEWS IN A RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Focus Group (FG) is a qualitative research technique. Its goal is to delve into attitudes and feelings about a particular topic, to understand the reasons behind the consumer/user behaviour. It is able to produce meaningful information and do so in a manner that shows respect for traditions and uses language and culture differences as advantages. For FG to work, however, the researcher must be alert to certain modifications to the procedures. The researcher must be sensitive to establishing an environment where these individuals feel comfortable in talking. He/she must approach each audience with respect, seeking their wisdom. Once the researcher meets these expectations, the FG yields impressive results. Additionally, the appropriate method for analysis is equally important to optimise the data gained. Ultimately, the goal and objectives of the research will be accomplished.

This paper affirms the FG technique in a qualitative research and its importance in group interview surveys. The first part of the paper focuses on the understanding of FG by way of answering questions: What is it? How is FG as a qualitative research method? How many groups to be conducted in a FG? What is its characteristic? How do we prepare and facilitate the interviews? What types of FG analyses are there? When do we use and not use FG?

The second part of the paper explores the experiences of the author in applying the FG method in group interviews in a conservation study carried out in Malacca Historical City.

PART I

What Is A Focus Group?

A ***Focus Group*** (FG) is a form of qualitative research which has its origins in marketing in which a group of people is asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, 2008). This manner of research has since been extensively used in other areas like military training, economic and environmental researches, as well as social surveys.

In the social sciences and urban planning, FGs allow interviewers to study people in a more natural setting than a one-to-one interview. In combination with participant observation, they are used for gaining access to various cultural and social groups, selecting sites to study, sampling of such sites, and raising unexpected issues for exploration (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). FGs have a high apparent validity - since the idea is easy to understand, the results are believable. Also, they are low in cost; one can get results relatively quickly, and they can increase the sample size of a report by talking with several people at once. The FG has been emphasised by researchers (Greenbaum, 2000; and Krueger and Casey, 2000) as a sensitive and reliable participatory tool and are widely used in social impact studies.

Thus, a FG is ***a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures.*** Its purpose is to listen and gather information and a way to better understand how people feel and think about an issue, product or service. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the group.

How Is FG As A Qualitative Research Method?

In general, a FG gathers a qualified group of respondents in the same room. They are screened to ensure that they are part of the relevant group and is a representative sub-group of this particular segment. There are usually six to ten members in the group, and the session usually lasts for one to two hours. A moderator guides the group through a discussion that probes attitudes about a client's proposed products or services. The discussion is loosely structured, and the moderator encourages the free flow of ideas. The moderator is typically given a list of objectives or an anticipated outline. He/she will commonly have only a few specific questions prepared prior to the FG. These questions will serve to initiate open-ended discussions.

In some researches, client representatives observe the discussion from behind a one-way mirror. Participants cannot see out, but the researchers and their clients can see in. Usually, a video camera records the meeting so that it can be seen by others who were not able to travel to the site. Transcripts can be created from the video tape. If the participants speak a different language than the client's, a simultaneous interpreter may be used.

Researchers examine more than the spoken words. They also try to interpret facial expressions, body language and group dynamics. Moderators may use straight questioning or various projective techniques, including fixed or free association, story-telling and ole-playing. FGs are often used to garner reaction to specific stimuli such as concepts, prototypes and advertising.

It is often suggested that respondents feel group pressure to conform and this can contaminate the results. Others hold that by using trained and experienced moderators who appropriately manage the discussion, this potential problem can be mitigated. Further, despite the potential for groupthink, marketers and sociologists find that group dynamics are useful in developing new streams of thought and covering an issue thoroughly.

In essence, a researcher creates a permissive environment in the FG that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus. The group discussion is conducted several times with similar types of participants so the researcher can identify trends and patterns. Then careful and systematic analysis of the discussions provides clues and insights as to how a product, service, or opportunity is perceived. Discussion is designed to obtain perception on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Each group is conducted with six to ten people by skilled interviewer. The discussions were relaxed, and often participants enjoy sharing their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments of others.

Determining How Many Groups To Conduct?

The rule of thumb is, plan three or four FGs with any one type of participants. The reason you plan for these number of groups is because FGs are analysed across groups. The analyst looks for patterns and themes across groups. When planning FGs, it is vital to have a balance in the design of FGs (the number of groups and complexity of analysis) with the resources available (money, time and skills).

Also, when planning groups, avoid mixing people who may feel they have different levels of expertise or power related to the issue. This is to create an environment where all participants feel comfortable to speak out. Again, the study and situation would dictate what we would do.

What Characteristics Has A FG?

For a discussion to be classified as a legitimate FG, it should contain virtually the following characteristics:

- Be held in a facility where a one-way mirror exists to permit observers to watch the session (however, this is considered as optional especially in other than marketing purposes);
- Be conducted by an objective, external, trained facilitator;
- Be composed of six to ten people who are recruited on the basis of common characteristics;
- Be implemented using a discussion guide that has been prepared in advance to ensure the appropriate topics are covered in the session and that the proper amount of time is allocated to each;
- Be executed in such a way that the participants interact with each other both verbally and non-verbally;
- Contain a vehicle for the observers to communicate with the moderator during the session to ensure the process is interactive between both parties.

The characteristics of a FG are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of Focus Groups

CHARACTERISTIC	MARKET RESEARCH	ACADEMIC	NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC	PARTICIPATORY
Where popular?	Commercial	Universities, government agencies, foundations	Governments, community groups, foundations	Community groups, schools, foundations, local government
Group size?	10–12 people	6–8 people	6-8 people	6–8 people
Should participants know each other?	No. Strangers preferred.	Not an issue. People may not know each other but are not in positions of control over each other.	Not an issue. Sometimes it is an advantage, provided they are not in positions of control over each other.	Sometimes an advantage. People regularly know each other.
Who moderates?	Professionals	Faculty, graduate students, or qualified staff	Qualified staff and occasional volunteers with special skills	Volunteers from the community
Where are FGs held?	Special rooms with one-way mirrors and quality acoustics	Public locations, classrooms, sometimes homes, or special rooms with one-mirrors	Locations in the community, such as schools, libraries, and so on	Community locations and homes
How are data captured?	Observers behind mirrors, audio and often video recording	Field notes and audio recording. Sometimes video.	Field notes and audio recording	Field notes and audio recoding
How are results analysed?	Valuable but often rapid first impressions given by moderator or analyst. Sometimes transcripts.	Usually transcripts followed by rigorous procedures	Usually abridged transcripts and field notes.	Oral summarises at conclusion, flip charts, filed notes, listening to audiotapes.
Who gets copies of reports	Only the sponsor. Reports are proprietary.	Academics or public officials. Results appear in academic journals.	Reports used within the organisation and sent back to the community. Shared with participants	Considerable effort made to share results with the community.
Time needed to complete study?	Short time period. Usually completed in a few weeks.	Long time period. Often six months or more.	Time needed vary. Usually takes several months.	Long time period. Often six months or more.

Source: Krueger & Casey, 2000

Preparing for FG Session

1. Identify the major objective of the meeting.

2. Carefully develop five to six questions.

3. Plan your session. This includes choosing the appropriate venue and considering the proper agenda. A setting with little distraction that avoids bright lights or loud noises is preferred to ensure the comfort of participants. Alternatively, holding sessions in a conference room with adequate air flow and lighting can be refreshing. Configure chairs so that all members can see each other. Provide name tags for members as well. Provide refreshments, especially box lunches if the session is held over lunch. Set a suitable agenda i.e. welcome, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap up. Determine the number of FGs. As discussed, groups are usually conducted with six to ten members of some similar nature, e.g. similar age group, status in a program, etc. Select members who are likely to be participative and reflective. Attempt to select members who do not know each other.

4. Call potential members to invite them to the meeting. Send them a follow-up invitation with a proposed agenda, session time and list of questions the group will discuss. If necessary, plan to provide a copy of the report from the session to each member and let them know you will do this.

5. About three days before the session, call each member to remind them to attend.

Facilitating the Interview

1. Welcome and thank the group members for their presence. Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator, if employed. Invite the group members to introduce themselves.

2. Explain the purpose of the interview. Explain the means to record the session.

3. Address and note terms of confidentiality. Explain who will get access to their answers and how their answers will be analysed. If their comments are to be used as quotes, get their permission to do so.

4. Explain the format of the interview. Explain the type of interview you are conducting and its nature. If you want them to ask questions, specify if they are to do so as they have them or wait until the end of the interview.

5. Indicate how long the interview usually takes (about one to two hours).

6. Set the Ground Rules – it is critical that all members participate as much as possible, yet the session move along while generating useful information. Because the session is often a one-time occurrence, it is useful to have a few, short ground rules that sustain participation, yet do so with focus.

7. Tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to.

8. Ask them if they have any questions before you get started with the interview.

9. Plan to record the session with either an audio or audio-video recorder. If this is not practical, involve a co-facilitator who is there to take notes. It is also a practice to have both done simultaneously. Please do not count on your memory to recall their answers. Ask for permission to record the interview and/or bring along someone to take notes.

10. Ensure even participation. If one or two people are dominating the meeting, then call on others. Consider using a round- table approach, including going in one direction around the table, giving each person a minute to answer the question. If the domination persists, note it to the group and ask for ideas about how the participation can be increased.

11. Closing the session. To conclude the FG is simply by thanking the group for participating, provide them with the gift (if you are providing), etc. A better alternative is to briefly summarise the main points and ask if this summary is accurate. Watch for the body language of the participants for sign of agreement, hesitation or confusion. If necessary, tell members that they will receive a copy of the report generated from their answers. Thank them for coming, and adjourn the meeting. Tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to.

Note:
Two essential techniques which are prerequisites - the Pause and the Probe. Successful moderators think about what has already been discussed, what is currently being said, and what still needs to be covered. This helps them take in the whole scope of the FG and keep the discussion on track and schedule. The five-second pause is often used after a participant comments. The probe - the request for additional information can be accomplished by asking e.g. would you explain further? or give an example? or say more?.

FG Analysis

Analysis begins by going back to the intent of the study. A key principle is that the depth or intensity of analysis is determined by the purpose of the study. The researcher must remember the intent of the study and regularly weigh choices against two factors: available resources and the value of that new information. Nonetheless, FG analysis is done in a systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous way.

The analysis is systematic and sequential because it is deliberate and planned, not capricious, arbitrary, or spontaneous. Systematic, sequential analysis procedures help ensure the results will reflect what was shared in the groups - systematic protocol to avoid making mistakes or overlooking critical factors. Systematic analysis also means that the analysis strategy is documented, understood, and able to be clearly articulated by each member for the research team. The process is open for inspection.

FG analysis is verifiable. This means that another researcher should be able to arrive at a similar conclusion using available documents and the data. Verification in analysis is a critical safeguard. For analysis to be verifiable there must be sufficient data to constitute a trail of evidence. The data stream begins with field notes and recordings taken during each FG. It continues with the oral summary (verification) of key points during each group discussion. Then it proceeds into the debriefing with the moderator team and shall include transcripts, if used.

The analysis is a continuous process. FG analysis is quite different from analysis of numbers. By contrast, FG analysis begins earlier – in the first FG – and is done concurrently with data collection. Each subsequent group is analysed and compared to earlier groups. In fact, doing analysis as you go improves data collection. The sequential process continues during the group and in fact, becomes a critical part of the FG. The questions are sequentially arranged, and later comments by participants build on earlier comments within the group.

