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URBAN PLANNERS' EFFORTS IN RESOLVING CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO FORCES: GROWTH AND CONSERVATION

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Abstract

Urban and regional planning has the following major objectives: Promotion of accessibility, the use of resources as wisely as possible, separation of conflicting land uses, preventions of slum development, upgrading of settlements and environmental pollution control (Dantudu, 1998). The paper highlights the major difference between two urban planners conflicting interests of growth and conservation. The research states the factors influencing growth and related factors attached to conservation. Furthermore, major planning policies such as planning development guideline, environmental protection act, town planning act, mix land use approach and land use planning approach elaborated in achieving conservation and the extent of planners' current interest in sustainable development. Finally, Malaysian urban planners' efforts in harmonizing the contradicting forces, efforts in conserving the environment and in achieving sustainable development are explained.

Keywords: Urban and regional planning, Land use planning, Conservation, Environmental protection, Sustainable development.

1. Introduction

Urban and regional Planning as defined by Keeble (1968) (as cited in Dantudu 1998) sees planning as an art and science of ordering the use of land and characters, siting of building and communication routes, so as to achieve maximum practicable degree of economics, convenience and aesthetics. Additionally, Dantudu (1998) further states that town planning has the following major objectives: (a) Promotion of accessibility (b) The use of resources (c) Separation of uses (d) Preventions of Slum Development (e) Upgrading of Settlements (F) Environmental Pollution Control. Furthermore, the growth of large cities, decay of industrial centers, the inner-city of neighborhoods, and the crisis of municipal services provision have suggested to many observers that urban areas are caught up by forces outside their own control. These resulted to the third Marxism definition concerned with question of who control production (Dear and Scott 1981).

2. Literature Review

Girardet (2004) itemized the following factors that lead to urban growth as: (1) Migration due to jobs and business opportunities, (2) Urban education, health and other services, (3) Reproduction of urban population, (4) Cheap energy supply, (5) Technological development, (6) Imports substitution and economic Growth, (7) Economic globalization, (8) Urban political and financial power, (9) Urban centered transportation system, and (10) Ease access to global food supply. Galony (1995) asserts that, our generation continuously faces the challenges of rapid changes in society and these changes includes sophisticated technology, changes in the standard of living, and an acceleration in the consumption of space. Additionally, 3 billion people live in 24 globalizing developing countries and they record an average 5% growth rate in the 1990s (Gill as in Heidelberg, 2005).

The people residing and working in the city occupy, organize, and utilize space on the earth surface. They have need for space for different purposes and the space needed is for different uses and an accelerated form of urban growth and the world population is experiencing urban growth as well as urbanization (Northan

1979). While Kofi Annan as in Girardet (2004) says ‘we have entered the urban millennium at their best, cities are engines of growth and incubators of civilization. They are cross roads of ideas, places of high intellectual ferment and innovations.....’. Additionally, Zhang as in Stifle and Watson (2005) states that, the balance between urban regeneration and conservation has become a hard task for China’s local planning authority. More so, environment is all natural landscape as well as the socio economics, physical and manmade environment surrounding us. With the advance in science and technology, we can create balance (conservation) between our resources and our needs and that we are able to understand the forces behind these two strata of the environment.

Girardet (2004) argues that, unless we change the way we live and use the resources within them, we may not survive and New York’s Central Park is surrounded by girdle of skyscrapers. Nature should be at the heart of every city to make people aware that they are not just product of technology. He added that, a pleasant urban environment with public spaces, parks and garden come to regard as crucial for assuring positive social life. Cohem (1999) states that the principle of conservation is to bring the preservation of individual buildings into its urban. Conservation will aid cultural values and not limited to isolated example. He stated reasons for conservation as: (a) Characteristics of urban form, (b) Locality and sense of place, (c) Internal proportion and relations, (d) Style and design, and (e) Construction methods and materials (Cohem, 1999). Accordingly, this paper aims to explain the parallel interest of growth and development, show efforts urban planners particularly the Malaysian planners in effort to harmonize the contradicting force growth and conservation and sustainable development as tool to achieve the conservation.

3. Planning Roles In Resolving The Conflicts Between Growth And Conservation

From the above explanations, growth is unavoidable process in human development while conservation is crucial for sustenance of human race. The following are the ways planning used as tools in harmonizing growth and conservation.

Planning development guideline: This is a comprehensive document where developmental regulations are spelt out and are used as major tool by the planning to resolve conflict between growth and development through development control and to achieve sustainability. For example, the Malaysian Total Planning and Development Guideline has the flowing objective:

“Creating a balance between physical development and human development in terms of spiritual and noble universal values for the sustainable progress of the country” (J P B D planning guidelines NO: 4/2000).

