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An Assessment of Land Use Planning Activities through Development Plans in Urban Housing

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Abstract
Land use planning is a contributing factor in achieving better housing development in urban areas. However, the ineffectiveness during the preparation of development plans and its implementation through development control has given the impact on housing development. This paper presents a study on the effectiveness of housing planning and control activities. The best approaches to assisting its effectiveness among decision-makers and implementers in housing development were revealed. Thus, the study employs a qualitative method through in-depth interviews conducted among town planners. The study discovered the most important aspects are the availability of data in improving housing planning and control.

Keywords: Land Use Planning; Housing Planning; Planning Control; Development Plan

1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, the current planning mechanisms are recognised as important tools in the housing planning process, especially in urban areas. It is possible for town planning to impose constraints on housing development through the development plan by which the land is identified for future development and development policies on intensity, designs, and land-use zoning. Also, through development control, the local planning authority set procedures to be followed, processing requirements, planning standards, and guidelines, and duration of its activities to preserve, monitor, and protect the environment. The issues concerning the development control process include delay of planning approvals, lack of consistency in decision making, the poor content of the development plans, and lack of workforce resources.

The weaknesses and ineffectiveness of the planning system in the preparation of development plans (Rameli, 2009; 2011; Ahmad, 2011) and its implementation through development control mainly during housing application and approval (Yakob *et al*., 2012) have significantly given the impact to the housing production process. Thus, the aim is to explore the strategies or plan of actions to ensure the effectiveness of planning activities such as policy formulation, land location, size determination of housing development, and housing application procedures. The planners viewed the current practices of housing planning in the study area as weak and ineffective based on certain highlighted aspects. They postulate that the existence of housing problems in Selangor occurred due to the weaknesses and the ineffectiveness of the housing planning process, starting from the formulation of the policy stage to the planning control stage.

One of the most critical issues is there are loopholes in the formulation of the policy due to several aspects such as market fluctuation, unavailability of data to monitor the implementation of policies (Rameli, 2009; Mohd, 2011; Foo *et al*., 2014), inadequate computerised systems in the applications submitted and existing housing developments (Chua & Deguchi, 2008), durations for Local Plan (LP) reviews

(Yakob, 2012), lack of experience among officers (Yakob, 2013; Monkkonen, 2013). Little study on income projections and lack of housing market consideration during feasibility studies (Rameli et al., 2011; Dunse, 2013).
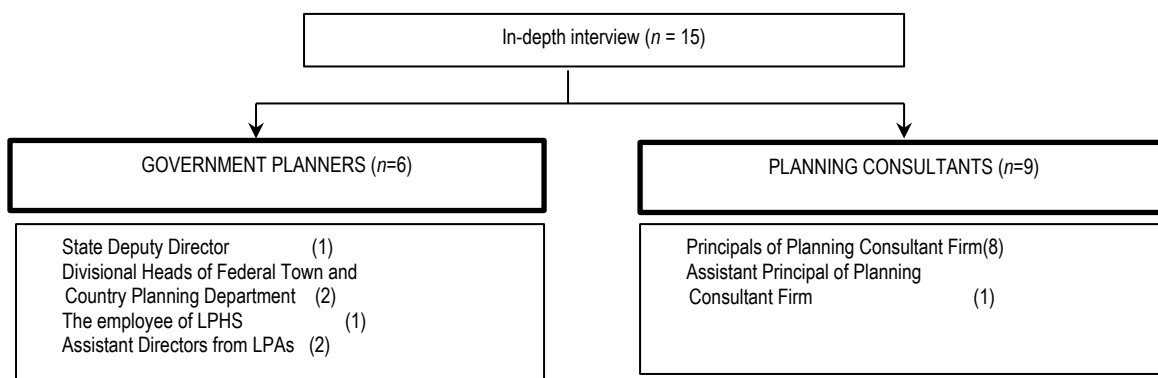
Most planners perceived that consideration of economic factors in determining land location, especially in terms of housing demand, has been given less attention. Consequently, this generates housing zones that do not reflect the actual demand (Jae, 2011; Gurran et al., 2011). They also pointed out errors in the calculation of population projection, which results in surplus and shortages. Other factors of oversupply highlighted by the respondents are poor implementation and enforcement (Othman, 2006), locational disadvantages (Rameli, 2007; Mohd et al., 2009; Lin, Y. & Meulder, B. 2012), unaffordable price of the houses (Burgress, 2010; Bakhtiyar, 2013), over planning and land expansion.