While the following can be used as the basis for analysis:

- transcript based;
- tape based – abridged transcript;
- note based;
- memory based;

the FG analysis can be done through:

- manual analysis e.g. long-table approach, matrix, typology method, etc.;
- using the computer to help manage the data by using software application/CAGDAS i.e. Nudist, NVivo, Atlas.ti, etc.

In short, FG analysis is a deliberate, purposeful process. It is systematic, uses verifiable procedures, is done in a sequential manner, and is a continuing process. Many analysis strategies can be used, yet each pays attention to the critical qualities. Transcripts, audiotapes and notes are used as the basis for analysis. The long-table approach is used as a way of making analysis concrete. However, the use of computers can be very helpful.

Why Do FGs Work?

The intent of FGs is to promote self-disclosure among participants. We want what people really think and feel. So when do people self-disclose? When do they really think and feel? It is when they feel comfortable and when the environment is permissive and non-judgmental.

When Are FGs Appropriate And When Should They Not Be Used?

FG interviews should be considered when:

- You are looking for the range of ideas or feelings that people have about something.
- You are trying to understand differences in perspectives between groups or categories of people. Often, people in power see a situation or issue differently from those who are not.
- The purpose is to uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviour, or motivation. FG can provide insight into complicated topics when opinions are conditional or when the area of concern relates to multifaceted behaviour or motivation.
- You want ideas to emerge from the group.
- You want to pilot-test ideas, materials, plans or policies.
- You need information to design a large-scale quantitative study. FGs have provided researchers with valuable insights into conducting complicated quantitative investigations.
- You need information to help shed light on quantitative information already collected.

When Not To Use?

- You want people to come to consensus.
- You want to educate people.
- You do not intend to use the results but instead want to give the appearance of listening.
- You are asking for sensitive information that should not be shared in a group or could be harmful to someone if it is shared in a group.
- You need statistical projections.
- The environment is emotionally-charged, and a group study is likely to intensify the conflict.
- You have lost control over critical aspects of the study.
- Other methodologies can produce better quality information.
- Other methodologies can produce the same quality information more economically.
- You cannot ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information.

PART II

In executing the research of community involvement in planning, acquiring primary data from local communities is a prerequisite. This part of the paper explores the author's experiences in applying the FG method in group interviews in a conservation study carried out in the historical city of Malacca. The FG method was engaged to get more representative feedback from the whole community of specific urban conservation areas. Guided FG discussions were organised with the cooperation of the area's local authority, the Majlis Bandaraya Melaka Bersejarah (MBMB). The selection of the type of group method was based on specification of group characteristics, the involvement of group members and the kind of interaction that was to emerge. This research was mainly based on the specification of group characteristics, i.e. they were the communities (landlords as well as tenants) living in the conservation area within the case study area; and the kind of good and free interaction expected to emerge, as each community knew each of its members well.

The FGs for the empirical work in the case study area - the MBMB area - were selected based on the list of community groups given and recognised by MBMB. Four groups from the list were identified as groups within heritage zones gazetted under the Malacca Enactment (Gazette no. Jil. 46/No.14/4 July, 2002) which were found to be based on different ethnic structures:

1. Kampung. Morten - the Malay Heritage Village, hereafter known as Kampung Morten;
2. Kampung Chitty, Gajah Berang - the Chitty Heritage Village, hereafter known as Kampung Chitty;
3. Kampung Portugis, Ujong Pasir - the Portuguese Heritage Village, hereafter named as Portuguese Community; and
4. Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock

(formerly known as Hereen Street) and Jalan Hang Jebat (formerly known as Jonker Street) - the Baba/Nyonya Heritage Village, hereafter named as Baba/Nyonya Community.

From the four residential zones gazetted, there were actually six community groups in them and the other listed as a community group by MBMB was the Malacca Heritage Trust (MHT), a heritage conservation NGO which was concerned with and supported conservation efforts. Coincidentally, a few members of the MHT were actually living in the gazetted areas, particularly in the conservation zones within Malacca City. There was another group also recognised by the MBMB as a community in the conservation zones - the Chinese Chamber of Commerce - as they formed part of the business and new community of mainly Jonker Street or better known as Jonker Walk and hereafter known as Jonker Walk group.

Therefore, for the Malacca conservation area community (anticipating the limitations especially in terms of time and location), initially two FG meetings were planned based on the first group being the more active group of communities (which included the MHT and the Jonker Walk group) and the second group as a relatively passive group (which included the Kampung Morten community and the Chitty community). The lists were selected on the basis that they were from the same background where they were the community/residents living in the conservation areas and were owners of the conserved buildings and may have wanted to save their buildings without considering their ethnicity background but rather on their participation level. However, when the author was on 'the ground' it was not possible to do so, because even MBMB differentiated its community groups by ethnic and locations. Thus, the author had taken this stance with the emphasis that participants who could attend the FG meetings from each community group should represent their community and therefore, ended up with having to organise six FGs. However, in terms of group attendance, it was represented either by individuals who had returned the questionnaires and were willing to attend the meetings, or were selected among the associations' group members themselves. It is an important to note that what the author was concerned with was the representativeness of the FG members rather than its social class structure.

The process of involving the communities in the selected areas was as follows:

- The initial planning of the FGs: Contacted various agencies including the local authority (MBMB) and community co-ordinators to identify the characteristics of potential FGs; made logistic arrangements, such as planning the discussions, venue, invitation, estimation of equipment costs and other costs; and confirming the availability of equipment needed.
- Designing of FG questionnaire guide.
- Sending out 100 questionnaires to the group leaders/representatives through MBMB. The questionnaires were distributed to all levels of communities living in the area of each group; the community members who agreed to attend in the FG discussions were listed.
- Tracking the return of the questionnaires: Since the returns were quite low (10%) and due to time limitation, the author went for face-to-face interviews and received a return of a further 14% (total 24%).
- Initial analysis of the responses of the 24 questionnaires (which is considered low but relevant to identify the main issues for discussion in the FG meetings).
- Conducting the FG meetings: Organising, setting and moderating the meetings with the sessions audio recorded.

As discussed earlier, there were difficulties in grouping the communities into two large FGs, due to differences in physical locations, ethnic mix and community interests. The author ended up organising six FG meetings for the different communities separately (Figures 2 and 3). All six FG meetings were carried out at venues chosen by the communities within their own localities, i.e. Kampung Morten for the Malay community, Kampung Chitty for the Chitty community, Hokkien Association office/temple for the Jonker Walk and Chinese Assembly Committee, Portuguese Square/Hall for the Portuguese community, a conserved Baba/Nyonya house in Hereen Street for the Baba/Nyonya community and St. Peter's Church (another conservation project) for the Malacca Heritage Trust.

Figure 2: Focus Group Meetings

Focus Group	No. of Participants	Rationale	Main Issues Discussed
Kampung Morten	8	Conducted all Focus Group meetings for different community groups separately (as opposed to the two groups earlier planned for all communities)	1. Rated level of success of conservation efforts in Malacca 2. Opinion on the various approaches taken by the local authority and other authorities in getting the community to be involved in the conservation efforts - whether or not they were given adequate opportunities to express opinions and get involved in the process. 3. The issues of community involvement in conservation. 4. The role they ought to play as communities in conservation projects. 5. Suggestions to improve the approaches and what the local authorities should do.
Kampung Chitty	10		
Jonker Walk Committee Chinese Assembly Hall	3		
Portuguese Community	8		
Baba/Nyonya	1		
Malacca Heritage Trust (NGOs/Private)	9		
Total: 6 Groups	**39**		

Source: Focus Group Meetings, 2005

Figure 3: Focus Group Participants' Background

Focus Group	No. of Participants	Gender		Ethnic Group	Background
		Male	Female		
Kampung Morten	8	6	2	Malay	1 headman, 2 pensioners , 3 general workers, 1 teacher, and 1 housewife
Kampung Chitty	10	7	3	Chitty (Indian descendents)	2 professionals, 6 general workers and 2 housewives
Jonker Walk Committee Chinese Assembly Hall	3	3	0	Chinese	3 businessmen
Portuguese Community	8	8	0	Portuguese	1headman, 2 pensioners, 1 businessman and 5 fishermen
Baba/Nyonya	1	0	1	Baba/Nyonya	Housewife
Malacca Heritage Trust (NGOs/Private)	9	5	4	8 Chinese 1 Portuguese	All professionals
Total: 6 FGs	**39**	**29**	**10**		

Four of these FGs had a good level of attendance of eight to ten participants and had a good discussion as everyone was drawn into participating in the discussions and provided lots of useful material and examples of experiences. Nevertheless, there were some difficult moments to handle when certain personalities dominated discussions and talked at length, but the situation was managed by the author who informed those dominating the proceedings that the other participants should also be given the opportunity to voice their opinions. The other two FG meetings had a smaller number of attendees with three men and a lady participant for the Chinese and Baba/Nyonya communities respectively. Qualitatively, they were different from the better-attended FGs but the materials gained out of these meetings were very valuable for the research.

Figure 3 indicates the different background of the FGs' participants.

As discussed earlier, the category of the FG was subjected to the ethnic group of each FG itself with the exception of one group i.e. the MHT. The MHT was (and still is) a pro-conservation non-governmental organisation group based in Malacca whose members were all professionals (mostly architects and engineers). In terms of ethnic background of its members, almost all of them were Chinese (except one Portuguese and one Australian) who operated their own businesses or worked in the private sector. Within their own community group, FG members were willing to speak up without any reservation. By gender, FG members were mostly male i.e. 29 (74%) whilst 10 (26%) were female. Irrespective of what gender they belonged to, they had played their role well in their respective communities as these were noticeably reflected during the discussions. This illustrates the idea that gender is not a hindrance in expressing opinions or being active in representing views of communities. In fact, this is apparent in the case of the Baba/Nyonya group where, despite being a female and at the same time a housewife, the participant was able to represent her community confidently. This also demonstrates that for the sake of the welfare and prosperity of their areas, they showed their willingness and great interest to participate in the FG discussion and represented their community regardless of their gender, education background or social class.

During the FG meetings (as in Figure 4), steps taken by the author to moderate the FG meetings and the experiences were as follows:

- Introduction:

  The author welcomed and thanked all the participants and introduced both herself and her assistant. All the community attending the FG meetings were informed of the reasons of being selected for the meetings - their residing in conservation areas; and/or their ownership of properties in these areas; and/or their interest in conservation of the heritage buildings in Malacca. They were told that their experiences and opinions about their involvement/participation in the authority's decision-making and planning process of conservation projects in their areas were the meetings' primary concern.

- Setting of ground rules:

  The participants were informed about the meetings being tape recorded and they were free to share their points of view even if they differed from other participants'. The author was interested in negative comments as well as positive ones, since there were no right and wrong answers. No names were to be included in the reports and comments were to be kept confidential. The participants were encouraged to follow up on points brought up by others, either to agree, or disagree or elaborate on them. They were told of the author's interest in hearing from each and every one of them and were free to get up for refreshments during the discussions. Before the discussions began, each of the participants was asked to introduce themselves by going around the group one at a time.

- Bringing everyone into the discussion:

  The FG sessions began with a general question to get the participants' views on the level of success of conservation efforts in Malacca; followed by three main questions on community involvement in conservation planning carried out by the local authority; and ended with general but related suggestions.