Environmental Protection Acts: This is an important document that is used as planning guides in conserving the natural environment. It is very vital tool used by planners in the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EAI) for instance, the Malaysian Environmental quality Act 1974 and Land Conservation Act of 1960. These positively help Malaysian planning in harmonizing between growth and conservation effectively.

Town Planning Act: This is a document used in planning to balance between growth and conservation. For instance, Malaysian Town and Country Planning Act 1974 guides planners in all issues regarding land and development like’s percentages allowable to be developing and area to be left as open space or green. Any land conversion must be in accordance to the planning stated guidelines and floor area ratio among others, all these are efforts to resolve conflict between the two opposing forces.

Mix land use approach: Birch (2009) states that segregation of land uses encouraged in the past is not relevant now. The trend to mixed usage brings a number of potential benefits. It ensures vitality through activity and diversity. It makes an area safer. It reduces the need to travel, making people less reliant on cars, and brings environmental benefits. There is no doubt that mix land uses development will provide practical value in providing a firm foundation for achieving the complex goals of sustainability (Coup land, 1997).

Land use planning approach: Mustafa as in Abdullahi, Okada and Yusoff (2004), analyzing the role of land use planning is a vital to promote an understanding of how planning can help to realize sustainability and balance development. Generally land use planning has the following roles as: (a) Translate socio economic and other policies into spatial and physical form. To attain to this, all policies have to be evaluated and its spatial and physical implications. (b) Emphasizing on the aspect of environmental quality and physical planning (c) Providing facilities to ensure an equitable and higher standard of living for all (d) Land use planning policies takes into consideration the latest development in science and technology, which in turn can help to achieve a higher quality of life.

4. The Extent Of Planners’ Current Intrest In Sustainable Development

According to Hough (2004), there is inseparable links between nature, cities and sustainability. Patrick Geddes, Ian Mcharg, Phillip Lewis and others eloquent voices concerned bringing together nature and human habitat, have shown the process that shape land. It provides indispensable basis for shaping human settlement. Hough (2004) added that, the Brunt land commission interprets sustainability as meeting the needs of the present and

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Business council on sustainable development sees it as “The simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity”.

World Commission for the Environment and Development (WCED 1978) as cited by Saadiah (1994), sees sustainable development as a process of change in which exploitation of resources, direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes are all in harmony and enhance both current and potential to meet human needs and aspirations.

Aims of sustainable: Saadiah (1994) explains the objectives of sustainability as to promote development that enhances the natural and built environment in a way they are compatible with: (a) The conservation of natural assets, (b) Avoidance of damage to the world’s natural eco-system, (c) The need to achieve greater quality, and (d) Avoidance of imposition of added cost or risk on succeeding generation. While the goals of sustainable development include the following: (1) Resource conservation for present and future generation, (2) Built development and use of the environment respect and is in harmony with natural environment, (3) Environmental equality, prevent pollution and degradation, protect regenerate ecosystem, (4) Prevent development detrimental to human health, (5) Social equality, and (6) Political participation.

5. Malaysian Urban Planners Efforts In Conserving The Environment And In Achieving Sustainable Development

Saadiah (1994) states that, Malaysia like developing countries has conflicting objectives of pursuing economic growth and preserving the environment. To turn Malaysia into developed nation by the year 2020, GNP is targeted to grow 8%. Joined the global activity promoting sustainable development in the national and international scenes such as Langkawi Declaration on the environmental at the common wealth Heads of governments meeting (CHOGM) held in Kuala Lumpur 1989. The vocal participation in Rio Earth Summit also showed the great concern of Malaysia in conserving the environment. Additionally, she further explains the efforts of Malaysia to recreate forest, and the compensatory forest plantation project is replanting degraded forest which is a very good and commendable approach. It is clearly explained in (J PBD No: 4/2000) intelligently the tree relationships as: The relationship between MAN and the CREATOR, relationship between MAN and the MAN and The relationship between MAN and the ENVIRONMENT. Additionally, the third relationship gives the solid foundation laid by Malaysia in preserving and conserving the natural environment.

6. Conclusion

Indeed growth and conservation are two conflicting forces, planning harmonizes these through various approaches which the majors are development guidelines, environmental protection acts, town and country planning acts and land use planning which implement development control and exercise planning law and policies with reference to Malaysian efforts to resolve the two major conflicts. Lastly, planners interest in sustainable development is growing rapidly and the worth praising effort of Malaysian planners in achieving sustainability is a major indicator of their concerned to achieve development through environmental sustainability.

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