Furthermore, concerning land size, it was claimed that there is no actual data on the types of houses based on income patterns of people who need housing. Besides, they also pointed out that there are loopholes in planning guidelines for housing development, especially within the provision of community facilities and open space (Maliene et al., 2005; Mohd et al., 2007; Mohit et al., 2010; Ismail et al., 2015). It was claimed that the problems are much related to the size and quantity required for facilities and open space provisions within the housing areas. This is due to the increased land value and limited access to land supply.

In addition to the planning control aspect, most planners perceived that the level of compliance is low for issues of low-cost housing (LCH) policies and housing category, especially for LCH and medium-low cost housing (MLCH). Among the factors leading to non-compliance is weaknesses in the preparation of the structure plan (SP) and local plan (LP) (Yakob, 2015, Yakob, 2016), not enough understanding of zoning and laws, the prolonged period of plan reviews which lead to out-dated content, lack of integrity among officers and the pressures of development (Osman et al., 2014). Regarding the factor of difficulty during the planning control process, they perceived that waiting time (Ball, 2011) is the most difficult, especially when it comes to water supply requirements in the study area. Political influences have caused difficulty in getting approvals (Ahmad, 2013). They also perceived that in some cases, bribery is encouraged due to the issues of delays.

2.0 Material and Method

The study is conducted through a face-to-face expert interview approach with the government planners and planning consultants in Selangor as a sample. To select appropriate respondents, the purposive sampling technique was applied by choosing respondents based on their years of experience of more than ten (10) years and their involvement in the preparation of development plans, housing layout plans, submission, and approval of housing planning applications. A total of fifteen respondents (n= 15) was selected and interviewed which includes a State Deputy Director, divisional heads of Federal Town and Country Planning Department ($n = 2$), an employee of *Lembaga Perumahan Dan Hartanah Selangor* ($n= 1$), and Assistant Directors from local planning authorities (LPAs) ($n =2$). They hold professional managerial positions with J48 and above. The remaining respondents are private town planners holding the positions of Principals of town planning ($n = 8$) and Assistant Principal ($n = 1$) of consultant firms. They are also corporate members of the Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP). These respondents were identified after analysing the data from the respondent's profile collected during the questionnaire survey. In analysing the data, government planners were coded as G10 to G15 and planning consultants as P1 to P9 (refer figure 1).

Fig. 1: Category and Total Number of Respondents involves in An In-Depth Interview

The interview session was started for two and a half months, from 10 July to 20 September 2014. The questions comprised seven (7) main questions that attempted to gain insight on the issues and problems and uncover the reasons behind the current practices of housing planning and control in the study area. Questions highlighted were; 1) loopholes in the policy for housing, 2) advantages and disadvantages of the new policy *"Rumah Selangorku*," 3) Factor of land location, 4) Factor of land size, 5) Factor of non-compliance with planning requirements, 6) Factor of difficulties during the housing approval process, and 7) Suggestions to improve the housing planning and control system.

However, this paper only discusses question 7, which was based on issues and problems raised in questions 1 to 6. Each session took approximately 60 to 90 minutes, depending on respondents' interest and was video and audio recorded. However, this study has a limitation. During the interviews, the respondents are unable to answer the questions correctly and tendency to elaborate on certain aspects that were out of the scope of the issues. Therefore, in some cases, the researcher had to guide respondents and propose several answers to avoid bias in terms of response accuracy. Also, additional explanations were omitted during the analysis.