  The main discussions of the FG meetings were focused on five of the topics as noted in Figure 2. Nonetheless, when certain domineering individuals talked at length in giving their opinion for each of the questions, the author had to intervene to give an opportunity for the others to voice their views. In another instance, when participants were discussing topics which were irrelevant, the author had to help them refocused to the scope of the meeting so as to keep the discussions on track. Hence, the author as the moderator of those meetings needed to continuously monitor the flow of the sessions to keep the discussions on schedule and focused. The author always had to think about what had already been discussed, what was currently being said, and what still needed to be covered. In short, the author had to establish a very conducive environment in which each participant felt comfortable in voicing their views, especially for the very reserved participants. The author realised that the best approach to get the best outcome from the interviews was to regard each participant's views and experience with respect.

- Ending the sessions:

  The end of the sessions was opened for members to express opinions and views on matters other than what had already been discussed. The author summarised briefly what had been discussed and obtained verification from the participants.

  The author opened the discussions for other suggestions the participants had to improve the government's conservation efforts as well as getting their views on other matters. Then a brief summary of the main points discussed was made and the participants were asked on its accuracy. At the end of the sessions, gratitude and thanks were expressed for the members' participation, and ended with a gift presentation to each one of them.

- Post-meetings:

  After the FG meetings, the author produced verbatim transcriptions of the sessions for further analysis. In short, the FG meetings organised were able to produce meaningful information and, since these groups came from different cultures and beliefs, the author had approached each group and participant with respect based on this diversity; hence the outcome of the FG meetings had been very good.

Figure 3: Four of the FG Meetings Held

The author as the moderator during the MHT group FG meeting at the St. Peter's Church in Malacca on 23rd April, 2005.

The Chitty FG meeting held at the Chitty Community Centre in Kampung Gajah Berang, Malacca on 2nd May, 2005.

Every member listening attentively to the opinion of one of the participants during the Kampung Morten FG meeting in Malacca on 11th May, 2005.

A member of the Portuguese community is voicing his opinion during the FG meeting held at the Community Centre in the Portuguese Settlement Square, Malacca on 2nd May, 2005.

APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an important stage of research as it is a process of bringing together the information into order and analysed, and to interpret the collected data. The qualitative analysis of this research was done for the community FG meetings and interviews. The results of the questionnaire survey in the selected communities formed the basis of issues that were discussed in the FG meetings. The data from these meetings were audio taped and then transcribed. Subsequently, the analysis of the data collected included about how data were sorted, organised, conceptualised, refined, and interpreted.

The first stage of analysis involved observing, sorting and grouping of data. This was done by investigating the data manually (matrix analysis) as well as using computer software (NVivo version 2). A matrix in this technique is essentially the crossing of two lists, set up as rows and columns (Nadin and Cassell, 2004; Miles and Huberman, 1994). It typically takes the form of a table, although it may also take the form of networks - a series of nodes with links between them. Each row and column is labelled, with rows usually representing the unit of analysis - be it by site, if a between-site analysis or comparison is being conducted, or by different individuals from the same site for a within site analysis. The column typically represents concepts, issues or characteristics pertinent to the research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) also point out that the key skill of constructing a data analysis matrix is to make a large amount of data accessible and meaningful whilst doing justice to the complexity of data by enabling cross-site and within site-comparisons. Before any matrix construction can begin, the process of data reduction is necessary, a process which involves 'selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the raw data' (1994:10) which is done, where interview transcripts are concerned, by coding.

The following process was undertaken in carrying out the analysis:

- Immersion in the data reading and re-reading the transcripts, labelling at the sides to generate appropriate codes.
- Arranging the codes into categories.
- Collating the different sections of the different interviews into the appropriate category.
- Taking each category individually and 'making-sense' of the data within it, further subdividing the information into sub-categories where necessary. Examples of 'sense making' included noting any similarities in the comments made and whether this indicated a general trend; noting which points were emphasised by interviewees; and noting the different ways in which interviewees qualified their views and actions.

In order to triangulate the analysis for the FG findings, the data were also analysed using the latest version of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software i.e. NVivo, version 2.0. NVivo was considered appropriate for this research as it was a flexible qualitative data analysis tool especially for working with grounded theory and inductive methods. Moreover, this software allowed for a combination of subtle coding with qualitative linking, shaping, searching and modelling. In terms of coding, the author reviewed FG interviews data documents line by line, developing codes to represent themes, patterns and categories. The codes were saved within the NVivo database as nodes that were then reordered, merged or removed, to help visualise and locate analytical items or categories. By using NVivo, it helped highlight areas that were unclear, and encouraged a return to the data to do further coding, refinement or review, improving the quality of the analysis. Nevertheless, NVivo or any other CAQDAS system required the author to create the time to thinking, as the author needed to construct and account for the data and methods and processes of analysis. The idea of using CAQDAS (besides manual analysis) was that it allowed managing, accessing and keeping a perspective on all the data, without losing its richness or the closeness to the data that was critical for qualitative research (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). Additionally, it helped the author to be immersed in the data while making sense of the data by detecting patterns and drawing robust conclusions simply resulting in better analysis capabilities. NVivo modeller was used in developing a structure for the emerging themes, in which, the final output of the analysis was a model.

Eventually, both the results from the manual and NVivo analysis were run through and checked and then produced the analysis. This was supported by the other information including documents and reports gathered from the relevant authorities. To establish reliability, validity and rigour in the case studies data, a quantitative element was incorporated through the questionnaire survey. Statistical techniques (by means of computer software) were utilised to analyse these quantitative data. In describing the characteristics of respondents, types of projects and the patterns of phenomenon; the descriptive statistical method was employed such as means, medians and standard deviation.

During the process of data analysis, quotations were used, and confidentiality was assured by keeping the respondents anonymous. This was done to encourage truthful answers without fear of repercussions from any sensitive comments or opinions made. The analysis engaged in generalisation of answers and avoided linking any individual respondent to specific answers.

Eventually, the analysis categorised in various elements covered community involvement approaches, main issues and suggestions and the roles of the community in the conservation planning process. The emergent findings from the community qualitative analysis were then underlined.

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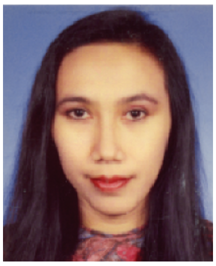

THE ROLE OF FOCUS GROUPS IN ENHANCING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the role and the use of Focus Group Discussions as a participatory tool for exploring existing issues and future scenarios in Local Plans and Special Area Plans in Malaysia. It introduces the history of use of FGDs in the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning (FDTCP), and how it has prospered into a popular technique in public participation programmes and various assessment processes such as Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Sustainability Assessment (SA) incorporated in the planning process. This paper also highlights the mandate for public participation in landuse planning and the protocol of conducting and analysing FGDs in the context of Development Plans. It also introduces some qualitative software that could be used to assist navigation of transcripts, which could then be theorised, extrapolated, interpreted and draw useful conclusions from. Lastly, this paper concludes that FGDs have brought public participation initiatives in landuse planning to a greater relevance.

BACKGROUND

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was first introduced after the 1st World War to gauge the persuasiveness of war propaganda. The technique has since been developed into a marketing tool to analyse preferences in products and product demand, the effectiveness of advertisements and consequently as a tool to promote 'people-centric' approaches in planning and other activities requiring public involvement or exploring community issues.

The definitions and techniques in conducting FGDs are well-documented. Briefly, the FGD is a discussion forum consisting of 8-12 people guided by a moderator, designed to be engaging, interactive, collaborative and synergistic. In land use planning, FGDs usually involve communities at the grassroots level focussing on existing issues and future scenarios. The duration of the discussion can range from 2-3 hours and FGDs offer opportunities for friendly, non-threatening, informal discourse and debate among the local community, bringing forth issues and various perspectives in the subjects to be explored. The FGD can effectively assist plan preparation from a reactive to a pro-active process, through the direct involvement of the public and other stakeholders. FGDs have also been successfully used as a tool in participative Social Impact Assessments (SIA) (Dahlia Rosly, 1997) and Sustainability Assessments (SA).

FGD'S IN MALAYSIAN LANDUSE PLANNING

Public Involvement in Development Plan Preparation

In the Malaysian land use planning scene, FGDs were first used as a planning technique in 1999 through the introduction of Social Impact Assessment in Local Plans within the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). These plans were prepared by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning (FDTCP), Peninsular Malaysia whereby SIA was incorporated in the planning process to ensure that the plans had sufficient coverage on community interests. FGDs were conducted on the predominantly rural community in the MSC to identify likely social impacts of the MSC development on existing communities and stakeholders.

The use of FGDs was consequently promoted in the FDTCP through training in capacity building. FGDs are continually being used in most Local Plan and Special Area Plan preparation. Public participation is required in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1976 (Act 172) with public involvement specified in sections 9 and 11 with regard to the preparation of Structure Plans; sections 12A, 13 and 14 for Local Plans; and section 16B for Special Area Plans. The legal mandate for public participation has been expanded much further through significant requirements relating to Section 21A (1A) of the Town and Country Planning Act which requires development proposal reports (DPR's) to include an analysis of the social implications of the proposed development; thus implicating Social Impact Assessment as a tool with the FGDs as a potentially effective participative technique. FGDs have since been used as a tool to promote participation and to explore community issues in Local Plan and Special Area Plan study areas. Findings from FGDs have effectively been used to draft the terms of references for Local Plan and Special Area Plan studies before they commence. FGDs give credible information on the Local Plan and Special Area Plan study areas and contribute to better documentation and content of the terms of references of the studies prepared by the study teams. The FGDs in 'Publisiti Awal' or Preliminary Public Participation potentially reduce the time taken in identifying the future directions of the study areas based on community participation and visioning.

To date, FGDs assume a productive and effective role in FDTCP's Local Plan and Special Area Plan public participation process. The number of FGD programmers employed during the first level of participation i.e. the 'Publisiti Awal' of Local Plans can be estimated through the number of Local Plans that have been prepared in the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plans totalling 76. (i.e. 39 Local Plans in the former and 37 the latter). Focus groups have also been employed in the 'Publisiti Awal' of Special Area Plans which totalled 35 in the Ninth Malaysia Plan. With a minimum number of five (5) focus groups running parallel in a particular 'Publisiti Awal' session, it can be estimated that at least 555 FGDs have been conducted by the FDTCP covering the whole of Peninsular Malaysia during the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plans. Further FGDs were also employed during the second level of public participation i.e. after the draft of the Local Plans or Special Area Plans are completed.

The Kuala Lumpur City Plan Team, taking cue from the FGD and public involvement activities in the FDTCP has similarly employed FGDs as a means of enhancing community involvement during the City Plan's preparation. FGDs have also been applied as a consensus building tool in a Land Readjustment Project in Kampung Pulau Meranti, Cyberjaya in 2000, and various Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

The protocol for all 'Publisiti Awal' programmes organised by the FDTCP requires a 'Publisiti Awal' report to detail out FGD issues and findings. This report contains valuable information on the current issues, perspectives and preferences of the community as to the direction and the framework of development in their respective communities. In the case of Local Plans whose completion may take more than 14 months, this 'Publisiti Awal' report containing FGD issues and findings can also be used as an interim document for local authorities to understand and track pertinent or controversial issues in their local authority areas before the Local Plans are completed.