Atlas.ti software was used to find deeper meaning and connections within the interview transcripts by mining for themes, similarities, and differences (Friese, 2012). All responses were coded as lean coding using an *Atlas*.ti software. *Lean-coding* was derived from variables or concepts in the study, namely policy, land location, land size, guidelines, and housing application and approvals as well as recommendations. Each variable was coded into several categories (*families*) that answer the research questions and their objectives. The transcript files were assigned and imported into a new "*Hermeneutic Units*" (HU) or a project in the software. The HU editor then shows the content of all data files, and the quotations were coded following suitable coding items derived from the research questions.
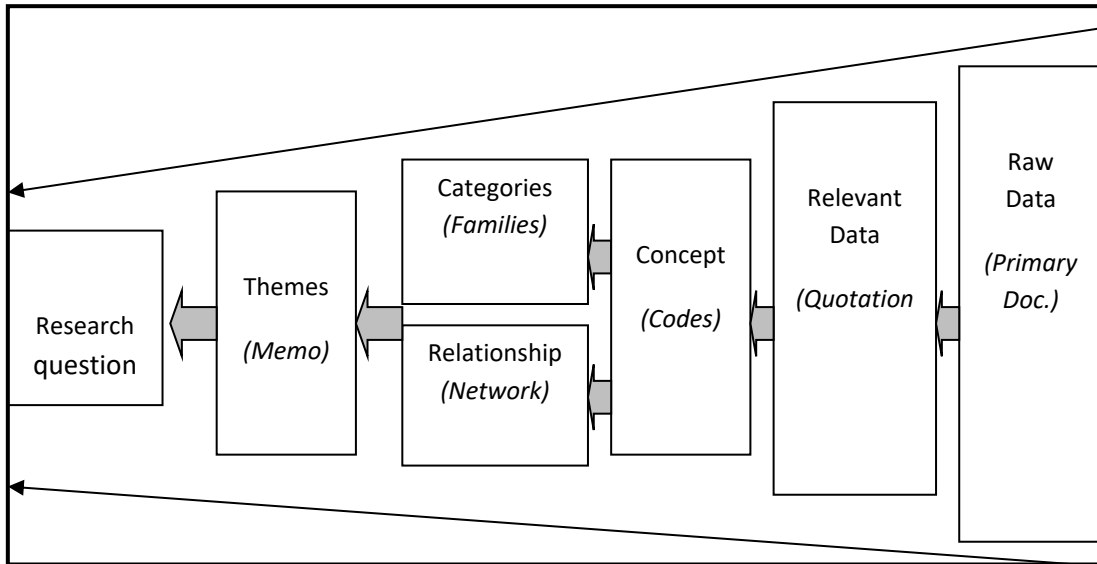

Fig. 2: Flow of data analysis to develop themes related to the research questions
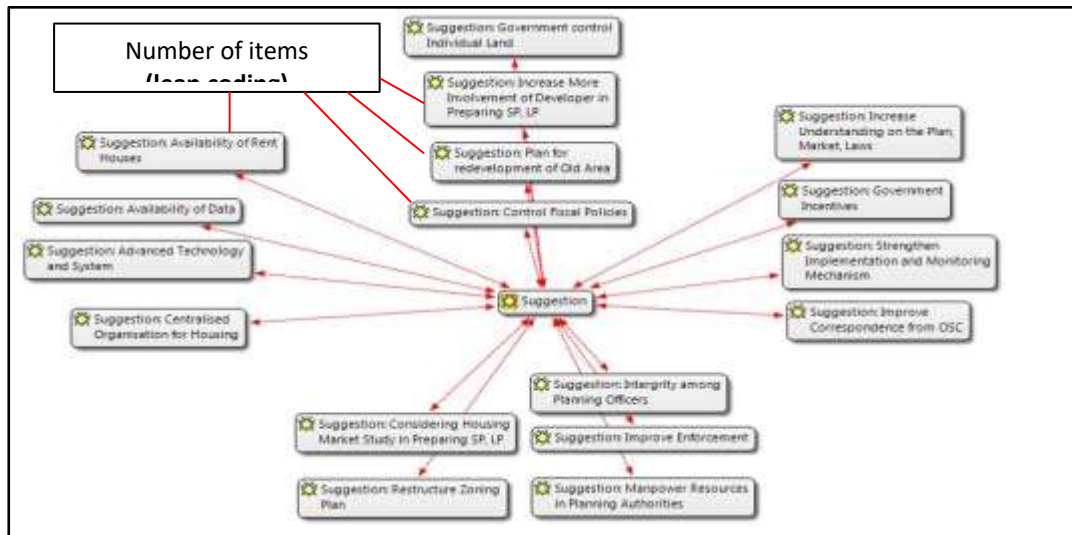(Source: Ducharme, 2014)

Fig. 3: Network Mapping with 17 items (lean-codes) as output from *Atlas*.ti software

The number of items for each coding was then identified and categorised from the list of quotations. As output, *network mapping* (relationships) was used to build theoretical models defined by a set of nodes and links within *Atlas*.ti. (Figure 3). These nodes can be any number of objects, which are - *Quotations*.

Meanwhile, links were also used to specify the relationship between two nodes. Figure 2 shows the flow of data to develop the themes leading back to the research questions. The software does not write the report but helps in narrating components by providing visual representations and readily available quotes to be incorporated in the report (Ducharme, 2014).