FGDs in Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Sustainability Assessment (SA)

The introduction of assessment processes in development planning has also expanded the use of FGDs. Social Impact Assessment was first introduced in Malaysian Local Plans in 1999 in the MSC Local Plans. 'Social impacts' are the consequences on human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society'. Social Impact Assessment is thus a process to identify, predict, evaluate options and communicate information about impacts of a proposed project, policy, programme or plan on a community and their activities. In this context, the FGD has demonstrated its usefulness in the scoping of issues and identification of likely significant impacts on a community as a consequence of a project, plan or programme. The FDTCP project team for the MSC Local Plans had recommended the use of FGDs to explore community perspectives on the likely social impacts of the MSC development. Generally, when the SIA process is incorporated in Local Plans, Local Plan policies and proposals can be tested for negative or positive impacts using the Focus Group method.

Consequently, focusing on sustainable development has called for a more integrated assessment in plans and Sustainability Assessment was incorporated in the Local Plans process to ensure that Local Plan strategies and proposals meet sustainability objectives. Sustainability Assessment (SA) has been increasingly recognised internationally and becomes a forefront approach in assessing the sustainability of plans, policies and programmes. The introduction of Sustainability Assessment in Local Plans in Malaysia to address environmental, social and economic aspects in a more holistic and integrated manner has also found FGDs instrumental in identifying sustainable development issues leading to the identification of sustainability objectives of the Local Plans. The standard practice of employing FGDs in Local Plans is reflected in the Local Plan Manual prepared by the FDTCP.

FGDs have thus become instrumental in the process of identifying sustainability issues and sustainability objectives. The employment of FGDs in 'Publisiti Awal' has multiple benefits such as enhancing the content of the Local Plan's Terms of Reference, in addition to its role in contributing to the Sustainability Assessment process.

Focus Groups: Protocol in Local Plan Publicity

Though FGDs are **not representative,** they can be considered as relatively good 'snapshots' of particular situation or issues being observed in a study area.

Depending on the purpose of the FGDs, certain groups or individuals may be required to participate. In the case of the preparation of Local Plans and Special Area Plans in Malaysia where issues can be explored from a wide range of stakeholders and players through parallel Focus Group sessions organised by FDTCP, examples of participants are as follows:

- Community Leaders - local Members of Parliament, state councillors, local authority councillors, village leaders, Village Work and Safety Committees (JKKKs)
- Government agencies
- Residents' associations
- Land or building owners
- Non-governmental organisations and other interest groups
- Public and private sector town planners
- Members of the academia – universities, colleges, and other educational institutions
- Business organisations - chambers of commerce, manufacturers
- Religious leaders
- Professional organisations - MIP, PAM, MSIA, IEM
- Community service providers – Police, Fire Department, RELA
- Schoolchildren
- Mothers'/Women's associations
- Marginalised communities – Orang Asli, the disabled

The list is not exhaustive and is guided by the types of players and stakeholders in the study area. For project SIAs, the FGDs' participants necessarily include the potential impactees of the project.

Preparation for a FGD

Essentially a good FGD should have three phases:

Phase One	:	Background Research and Preparation
Phase Two	:	The FGD Session; and
Phase Three	:	Data Compilation and Analysis

Phase One: Background Research and Preparation

i. **Site Familiarisation**

- The land use survey conducted by the by the Local Plan study team becomes an activity that enhances site familiarisation before the FGD commences.

ii. **Identify Target Group**

- Though it is easy to give the responsibility of inviting FGD participants to the local authority, it is best that invitations be done by the FDTCP Local Plan/Special Area Plan teams to avoid bias and 'making do' with walk-in participants. Attendance can be solicited through phone calls explaining general objectives and time dedicated for the session. This would ensure that FGD participants understand their role and are prepared for the session.

iii. **Scheduling, Venue and FGD Format**

- Choose a venue with a suitable location accessible to participants and space to match the number of focus groups proposed. If there is more than one focus group, it is preferable that each group occupy a separate room.
- Prepare questioning guides; time allocated, and other matters to be discussed
- Prepare a guide for moderators and note takers, which should comprise of background information of study area, discussion format, list of tasks, general tips, etc. Trained moderators should ideally come from the project team or project office.
- Plan for heavy or light refreshments depending on time of the day and length of the FGD.
- Provide tokens of appreciation for all involved in the FGD.

iv. **Publicity and Public Awareness**

- Include announcements in websites, streamers, posters, brochures and other publicity materials and briefings to inform the public about the Local Plan/ Special Area Plan Publicity and FGD programme.
- Organise a public exhibition to outline the preparation of the draft plan and basic information about the area.

v. **Cost Estimation**

Estimate in broad terms the resources needed to prepare and carry out the FGD can be estimated as follows:

- Preliminary publicity and promotion.
- Printing and distributing the publicity materials.
- Organising of venues, accommodation, transport and moderators (if not provided within the project team).
- Administrative support costs, stationery, postage, telephone calls, etc.
- Costs of transcribing discussions in the FGD.

Phase Two: The FGD Session

i. **Administration of the FGD**

- Record profile of participants.
- Divide the participants into groups (8-12 per group). It is standard practice that each group be a mixed one determined by subject matter and/or individual composition. If necessary, form as many groups as possible so that all aspects of the planning issues and problems are covered. Control group not assigned to specific issues.
- Assign a moderator and two note-takers to each group and ensure that the FGD rooms are available and ready.
- Ensure that all relevant data (for example maps, background information, etc.) are made available for participants to refer to.
- Provide heavy or light refreshments depending on the time of day and length of the FGD.

ii. **The Focus Group Discussion Session**

- The moderator introduces him/herself and outlines the process and the ground rules for the conduct of the focus group. It is important to note that the session be conducted by the moderator from start to finish. Some Local Plan FGDs have a moderator as well as a chairman for the session. This is not recommended as it erodes the role of the moderator.
- Introduction of participants
- The moderator prompts discussion based on the 'questioning guide'. The role of the focus group moderator is to facilitate, not dominate discussion. The moderator encourages the participation of everyone and seeks to limit the domination of discussion by a few participants. The moderator may also give prompting questions (probes) to elicit expansion on interesting subtopics, such as 'Give us an example of ...', 'Tell us more about that', or 'Keep talking...'. The moderator should not ask closed-ended, 'yes-no' questions, such as 'Do you prefer X?'; instead always use non-directive prompts like 'What is your reaction to X?'. Each participant must be given the opportunity to give their views. All views irrespective whether they are relevant or not should be heard and recorded. However the moderator may seek to return conversation to the topic at hand.
- The discussion should not be structured as a 'one-by-one round the table' taking turns in speaking but should be a synergised and spontaneous one.
- The discussion should be recorded by the note-takers and may be recorded on tape or video to observe the participants' behaviour or empathy to assist in theorising the significance of certain issues. However, the participants' permission should be sought before recording the discussion on tape or video. The note-taker must record not only overt statements, but must also be sensitive to omissions, choice of words, non-verbal communications, expressions of emotion, energy levels, and the roles played by the participants.
- The group must keep to the schedule. The moderator should ensure that no participant will dominate the session or take too much time at the expense of others. Likewise, everyone should participate in the discussion; the moderator should prompt reluctant speakers.
- In FGDs designed not for consensus building but for issues identification (for example in a Local or Special Area Plan), the discussion would be adjourned after about two (2) hours.
- For FGDs designed for consensus building, at least 15 minutes must be allocated at the end of the session to summarise the discussions. The moderators and the note-takers should work on the summary and get the final consensus of the group.
- A presentation of the findings of every focus group may be conducted after the FGD to get further consensus and verification of issues.

Phase Three: Data Compilation and Analysis

i. **Compilation of Findings**

The study group should compile all the information recorded by the note-takers and prepare a full list of issues and suggestions. It is common practice to record the discussions verbatim and code emotive situations which may be related to the significance of a particular issue.

ii. **Analysis**

A number of software techniques are currently available on the market for qualitative and quantitative analyses. The aim should be to use a software package that is easy to operate, does not require much training, able to produce diagrams and charts that are easy to navigate, understand and has the ability to generate data and information in a coherent format which the user can extrapolate, interpret and draw useful conclusions from. Amongst popular quantitative software used are NuDist (Non-Numerical Data Indexing, Structuring and Theorising) (Dahlia Rosly 1997) and NViVo.

iii. **Producing the FGD Report**

Once all information from the FGD sessions have been gathered, the results and analysis should be written up in a way which:

- Sets out the context for the FGD in the preparation of the development plans for the area.
- States who was involved and how they were involved.
- Sets out the findings of the FGD, the discussions and consensus of opinions.
- Identifies the issues which need tackling and the opportunities which could lead to action.
- Includes a summary of the discussions and any other specific issues that emerged.

CONCLUSION

FGDs have demonstrated its usefulness in plan-making as a participatory tool as well as a tool for exploring existing issues and future scenarios in a particular study area. In the preparation of Local Plans and Special Area Plans, FGDs have identified themes as well as added more depth and details to the terms of references of these studies. In plan sustainability assessment, FGDs have been rendered useful in identifying sustainability issues and for constructing sustainability objectives in the Local Plan Study areas. In plan and project SIAs, FGDs are considered useful in identifying likely social impacts of a particular proposal. FGDs have also been employed in Local Agenda 21 programmes.

Though FGDs are not representative, they do provide important 'snapshots' of a particular situation which can be further verified, if required, by expert opinion and other survey techniques. The use of FGDs in Local and Special Area Plans however can be further improved. FGDs of participants should be pre-determined and contacted earlier rather than of the 'walk-in' category. From observation, FGD groups in Local Plans tend to be bigger than 15 people per group; the ideal size should not exceed 12 participants per group. Note-takers are instrumental to a successful FGD, thus should be sufficiently trained so as not to lose or misinterpret important verbal data.

From observation, analysis is usually the weakest stage in Local/Special Area Plans. In most Local Plan cases, substantial valuable information is collected, but not sufficiently and appropriately analysed. Qualitative software should be used to assist navigation of transcripts, which could then be theorised, extrapolated, interpreted and drawn useful conclusions from.

Comprehensive FGD reports which contain significant community issues in the Special Area Plan study area or Local Plan district can become interim guides for local authorities to identify main public issues and act upon before the Draft Plan is completed.

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A CASE FOR CYCLING IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Most towns and cities in Malaysia have been designed to cater for motorized vehicles. This has contributed to rising noise and air pollution in our urban areas and has also made cycling secondary to motorized travelling. With increasing awareness of the need for a sustainable environment and a healthier lifestyle, cycling as an alternative mode of transport is now ready for a relook. Maybe now is the right time for our towns and cities to be designed with cyclists and pedestrians as the main focus and make the dependency on motorized vehicles a thing of the past.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, bicycles used to be an important mode of transport but sadly today they are largely reduced to the confines of sports and recreation. This, many argue, is due to the over-emphasis on motorized modes of transport in the planning of our towns over the decades; and the accruing traffic has, to a large extent, contributed towards making cycling unsafe, impractical and unpopular. However, increasing environmental awareness coupled with spiralling global energy prices of late have raised the desire to re-examine the potential of the simple bicycle as a sustainable mode of urban transportation.

CYCLING IN THE PAST

Bicycles were first introduced in the country probably during the British colonial period of the early 1900's. During their early introduction, bicycles were brought in mainly from England for the British administrators as an early form of transportation and recreation, and the public servants for the carrying out of their official duties. Brand names such as Raleigh and Phillips were synonymous with bicycles in the old Malaya then but not many people could afford them as they were relatively expensive and considered luxury items. However, this changed when cheaper bicycles were imported from Japan in the 1930's (interestingly, it is widely-known that bicycles were instrumental in the relinquishing of Malaya from the British to Japan during World War II).

The use of bicycles as a cheap form of transport was especially popular in the country in the 1950's and 1960's. Their cousins, the tricycles and trishaws were not only used to taxi people and goods around town, but also to sell food and products. As there were not many motorized vehicles on the roads in those days, bicyclists and pedestrians could co-exist in harmony with motorized vehicles.

THREATS TO CYCLING

Rapid industrialization in the 1970's had resulted in a rapid increase in the number of motorized vehicles in Malaysia. Consequently, a long period of rapid economic growth and urbanization in the 1980's and 1990's had further contributed to the rising number of cars and motorcycles on our roads. As a result, the use of bicycles in the country as a mode of transport declined considerably over the same period and Malaysia has turned into an auto-dependent country since then. It is very common nowadays that even a short trip to the local grocery store is a motorized one and the use of bicycles in our towns and cities is very much confined to sports and recreation. Only in smaller towns and rural areas that bicycles are perhaps still being used for commuting, shopping and running errands but even these are limited to mostly the elderly, the poor and school children.

Figure 1: Cycling in Kuala Lumpur in the 1950's

Source: Binder's Classic Malaya, 1998

Figure 2: An old man with his bicycle in a rural area in Butterworth, Penang

Source: Bruno Sananès, 1996

Table 1: Registration of Motor Vehicles (New) by Type, Malaysia, 1996-2005

Year	Motorcycle	Motorcar	Bus	Taxi	Hire & Drive Car	Goods Vehicle	Others	Total
1996	322,145	318,765	2,620	4,358	2,545	69,234	30,844	750,511
1997	364,214	372,343	2,947	5,257	1,860	65,160	28,396	840,177
1998	237,776	159,642	797	3,569	552	11,786	6,342	420,464
1999	236,779	296,716	508	1,925	1,724	19,987	8,102	565,741
2000	238,695	344,847	544	2,635	2,883	24,316	11,949	625,869
2001	234,751	395,891	652	3,169	1,348	25,612	13,866	675,289
2002	222,685	419,713	919	4,446	1,242	25,415	16,768	691,188
2003	321,234	424,753	1,014	5,542	1,231	29,975	17,041	800,790
2004	397,977	472,116	1,290	7,746	1,797	33,169	18,268	932,363
2005	422,255	537,900	1,568	5,002	3,411	33,532	16,440	1,020,108

Source: Road Transport Department, Malaysia, 2005

Table 2: Road Accident Statistics in Malaysia, 2005

Type	Casualties	%
Pedestrian	3,523	7.49
Motorcycle	31,222	66.41
Bicycle	1,679	3.57
Car	7,372	15.68
Van	824	1.75
Bus	359	0.76
Lorry	1,032	2.20
4 Wheel Drive	585	1.24
Others	416	0.88
Total	47,012	100.00

Source: Royal Malaysia Police, 2005

As the number of motor vehicles increases, cycling is no longer safe and attractive as a transport mode and further expansion of towns and cities has made the use of motorized vehicles much more important than bicycles. The Government policies with regards to the use of more sustainable forms of urban transportation are also not fully implemented and at times contradictory. On one hand, there have been efforts (although some consider them merely lip-service) to encourage more Malaysians to use public transport, but on the other, the automobile industry has also been the main focus of the Government. Malaysia manufactures its own national cars apart from assembling foreign ones and intends to be a regional hub for the industry within the Southeast Asian region. The automobile industry has been considered an important growth sector in the national economy. Malaysia is the biggest passenger car market and has the highest level of motor vehicle ownership in the region. The million dollar question then is would public transport be allowed to grow at the expense of the automobile industry?

Whatever the answer is, the fact remains that cars are more popular than ever as a mode of transport as compared to public transport (see Table 1). They are now considered indispensible and have become part of the Malaysian lifestyle.

The rising number of motorized vehicles such as cars, buses, lorries and motorcycles has made cycling on Malaysian roads very dangerous and impractical. Many foreign travellers who cycle around Malaysia have also commented that it is unsafe to cycle in our towns and cities as the traffic is too heavy. Table 2 shows cycling casualties constitute almost 4% of road accidents in Malaysia in 2005 and cyclists together with pedestrians are categorized as vulnerable road users.

Issues on cycling in Malaysia are not only confined to safety and health but are also related to theft and poor facilities. The high incident of thefts involving bicycles only discourages people to own them. The lack of facilities for bicycle parking (and hence their security) unlike in many other countries only exposes their bicycles to the risks of them being stolen. Whether rightfully or not, bicycle thefts in this country tend to always be associated with the poor, the youngsters, the juvenile delinquents or the illegal immigrants who some argue, would take every opportunity to own a bicycle as a form of recreation or transport or for monetary gains.

CYCLING TODAY

Despite consigning cycling to the ‘back seat’ of our daily travel, bicycles are still owned by the general public but the level is low. As far as bicycle types are concerned, ‘road’ or utility bicycles are generally used by the adults whereas mountain bikes and the BMX variety are generally used by the youngsters. Only in smaller towns and rural areas are utility bicycles likely to be used for short commuting, shopping and running errands. In the major urban areas however, they are more likely to be used for recreation. To a certain extent, bicycles are now at least gaining some popularity again in major urban areas thanks to the presence of hypermarkets such as Carrefour, Tesco and Giant which can sell imported bicycles mostly from China cheaply. Most of the bicycles sold are the mountain and BMX types which are especially more compact and can easily fit into car boots. In addition, the rising number of SUV and MPV ownership also makes bicycles marginally popular again although as a form of recreation in which they can be brought along for a weekend getaway in the mountains or the seaside.

In residential neighbourhood parks too, more children can now be seen cycling thanks to the cheap imported varieties probably from China and Taiwan. Even though some of the bicycles are of low quality, they can be upgraded or modified accordingly at the local bicycle shops which sell parts of various grades. Shimano, a leading bicycle parts manufacturer, has a factory in Malaysia producing bicycle components for both the local and overseas markets. Without doubt, most of the newer utility bicycles owned by the general public today are made in China but the older ones were mostly made in England and Japan; whereas for the mountain bikes and BMXs, they are mainly made in China, Taiwan and Japan but some are made locally. LeRun is an example of a Malaysian-made bicycle brand that has successfully made a presence not only in the local scene but also overseas. Proton, the national car maker, is also known for making high quality racing bicycles and mountain bikes for export. However, as the bicycles produced by Proton tend to be of high-tech ones, they tend to be costly and hence, out-of-reach of most Malaysians who would then opt for the cheaper ones made elsewhere. Apart from mountain bikes and BMXs, racing bicycles too are gaining popularity among the cycling enthusiasts. Again, unlike in other countries where bicycles are an important mode of transport, racing bicycles like all bicycles in Malaysia are only meant for sports and recreation.

POLICIES ON CYCLING

Transportation policies in Malaysia have always been geared towards improving public transportation, tackling road safety issues and reducing road accidents; but there has never been any explicit mention of cycling. The country's National Physical Plan (NPP) for example gives emphasis on the need to have a more efficient, safe and comfortable public transport system to enable a modal shift from private car usage. It also recognizes the need to promote Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and an integrated public transportation system. Among the measures are the provision of park-and-ride facilities and provision of walkway linkages to connect the railway stations with other major landmarks or developments in the town centres. There is no emphasis on cycle ways or facilities for cyclists (such as bicycle parking areas) in the transportation system. Ironically, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development Regional Roundtable for East Asia and The Pacific Region held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 9 - 11 July 2001 recognized the need to promote the use of environmentally-friendly means of transport such as cycling to protect the environment.

The fact is, the way most towns and cities have been designed in Malaysia, cycling has always been ignored. If the apparent lack of integration between transportation and land uses is bad enough, the over-emphasis of motorized traffic in the design of our roads has worsened the issue. There has been very little attempt if any, to provide dedicated routes for cyclists or adopt measures to make cycling safe on our city streets. Cyclists have to share the same width of road with other vehicles – a near impossible task as even current roads do not have enough space for the motorized vehicles. The provision of bicycle (and also pedestrian) lanes is almost absent in our towns and cities because of this secondary importance given to cycling over the years. Mindsets need to be changed quickly as when development gets more intensified, there will be no room left to accommodate such facilities.

Figure 3: Bicycles on the sidewalk of Malacca without proper parking facilities

Source: Callan Bentley, 2002

Figure 4: A typical Malaysian household with bicycles for recreation

Source: Author, 2005

Figure 5: Motorized vehicles dominating the traffic scene in Kuala Lumpur

Source: Author, 2005

Figure 6: An absence of cycling culture in Kuala Lumpur today is evident

Source: Author, 2005

Oddly enough, even in areas (usually new developments) where planning guidelines on the provision of these facilities exist, for some reason or the other they are rarely adhered to by developers and/or overlooked by local authorities. For those areas where dedicated cycle and pedestrian routes are provided, they are usually unconnected to adjoining areas; thus limiting their use to the confines of the local neighbourhoods only. This reflects the apparent lack of coordination of the local authorities concerned.

As outlined earlier, the emphasis of cycling in Malaysia can be best described as 'patchy'. Barring the odd localised cycling routes provided for the general public by local authorities, it can be safely said that the government to a large extent has not been promoting cycling in the country as an important mode of daily transport. So far, the many cycling events organized and the facilities provided were to promote cycling as a sport. The Le Tour de Langkawi for instance is an annual international cycling race organized to support the sport; ramp facilities provided by certain local authorities are meant for BMX enthusiasts; and elsewhere, parts of parks and forests are reserved for mountain and downhill biking. All these are a result of the many active cycling communities and companies in Malaysia who take part in, demand for, organize or sponsor local and international cycling activities and events. Although the sporting type, these activities nevertheless have at least instilled or kept going the interest in cycling among the public. Possibly a similar strategy can be used to widen this to include daily use. With increased interest, the facilities would follow.

ATTITUDES TOWARD CYCLING

The general public have always perceived cycling in our towns and cities as not practical and conducive due to the dangers of heavy traffic, the hot and humid weather and even it being 'unMalaysian'. Most new graduates who enter the job market would always plan to buy cars once they have saved enough for the deposit. It becomes a matter of concern to them as to what kind of transport they go to work in. Obviously, nobody wants to reach his or her office sweaty, grimed or bruised. In addition, cycling in Malaysia is always associated with the poor and the low income earners. Office workers could be (wrongfully) ridiculed for cycling to work; hence putting off their desire to use this mode of travel for commuting. In contrast, in many other countries it is seen as practical and even 'trendy' to ride bicycles to work. However, some expatriates from these countries can be seen cycling on our city streets to get to work and they have proven that cycling is still possible in our cities with some effort and determination. To the locals however, it is something amusing to see this group of people cycling on the city streets, an unfamiliar sub-culture best described by a Bath University psychologist as 'lycra-clad street-warriors'. They would always consider this as only common in Western countries (although Japan and China are Far-Eastern countries with some of the highest levels of bicycle usage in the world; and the Japanese enjoy their rides even during the hot summer days). This is the perception which should be changed and it would have to be the responsibility of everyone - especially the government - to bring back cycling into the mainstream of our transportation system - and one of the ways is to make our cities 'cycling-friendly'.