3.0 Result and Discussion

Based on the result from *Atlas*.ti, there are seventeen (17) items (based on lean coding), as output included in the network mapping relating to suggestions and recommendations highlighted by government and private planners during the interview survey. However, for a summary of findings in Table 1, two (2) items - considering housing market study & improve enforcement were combined with SG10 and SG14, respectively. The suggestions refer to the question of *"How to streamline and strengthen the planning and control in urban housing development?"* Findings indicated that suggestions from respondents fall within two (2) categories; during the preparation stage and the implementation stage. In this case, the implementation stage points towards the roles of the Federal government, State government, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) (Table 2). Meanwhile, table 1 is a summary of the result showing that suggestion SG4 "availability of data" and SG10 "increasing understanding of the plan, laws and housing market" are the most important aspects to be considered and improved in housing planning and control activities with 47 percent respondents respectively. The recommendations are expected to help improve and make the process of land use planning activities in urban housing development more effective.

Table 1. The summary result of a suggestion to improve housing planning and control in urban housing development

Lean-Coding	Description of suggestions	Respondent Rate *N*= 15 (%)	Ranking Rate
SG1	More involvement of developers	1 (7)	6
SG2	Advanced technology and system	2 (13)	5
SG3	Centralised organisation for housing	4 (27)	3
SG4	Availability of data	7 (47)	1
SG5	Restructure zoning plan	3 (20)	4
SG6	Integrity among planning officers	3 (20)	4
SG7	Improve correspondence from OSC	1 (7)	6
SG8	Availability of rent houses	2 (13)	5
SG9	Government incentives	2 (13)	5
SG10	Increase understanding of the plan, laws and market	7 (47)	1
SG11	Plan for the redevelopment of old areas	1 (7)	6
SG12	Manpower resources in LPAs	1 (7)	6
SG13	Control fiscal policies	1 (7)	6
SG14	Improve enforcement and strengthen implementation and monitoring mechanism	6 (40)	2
SG15	Government controlled individual land	3 (20)	4

Table 2. Results from In-depth Interview to improve the Housing Planning and Control Process

Preparation Stage	Implementation Stage	
▪ Availability of data (e.g.: Income projection study) ▪ Restructure the zoning plan (e.g.: Location & size of housing land)	Role of Federal Government	▪ Control fiscal policies
▪ Plan for redevelopment for future housing ▪ Increase involvement of developer during FGD ▪ Increase understanding of the plan, laws & housing market studies among officers	Role of Selangor State Government	▪ Availability of government incentives ▪ Availability of rent houses temporarily for people in need ▪ Control individual land (ownership)
	Role of Local Planning Authorities	▪ Provision of centralised units for housing in each of LPAs ▪ Increase the use of advanced technology & system ▪ Increase manpower resources ▪ Increase the level of integrity among officers ▪ Improve OSC correspondence (waiting time) ▪ Improve monitoring & enforcement

4.0 Conclusion

This paper has presented a framework of strategies to ensure the effectiveness of housing planning and control activities through an in-depth interview with planners. The analysis indicates housing market study in terms of demand and price of houses should be considered during the preparation of structure plan (SP) and local plan (LP). To portray the actual requirements of future housing in certain areas, housing forecasting is vital, other than the total quantity of housing needs. The analysis also indicates the formulation of specific policies that enable the LPAs to consider the housing market and study on income projections in the process of housing approval are essential

to be formulated in the SPs. Additionally, the consideration of housing market demands in determining a location for future housing development is very appropriate and rational.

Failure in the distribution of the housing land area, the analysis indicates that there are many contributing factors and justifications. The leading causes are the influence and interference of politicians, lack of income study, poor implementation, zoning not reflecting the actual demand, and zoning not taking into account the amount of land acquired. Concerning non-compliance, there are suggestions highlighted, such as improvement of planning control in terms of enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, increasing the level of knowledge and integrity among those involved in approvals. Furthermore, it was perceived that the problem of waiting time could be improved through the use of advanced technology and system in LPAs. The increase in workforce resources for monitoring implementation will enhance and strengthen enforcement.

This paper's outcomes are expected to guide future researchers in exploring land-use planning activities and urban housing development processes. Furthermore, the weaknesses that were identified, together with the suggestions to improve the process of housing planning and control activities, could be a useful reference for urban planners, LPAs as well as state authorities in planning and controlling housing supply more effectively. However, it should also be noted that this research requires continuous assessment by identifying and ranking the significant factors and explaining the relationship between issues, the contributing factors, or both. The property players not limited to the perspective of town planners as in this paper, such as housing developers, property analysts, local councillors, and house buyers, maybe approached to gain information about the contributing factors.

Acknowledgement

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