PROSPECTS ON CYCLING

Many NGOs, NPOs, professional bodies, citizen groups, etc, have constantly raised their concerns on the high level of motorization in the country and have urged the government to give better attention to the more sustainable form of urban transportation including light rail, bus and cycling. For others, increasing the awareness of the public on cycling is another option. For example, a movement called Sustainable Transport Environment in Penang (STEP) was established in 1998 by a group of concerned citizens and voluntary groups in the state, with the primary aim of addressing the concerns and advocating the interests of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and mobility-impaired groups. Its activities among others include the holding of fun cycling events in residential neighbourhoods and the drawing up of a Cycling Action Plan for pilot areas in the state. They have also prepared and distributed leaflets to the public called 'Pedal Power' which described the merits of cycling and the rights and needs of cyclists. Whereas in Kedah, the Kedah Old/Classic Bicycles Association (Persatuan Gerek Tua/Klasik) was formed in 2003 to revive an interest in bicycling with its membership standing at 112 including members from as far away as Penang and Perlis. The association has participated in activities such as the National Day parade, Citrawarna Malaysia Festival and Le Tour de Langkawi to help instil interest in cycling among the public.

Realizing the importance of cycling, some local political organizations, corporate sectors, NPOs, charitable bodies, etc, regularly donate bicycles to poor school children in rural areas to help them commute. It is also observed that many schools have chosen to award their outstanding students with bicycles – this could be a good way to instil cycling at an early age. Some far-sighted politicians are also cycling to their local constituencies as they believe it is a more practical way for them to get to know the local problems better. Some government bodies and NPOs have also taken the initiative to promote safe cycling among school children. The Fire and Rescue Volunteers, Malaysia (MVFRA) for instance regularly organizes 'Cycle Safely Programme' for school children in urban and rural areas. In Pahang, the police in Kuantan and Pekan have decided to form police units on bicycles to patrol the towns which they claimed is effective in controlling certain crimes in these areas.

CYCLING IN JAPAN

In Japan, bicycles are widely used as a form of transportation especially for trips to local shops and train stations. It is amazing to see a very technologically-advanced country like Japan which produces the major portion of the world's cars having a high usage of bicycles by people from all walks of life. This shows bicycles are still highly valued in Japanese society unlike in many other countries (Malaysia included). Perhaps the compactness of the urban development especially in certain parts of the Japanese cities makes cycling a popular mode of travel. In the case of Shimokitazawa for instance, a very lively and energetic suburban neighbourhood of Tokyo, bicycles are widely used on a daily basis. The

Figure 7: Some of the members of the Kedah Old/Classic Bicycles Association

Source: The STAR, Oct 9 2006

Figure 8: Bicycle friendly neighbourhood in Shimokitazawa, Japan

Source: Author, 2006

narrow traditional street patterns do not deter people from cycling and they co-exist in harmony with pedestrians as well as motorized vehicles. It even appear that the central core of the area is over-dominated by pedestrians and cyclists rather than cars - unlike in many other parts of Tokyo – and the authority has to impose fines on bicycles which are parked illegally.

Even all is not rosy in Shimokitazawa. Many argue that instead of imposing fines, the authority should try to find a solution on how best to solve the bicycle parking problem. To make it worse, it is understood that there is a plan to redevelop the neighbourhood and among the proposals is to widen the road along the core area. Such a proposal will only encourage the use of motor vehicles into it and thus making cycling dangerous and less attractive.

Figure 9: The author cycling in Japan

Source: Author, 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The high usage of private motor vehicles in Malaysia over the years has resulted in intolerable levels of traffic congestion, as well as air and noise pollution in our urban areas. Despite the continuing call for improved public transport services over the years, nothing much has come out of it. Hence, there is a need to evaluate the use of other forms of transportation which are more sustainable in the long run; and for this reason, the simple bicycle and the benefits it possesses is worthy of consideration. To do this, cycling-friendly countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Japan could become benchmarks in our quest to develop our own model of a cycling society.

Obviously, a lot needs to be done to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transport in Malaysia. Firstly, there must be a firm commitment from all levels of government in introducing this form of transport in the planning and development of our towns. For a start greater measures should be taken to balance the policies between the use of motorized and non-motorized vehicles in our urban areas. Secondly, there must be well-formulated programmes to educate the public on the benefits of cycling; by no means an easy task especially when they have been auto-dependent for so long. Perhaps for a start, cycling should be inculcated or instilled to children at a young age. Parents and schools should teach children the importance of practical bicycle use and how cycling could help protect the environment and the health benefits associated with it. The media too could play a role to better inform the public about the importance of cycling in the country.

Thirdly, more serious efforts should be made to integrate land use and transportation planning that would reduce the high-dependency on motorized vehicles. Urban planners should also be more creative in finding solutions - from the creation of more compact urban forms which make walking, cycling and public transport more convenient, to the development of towns and cities that are more cyclist and pedestrian friendly.

In short, cycling culture should be re-introduced seriously in Malaysia and as the saying goes, 'Where there is a will there is a way!'

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PLANNING PEOPLE PLEASE!

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Why?
Have we not been planning for the people?
The people are not interested!
Only a few came and gave their views and even those are of personal in nature!
Since we are the qualified professionals in our field, the public will have to accept what we suggest!
The people are not mature enough and they will delay the project!

Let us dispel these myths!

Involving the people in the planning process has always been a basic human rights issue and will always be one. A heavily public-involved plan-making process is an indicator of a maturing society.

Public participation is a political principle or practice, and may be recognised as a human right (to public participation). The term may be used interchangeably with the concept or practice of stakeholder engagement and/or popular participation *(Wikipedia).*

Thus it is part of a democratic process as enshrined by the United Nations' Rio Declaration on Agenda 21.

Public participation is part of 'people-centred' or 'human-centric' principles, which have emerged in Western culture over the last thirty years, and has had some bearings of education, business, public policy and international relief and development programmes. Public participation is advanced by the humanist movements and in the context of post-modernism. Public participation may be advanced as part of a 'people first' paradigm shift. In this respect public participation may challenge the concept that 'big is better' and the logic of centralised hierarchies, advancing alternative concepts of 'more heads are better than one' and arguing that public participation can sustain productive and durable change.

In some jurisdictions, the right to public participation is enshrined by law. The right to public participation may also be conceived of as human right, or as manifestation of the right to freedom of association and freedom of assembly. As such the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, have public participation and freedom of information provisions in their legal systems since before the Middle Ages. Democracy and public participation are closely connected. Democratic societies have incorporated public participation rights into their laws for centuries. For example, in the US the right to petition has been part of the First Amendment to the US Constitution since 1791. It is assumed that public participation depends on the public's access to information. Hence laws regarding public participation often deal with the issue of the right to know, access of information and freedom of information. The right to participation may also be advanced in the context of equality and group rights, meant to ensure equal and full participation of a designated group in society - for example in the context of disabled people.

In some countries public participation has become a central principle of public policy making. In the UK it has been observed that all levels of government have started to build citizen and **stakeholder engagement** into their policy-making processes. This may involve large-scale **consultations**, **focus group researches**, **online discussion forums**, or **deliberative citizens' juries**.

Public participation is viewed as a tool, intended to inform planning, organising or funding of activities. Public participation may also be used to measure attainable objectives, evaluate impact, and identify lessons for future practice.

In the USA public participation in administrative rulemaking refers to the process by which proposed rules are subject to public comment for a specified period of time. Public participation is typically mandatory for rules promulgated by executive agencies of the US government. Statutes or agency policies may mandate **public hearings** during this period.

Participatory Development

In economic development theory, the desire to increase public participation in humanitarian aid and development has led to the establishment of a numerous context-specific, formal methodologies, matrices, pedagogies and ad hoc approaches. These include conscientisation and praxis; **participatory action research, rapid rural appraisal** and **participatory rural appraisal**; **appreciation influence control analysis; 'open space' approaches**; **objectives oriented project planning**; **vulnerability analysis** and **capacity analysis**. There is a plethora of approaches in public participation. Just pick any one!

Public participation in the plan making process differs in mechanism and approaches from one country to another. Benchmarking the city of Washburn in Wisconsin,USA the public involvement takes a **total approach.** Public involvement is carried out by law at all stages of the plan making and plan implementation phases; which are during;

- Establishing the planning procedure stage
- Data collection and analysis stage
- Defining community goals and objectives stage
- Strategy formulation and draft comprehensive plan stage
- Plan review and adoption stage
- Plan implementation stage(annually)
- Evaluate Planning Process stage

But what is inspiring in the Washburn example is the emphasis given by law to the following principles of public participation in the plan making process where we are still lacking and left far behind. That city acknowledges that:

1. Every citizen has the right to participate in local government decision making.
2. Because the plan will significantly impact the future growth and the development of the city, local residents, businesses and property owners have a significant interest in shaping that future.
3. Citizens possess a greater combined knowledge of the history, present dynamics and future challenges surrounding the city than those vested with overseeing the planning process.
4. Citizens provide a variety of perspectives and represent a fertile source of ideas, creativity, and solutions based on their wide breadth of life experiences, knowledge and skill. Their input will help produce better planning decisions.
5. If a plan is not representative of the public's attitude and values, the public will not value and support the plan. A collaborative planning endeavour is therefore necessary to give the public a stake in the planning process, to engender a sense of pride in the final planning product and to ensure public support for future planning decisions and implementing and applying the plan.

Ref: City of Washburn, Wisconsin Public Participation Plan 2006 as part of Washburn Comprehensive Plan (http://www.co.washburn.wi.us/other/election/comprehensive-planning/overview.htm)

The Washburn public participation process involves many forms of medium and format; among others through local and regional vernacular media, websites, focus group consultation and meetings, forums and workshops. The use of the public library is also an important venue for public outreach.

Participation during policy formulation involves opinion survey as well as visual preference surveys where series of photographs are shown to get public opinion on visual preferences of different land uses. This community visioning sessions are integral to create issues and are held at various locations of the city and involving all sectors of communities including ethnic, gender and age groups. Special sessions with the youth community are also held.

As we evolve towards a more mature society, the act of deliberative processes will be an important part of nation building. As such getting people involve in decision making will remain high on the agenda of planning authorities. Managing dissent in any community is not as important as in giving as many avenues for people to give their views. Providing these avenues, platforms and medium in a fair manner must be imbedded in every town planning thinking in this country. Current positive developments in the plan making process in Malaysia in the use of various approaches like *focus groups, charrettes* and *village appraisals* are steps in the right direction. **Consensus decision making rules!**

Focus Group Consultations

A **focus group** is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

Types of Focus Groups

Variants of focus groups include:

- **Two-way focus group** - one focus group watches another focus group and discusses the observed interactions and conclusions.
- **Dual moderator focus group** - one moderator ensures the session

progresses smoothly, while another ensures that all the topics are covered.

- **Duelling moderator focus group** - two moderators deliberately take opposite sides on the issue under discussion.
- **Respondent moderator focus group** - one or more of the respondents are asked to act as the moderator temporarily.
- **Client participant focus groups** - one or more client representatives participate in the discussion, either covertly or overtly.
- **Mini focus groups** - groups are composed of four or five members rather than 8 to 12.
- **Teleconference focus groups** - telephone network is used - computers connected via the internet are used.

Charettes

Literally means 'wagon' in French. Charettes are workshops especially conducted during design stage. The word *charrette* may refer to any collaborative session in which a group of designers drafts a solution to a design problem. While the structure of a charrette varies, depending on the design problem and the individuals in the group, charrettes often take place in multiple sessions in which the group divides into sub-groups. Each sub-group then presents its work to the full group as material for future dialogue. Such charrettes serve as a way of quickly generating a design solution while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people.

Charrettes take place in many disciplines, including urban planning. In urban planning, the charrette has become a technique for consulting with all stakeholders. Such charrettes typically involve intense and possibly multi-day meetings, involving municipal officials, developers, and residents. A successful charrette promotes joint ownership of solutions and attempts to defuse typical confrontational attitudes between residents and developers. Charrettes tend to involve small groups; however the residents participating may not represent all the residents nor have the moral authority to represent them. Residents who do participate get early input into the planning process. For developers and municipal officials, charrettes achieve community involvement, may satisfy consultation criteria, with the objective of avoiding costly legal battles. Other uses of the term 'charrette' occur within an academic or professional setting, whereas urban planners invite the general public to their planning charrettes. Thus most people (unless they happen to be design students) encounter the term 'charrette' in an urban-planning context.

In fields of design such as architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, interior design, or graphic design, the term *charrette* may refer to an intense period of work by one person or a group of people prior to a deadline. The period of a charrette typically involves not only a focused and sustained effort, but also 'all-nighters' or sleepless nights of toil. The word 'charrette' may also be used as a verb, as in, for example, 'I am charretting' or 'I am on charrette [or: en charrette],' simply meaning I am working long nights, intensively toward a deadline.

Village Appraisals

The purpose of a Village Appraisal is to set out a vision in how the community wants to develop and identify the action needed to achieve it. Most Village Appraisals establish the needs of the community, issues and problems, and contain an action plan for key improvements.

In concluding, while there are many modes and approaches in consensus building, planners must ensure in getting as many stakeholders' involvement as possible in the planning process. Healthy consensus decision-making processes usually encourage and engage out dissent early, maximising the chance of accommodating the views of all minorities. Since unanimity may be difficult to achieve, especially in large groups, or unanimity may be the result of coercion, fear, undue persuasive power or eloquence, inability to comprehend alternatives, or plain impatience with the process of debate, consensus decision making bodies may use an alternative benchmark of consensus.

**As a proponent of pro-choice, I still stick to the anthem that PLANNING IS A DEBATE.
Salut!**

BOOKS:
Editor's Choice

LILIAN HO YIN CHAN
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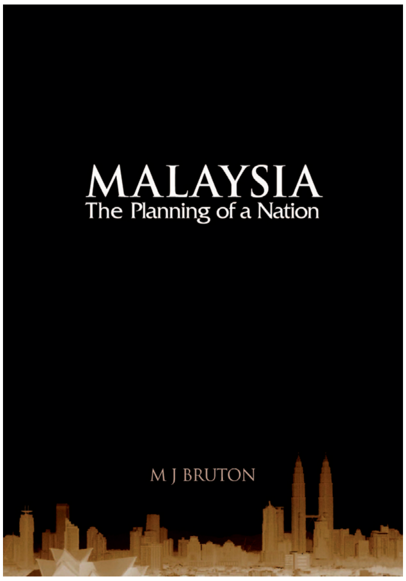

Michael J. Bruton (2007)
MALAYSIA – THE PLANNING OF A NATION
PERSADA (Persatuan Pegawai Perancang Bandar dan Desa Malaysia)
ISBN: 978-983-43703-0-5

This book has been published as a 'special edition' which was launched at the gala dinner of the World Town Planning Day 2007 celebrations themed 'Town and Country Planning - 50 Years' to commemorate Malaysia's 50 years of independence as a nation. Professor Bruton takes us through a walk of history as he traces how the nation grew and changed from the founding of Malacca in the 15th Century, through the Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial period from the 16th to the first half of the 20th Century, the gaining of independence in 1957, and the significant milestones in the planning of a nation up to the government of the day in the early 21st Century. The professor has taken a broad look at the planning and development process in Peninsular Malaysia, critically examining the Malaysian planning system and planning hierarchy, spanning economic, socio-economic and physical planning with special focus on regional and rural development planning, as well as the town and country planning system in Peninsular Malaysia.

He observes how economic planning has evolved from the mainly sectoral 'Old Economic Policy' of public development programmes from 1947-70 to the 'New Economic Policy' from 1971 to the present day, with its overriding objective of national integration and unity, through its two-pronged strategy of poverty eradication as well as the elimination of economic imbalances among the various ethnic groups in the country. He has meticulously reviewed the first two Malaya Plans and the subsequent nine Malaysia Plans and assessed the outcome of these plans, noting the shortcomings of the earlier plans and their subsequent improvements.

He praises the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) as being more sophisticated than earlier plans in which the quality of the data used had improved significantly with consequential improvements in forecasting. The economic objectives, and socio-economic policies and programmes were set out more fully and clearly, with a move away from the primacy of agriculture and rural development towards a manufacturing and services-oriented economy. The contribution of regional development and urbanisation in achieving economic growth and social change was addressed centrally, and for the first time, an explicit policy for regional development and urban policy was articulated which was *'to spread urban development rather than to perpetuate its polarisation in particular regions'*.

Likewise, the Fourth Malaysia (1981-1985) is of special significance to town planners as Professor Bruton points out that, for the first time, reference was made to the role that the newly-introduced town and country planning system would make in facilitating development, viz. *'urban studies will be undertaken to prepare Structure Plans for existing towns which will have prospects for the creation of agglomeration economies. The Structure Plans will focus on key areas such as spatial zoning, orderly traffic arrangements, urban drainage, sewerage and waste disposal, environmental protection and the provision of adequate housing and utilities. By 1990 the majority of state capitals will have Structure Plans to guide their future spatial and economic expansion.'*

In the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990) he noted that the plan stated that regional development will be supported by a number of policies which would '*be incorporated in the National Spatial Plan and the NUP (National Urbanisation Policy) studies which are expected to be completed in the early part of the period. These two studies will provide a basis for the integration of spatial planning with planning and implementation at the macro, sectoral and project levels and take cognizance of the national level plans already in existence, including the Industrial Master Plan and the National Agricultural Policy.'* According to the Professor, the fact that a National Spatial Plan was proposed could be interpreted as an indication that the Government was becoming uneasy about the way in which policies for socio-economic change were not being integrated with the land use planning system.

Overall, the period of the NEP (1971-1990) was considered to have been successful in terms of poverty eradication and redressing ethnic imbalances. However, Professor Bruton is of the view that problems associated with the environment and urbanisation had not been adequately addressed. The Malaysia Plans paid lip service to environmental problems, by and large correctly identifying the issues but not implementing policies to deal with those problems such as deforestation, erosion, siltation, flooding and pollution. Anecdotal and visual evidence suggests that the environment deteriorated significantly during NEP period.

The period of 1991-2000 which marked the final decade of the 20th Century, saw the review of the NEP which was re-branded as the NDP (National Development Policy 1991-2000), following a period of consultation with a range of different groups and taking into account the report of the National Economic Consultative Council. The main aim of NDP was *'to attain a balanced development in order to establish a more united and just society'*. The highlight of this period was the announcement by the then prime minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir of Vision 2020, his far-sighted goal and long-term perspective for the country. The book devotes a section to Vision 2020 and brings to light the philosophy and thoughts of Tun Dr. Mahathir as he outlined his thoughts on the future course of our nation and how we should go about to attain our objective of a fully-developed and industrialised country by the year 2020. Dr. Mahathir argued that Malaysia could not become a developed country until it had addressed the nine strategic challenges facing the country since independence, the most fundamental being the establishment of a united Malaysian nation.

Running parallel with Vision 2020 was the Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2)1991-2000); the main economic aim being to nurture a private sector-led economy, and the creation of a more viable and resilient Bumiputera commercial and industrial community. The strategic thrusts of the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) prepared then aimed to diversify the industrial base, enhance human resource development, promote technological advances, and develop tourism, private secondary education and specialised healthcare. It also for the first time gave priority to environmental issues. To mitigate the environmental deterioration in the urban areas, the Government implemented improvements to the public transport system, including the light rail transit systems, the use of electric powered trains and the improvement on public transport. During the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) measures to protect the environment and conserve natural resources were maintained such as environmental impact assessments for all major projects in an attempt to ensure sustainable economic and social environment. Overall the performance of the Malaysian economy during OPP2 was highly satisfactory despite the debilitating effects of the South-East Asian financial crisis. The construction sector was boosted by the privatisation of large infrastructure and civil engineering projects, and the development of advanced communications, computer-related and financial services were accelerated. The period also witnessed the completion of Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Port Klang and Tanjong Pelepas, and special feature towns such as Kulim High-Tech Park, Putrajaya and Cyberjaya. Overall the strategies and policies contributed towards strengthening and modernising the industrial base of the country.

The National Vision Policy 2001-2010 (NVP) guided by the strategy set out in Vision 2020 is amplified in the Third Outline Perspective Plan 2001-2010 (OPP3), which stressed on competitiveness in the face of globalisation, a knowledge-based economy and environmentally-sustainable development. The Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) was concerned with economic and social resilience after the South-East Asian financial crisis. This called for development of human resources, strengthening research and development, and science and technology, upgrade IT infrastructure and develop Malaysia as a global ICT and multimedia hub. In addition, the National Spatial Plan proposed in the Eighth Malaysia Plan was intended to provide the necessary management tool for effective and efficient urban development. During the Ninth Plan period (2006-2010), measures are to be undertaken to accelerate the development of the less-developed states. The identification of three major trans-border growth areas – the Eastern Corridor, the Northern Corridor and the South Johor Region - in which development efforts will be focused, each headed by a private sector company to be responsible for the planning and implementation of proposals for development, introduces a new and radical approach to regional development.

Chapter Three is dedicated to regional and rural development planning in Peninsular Malaysia and examines regional differentials in the Peninsular and the role of regional development planning and rural development projects in addressing those differentials. Interestingly he has chosen to highlight regional development planning in Penang and Johor, both hotbeds of development, one a highly-urbanised, always-has-been-different political entity, the other as the area to watch as it takes the lead as one of the three latest regional development areas. For Penang, Professor Bruton has provided us with the opportunity of insight into two early Master Plans which had been quite inaccessible, the Munro Report of 1964 and the Nathan Report of 1970, both of which broadened the vision and methodological approach and planning in Malaysia, yet sadly was not recognised or formally adopted at the time. He has also provided concise accounts of the Penang Strategic Development Plans of 1992 and 2001, the Johor Operational Master Plan 1996, FELDA and other regional development authorities such as JENGKA, DARA, KEJORA, KETENGAH, KESEDAR, KEDA, PERDA and LADA.

Chapters Four and Five gather together all that is relevant to town and country planning in Malaysia and provides the big picture of the profession and the service, tracing its introduction into the country based on the British system in 1912, and the appointment of Charles Reade as the first Town Planning Adviser in 1921. From the early town planning enactments to its incorporation as part IX of the Town Board Enactment (Cap 137) in 1939, the constitutional and legislative basis for town and country planning took a giant step forward and underwent radical changes with the introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 and its subsequent amendments in 1993, 1995 and 2001. An interesting section is devoted to the Town Planners Act 1995 under which only registered town planners can produce Structure Plans and Local Plans, carry out urban and regional development planning studies and prepare and submit applications for planning permission. Related legislations such as the National Land Code and the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 as well as advisory documents on planning standards and guidelines are also described. He has dealt extensively with town and country planning in practice from 1976 to 2001, with a brief review on the planning system in practice in Penang from 1973 to 2000. This review is particularly interesting as it gives an indication of the problems associated with the 1976 Act, leading to a reluctance to gazette Local Plans, and the innovative way in which the state began to approach its development and conservation responsibilities.

Chapter Five focuses on the reform of the town planning system since 2001, and looks into the impact of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 2001, sectoral policies and strategies at the national level, including the National Urbanisation Policy and the Third Industrial Master Plan. The National Physical Plan is discussed at length, and the Professor views its preparation, as well as the National Physical Planning Council as having overwhelming advantages if town and country planning is to play its part in facilitating the changes sought in the Malaysia Plans. However he expresses concern over the decision by the Federal Government to establish special authorities linked to private companies to be responsible for planning the development of the Regional Growth Conurbations in the north, south and east of the Peninsular, particularly with regard to the town and country planning system within those areas. Other special projects of national importance which have been reviewed in this chapter are the Multimedia Super Corridor, Putrajaya, the new administrative centre, Cyberjaya, the 'intelligent city', and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport over which the Professor has drawn some interesting conclusions.

In Chapter Six, the final chapter, Professor Bruton concludes that since independence in 1957, Malaysia has been transformed into a mature political democracy, grown a modern and prosperous economy and successfully weathered a number of major crises. After a somewhat laissez-faire start, it has since 1971, planned systematically to deal with its problems, and innovative approaches have been adopted when traditional methods have not worked. Town and country planning has contributed to the implementation of policies for change, in particular social and economic change. There has been radical reform of the town and country planning system since 2001. Planning is now a serious business in Malaysia based on a strategic and hierarchical approach. Although the earlier system of town planning was based on the British model, the country has moved on, and with a new generation of town planners, changes have been made and the outcome is a much more robust system that has been tailored by Malaysians to meet Malaysian needs.

PLANNING UPDATES

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Federal Department of
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AUGUST 2008

1. FORUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EIA): TWENTY YEARS ON - WHAT NEXT?

Date	:	**12 August**
Venue	:	**Holiday Villa Hotel, Subang Jaya**
Organiser	:	**ERE Consulting Group**
Web Site	:	**http://www.ere.com.my**

This forum discussed on the implementation of EIA since it was introduced in 1998, and how it could shield the adverse impacts of development and stop undesirable projects. It also focused on the role of the Department of Environment in EIAs.

2. THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SEISMOLOGY AND TSUNAMI WARNING CENTRE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (TWC SOP)

Date	:	**25-29 August**
Venue	:	**Auditorium of Malaysian Meteorological Department, Petaling Jaya**
Organisers	:	**Meteorological Department with the collaboration of UNESCO and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**
Web Site	:	**http://www.met.gov.my**

This five day workshop was held to provide technical assistance to national tsunami warning centres in developing their own standard operation procedures (SOPs). Participants were given training by professionals from UNESCO-IOC and International Tsunami Information Centre (ITIC) who are experts in tsunami and the operations of tsunami early warning centres. A total of 40 local and international participants were given the opportunity to participate in 'table top' exercises which enable them to prepare a comprehensive SOP that could be applied in tsunami early warning centres.

SEPTEMBER 2008

1. NUSAJAYA SECURITY MASTER PLAN - CPTED WORKSHOP

Date	:	**3-4 September**
Venue	:	**Carcosa Seri Negara, Kuala Lumpur**
Organiser	:	**UEM Land Holdings Bhd.**
Web Site	:	**http://www.nusajayacity.com**

This workshop focused on the proposed security arrangements for the Nusajaya Master Plan as safety and security have been identified as key priorities in the development and management of the regional city. The Master Plan is meant to ensure the safety and security for those who live, work and play in Nusajaya through the establishment and incorporation of the world's best practices in security design principles into the design and planning of this city; hence making it the first of its kind and a benchmark for other cities around the world to follow.

The lessons learned could then be used in the preparation of the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia to be used for the other cities in the country.

OCTOBER 2008

1. 2ND INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE ON EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI HAZARDS AND RISKS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, SOUTH CHINA SEA AND WESTERN PACIFIC MARGINAL SEAS REGION

Date	:	**6-8 October**
Venue	:	**Sutera Harbour Resort, Kota Kinabalu**
Organisers	:	**MOSTI with UNESCO–Intergovernmental Oceanographic Committee (IOC), UNESCAP, UNDP and Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC)**
Web Site	:	**http://www.met.gov.my**

A total of 88 participants from 18 countries participated in this roundtable dialogue to share scientific findings amongst scientists, researchers, regional organisations and national tsunami warning centres. This roundtable was a follow-up from the 1st Roundtable, also organised by MOSTI with UNESCO-IOC in April 2006 in Kuala Lumpur.

The objectives of this meeting were:

- To assess earthquake and tsunami vulnerability in Southeast Asia, the South China Sea and Western Pacific Marginal Seas Region.
- To review the level of preparedness and mitigation measures in place and identify gaps/weaknesses.
- To identify opportunities to strengthen regional and international partnerships, networking and capacity building.

2. CONFERENCE ON EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE AND RISK REDUCTION

Date	:	**14–15 October**
Venue	:	**Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC), Putrajaya**
Organisers	:	**Malaysian Meteorological Department (MMD), Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM), University of Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)**
Web Site	:	**http://www.met.gov.my**

The conference evolved around the understanding of current science on extreme weather and climate change, the identification of the vulnerability and adaptation responses of different sectors to extreme weather and climate change, and the creation of awareness and enhancing capacity on risk reduction.

3. EXPERT TALK: SPATIAL PLANS IN PRACTICE - LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

Date	:	**22 October**
Venue	:	**Wisma Tun Sambanthan, Kuala Lumpur**
Organiser	:	**Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia**
Web Site	:	**http://www.townplan.gov.my**

This talk was given by Prof. David Shaw, Head of the Department of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool. He presented the experiences of spatial planning as currently practiced in the United Kingdom and focused on a new approach in local planning called Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) system that requires local practitioners to develop partnership approaches across the local authority, the local community and the development industry. It is a long-term, interactive project that will form part of the government's contribution in creating sustainable towns and settlements. The study will provide reliable evidence in understanding how inclusive and pro-active plan-making contributes in creating sustainable town and settlements.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP: NEGOTIATING THE POST-KYOTO LANDSCAPE - HIGH LEVEL TRAINING FOR DECISION MAKERS AND NEGOTIATORS

Date	:	**20-22 October**
Venue	:	**Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Kuala Lumpur**
Organiser	:	**Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations**
Web Site	:	**http://www.aeu.edu.my/climatechange/index.htm**

The focus of this workshop was to discuss on climate change and its serious threats to sustainable development, with adverse impacts expected on the environment, human health, food security, economic activity, natural resources and physical infrastructure. The target audience of this training workshop was the member states of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), representing a diverse set of countries in climate negotiations.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SIA) SEMINAR

Date	:	**24 October**
Venue	:	**Wisma Tun Sambanthan, Kuala Lumpur**
Organisers	:	**Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment (MSIA)**
Web Site	:	**http://www.townplan.gov.my**

The seminar was aimed at improving awareness on 'people-centric' approaches in land use planning through Social Impact Assessments (SIA) and to highlight the role of SIAs in the context of social responsibility.

NOVEMBER 2008

1. WORLD TOWN PLANNING DAY CONVENTION 2008

Date	:	**5–7 November**
Venue	:	**Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC), Putrajaya**
Organisers	:	**Jointly-organised by Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia and Ministry of Housing and Local Government**
Web Site	:	**http://www.townplan.gov.my**

The World Town Planning Day (WTPD) is a dedicated day celebrated on 8th November every year to commemorate the roles and contribution of town planners towards achieving sustainable development and creating quality living environment. This celebration began 56 years ago and is currently celebrated in almost 30 countries worldwide simultaneously on 8th November every year. Since 1988, this special day has become an annual event celebrated by the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia.

The theme for this year was 'Planning for Sustainability' and it was celebrated together with World Habitat Day. To celebrate both events, an exhibition themed the 'Role of the Industry in Sustainable Development and Harmonious Cities' was held together with a seminar where seven papers were presented covering a wide range of issues relating to the themes of the events.

2. WORLD HABITAT DAY 2008

Date : **5–7 November**

Venue : **Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC), Putrajaya**

Organisers : **Jointly-organised by Federal Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia and Ministry of Housing and Local Government**

Web Site : **http://www.townplan.gov.my**

World Habitat Day has been celebrated on the first Monday of every October since 1985 when it was first designated by the General Assembly of UN-HABITAT. This day is meant to reflect on the conditions of the living environment, the state of human settlements, assess progress made so far, and explore ways and means to meet the new challenges confronting us towards achieving sustainable development.

For this year, the theme for World Habitat Day was 'Harmonious Cities' and it was celebrated together with the World Town Planning Day via a jointly-held exhibition and seminar.

3. WASTE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2008

Date : **11-12 November**

Venue : **Sime Darby Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur**

Organisers : **ENSEARCH together with Ministry of Housing and Local Government and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment**

Web Site : **http//www.ensearch.org**

This Waste Management Conference and Exhibition focused on issues relating to Scheduled Waste Management and Solid Waste Management for industries, oil and gas, and plantation sectors. The conference was aimed towards presenting an opportunity for both the regulators and key industry players an avenue to deliberate and exchange current waste management issues, updates and implications of the new Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Bill 2007 as well as to look at the updates and challenges faced by the industry in relation to the Scheduled Waste Regulations 2005.

4. SEMINAR ON SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SIA) IN THE ASEAN REGION: ENHANCEMENT OF SIA PRACTICES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Date : **19–20 November**

Venue : **Crystal Crown Hotel, Petaling Jaya**

Organisers : **Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment (MSIA)**

Web Site : **http://www.kpwkm.gov.my**

http://www.malaysiansia.com

Responding to the need for greater accountability and transparency in development and programme planning, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development together with the Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessment (MSIA) took the initiative to hold this seminar to discuss ways in pushing across community interests within the planning, policies and project level decision-making processes. Local experts, implementing agencies and experts from other ASEAN countries were invited to share their experiences and expertise. Beyond the ASEAN boundary, an expert from the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) was also invited to provide invaluable ideas and experiences to be shared amongst local and ASEAN participants.

DECEMBER 2008

1. REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS FOR WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Date	:	**1-5 December**
Venue	:	**Equatorial Hotel, Bangi**
Organiser	:	**National Hydraulic Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM)**
Web Site	:	**http://www.nahrim.gov.my**

Extreme weather conditions of floods, droughts and sea level rise have become more common in the Asia-Pacific region in recent decades, including in Malaysia. The impact of climate changes on water resources has threatened sustainable economic development in rural areas, cities and river basins. Developing countries and poorer regions and communities have become especially vulnerable to the negative impact of climate changes. This workshop discussed on the development of partnerships for water and climate change particularly relating to the analysis and dissemination on the potential impacts of climate change on water resources, and how governments, organisations and communities can adapt their water management strategies and activities.

THE OLD TIN MINING TOWN OF TAIPING BOASTS MANY OF MALAYSIA'S FIRSTS. THE CENTRAL MARKET IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF A 19TH CENTURY MARKET STRUCTURE CONSISTING OF TWO BUILDINGS, OF WHICH THE FIRST WAS BUILT IN 1884 AND THE NEW MARKET A YEAR LATER. THIS IS ONE OF THE FIRST EVER KNOWN MARKETS AMONG THE EARLIEST PUBLIC SQUARES IN THE COUNTRY AND WAS PART OF THE OPEN SPACE NETWORK CREATED FOR THE CITY.

Central Market in 1885

JABATAN PERANCANGAN BANDAR DAN DESA
SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA

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