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THESIS

BARANGNYA PERAK... DAN PEMBACA

LIVABILITY IN MALAYSIAN URBAN SETTLEMENT

301.36
no.1
1412

By

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A Thesis Submitted For The Partial Fulfillment Of The

ADVANCE DIPLOMA IN TOWN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

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July, 1981

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to thank the many people who have in one way or another helped him in the writing of this dissertation. In this respect, special acknowledgements go in particular to En. Wan Walleh bin Hj. Wan Ibrahim who could spare his precious moments in critisizing and constant advice to the writer's work.

Also not forgetting gratitude to Cik/Puan Fatimah Mohd Nor for her help not withstanding the short notice and little time given for her to type the manuscript.

Special thanks should also be given to the writer's friends and family for their assistance and encouragement and residents of the surveyed areas for their cooperation during the field survey.

Last but not least, special mention to Yus.

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CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Reasons For Concern

The provision of housing is a major issue in the country. With the high rate of urbanisation, urban areas are facing the problem of providing enough housing for the public. Those concerned in the housing industry are facing the problems to meet the demands. The various levels of problems are seen by the government as a serious factor and steps are being taken to remedy it.

The failure in the provision of enough houses resulted in the mushrooming of squatter areas. Such an existence indicates two things:

1. not enough houses
2. the available units are beyond the reach of the public

In Malaysia, housing problems constitute of both factors. Measures are being taken by the government in solving the problems. For the Third Malaysia Plan, a sum of \$2,467.6 M has been allocated for housing, an increase of \$2,295.7 M from the previous plan shows the seriousness of the government¹.

Besides that, incentives and cooperation from the private sectors are also being sought.

All along, the quantitative housing has been discussed. One should not get carried away with the objective of providing enough housing while neglecting the qualitative aspects of it. The western concept of housing has been practised in this country, neglecting the social background of the population.

The plural society in Malaysia are rich in culture. Cultural plays a dominant role in the organisation of the environment; besides physical, a climatic and so forth². A glance of it will clearly indicate that the residents are made to stay in an alien environment. They are made to stay in a place where modification and alteration in the living environment is not possible. Residents are not allowed to personalised or to have own identities.

Thus, the statement of the problem is that "present trend in housing development does not able to satisfy the needs of the residents. Thus, it is my intention to look into the elements of dissatisfaction of the residents."

This brings us to the concept of livability. It measures the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of residents with the environment.³ For the purpose of this study, environment refers to the living environment, which consists of a hierarchy of social and physical units.

Designers see planning as the creation of better environment, based on understanding of landuse requirement and certain ways of improved environmental quality but they give this concept a different image.

The quality of an area is also judge by the absence of industry, office and planning is seen as an attempt to keep out undesirable elements.

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CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER II

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

The environmental evaluation is influenced by expectations, values and cultural norms and previous experiences which influence the standard for matching or the comparison through adaptation¹.

The psychological literature on adaptation and on the social effects on how things are seen and evaluated would lead us to expect a result. This will be a major factor in accounting for environmental preference may be the environmental background of the people concerned.

The residents assessment of a particular attribute of environment is considered dependent upon two things:

1. his perception of it,
2. the standards against which he judges it.

The concept of standard of comparison is a complex one. Basically, the components of the concept described by Marans² is as follows:

- 1 - a person expects from his residential area prior to his moving in.

- 2 - aspiration level that is what a person thinks could be true of the residential area in which he now lives or the environment in which he hopes to live.
- 3 - Equity level, that is what a person thinks should be true of his residential areas, given the amount he has invested in his monthly payments.
- 4 - reference group level, that is what a person believes be true of the places where others live--others with whom he identifies - families, friends and those with similar occupations, income, etc.

It is important that the above factors are to be taken into consideration in the process of the study.

The above discussion concerns the individual residents, the biasness likely to occur in giving their perception of the quality of environment. It is also worthwhile to look into the components of the environmental quality.

Basically, there are two obvious interpretations of the environmental quality:³

- i - The simpler one is related to aspects such as air and water pollution and so forth. These could be called the material and biochemical aspects of physical environment.
- ii - the more complex interpretation is related to the less easily definable and more cariable, qualities

of the natural and man-made environment which give satisfaction to people, its sensory quality in all modalities, the positive and negative effects on human feelings, behaviour or performance and its meaning. They could be called the psychological and socio-cultural aspect of the environment.

The socio-cultural factors are important in the house-form. This is seen in the vernacular houses in the country. But today, with the modern technology and architecture, houseform is no more having the socio-cultural features. The aesthetic, layout and form are created with the objective of quantitative. The concept of residential setting are "imported", neglecting the local values.

As a result of the modern housing development, it creates the dissatisfaction of the residents. Thus, the hypothesis of this study is:

"The present housing development has neglected human norms and values resulting in the dissatisfaction of the residents".

The satisfaction of the residents can only be achieved if human norms and values are carefully considered. Satisfaction of residents in the environment created, should be looked into with a wider perspective. An average man should not be the yardstick for the designing of an environment.⁴ Neither the design should be left to be too open-ended resulting in the chaotic of the environment. The point of compromise should be reached between human norms and

values, and the socio-political, economic and technological factors. Then only residents would accept the living environment designed for them as livable.

For the purpose of this study, the following are the working hypotheses:-

- 1 - Designers have neglected socio-cultural factors in the modern provision of housing.

Culture is one of the major factor in house-form. Residents shaped the traditional house-form based on the needs and the relationship with the environment. Such a long process has at last come to a stage where it is being considered as ideal. By introducing a totally different type of house-form, it will affect the residents because an alien culture has been introduced without their consent. The introduction of alien culture would mean that residents would have to adjust themselves to suit both their own and alien cultures, hence creating a state of confusion.

- 2 - The lack of understanding socio-psychological values of residents would result in dissatisfaction of residents with their dwellings and built environment.

Political forces acted on designers to prepare houses for the people. Urgently needed houses gave too little time for them to study the local condition. Without understanding local values, designers who are trained in the west, have adopted the western concept.

As a result, the built environment was unable to satisfy the socio-psychological needs of residents.

3 - Modern housing development has failed to create social interaction among residents.

Modern housing schemes are known as areas where social interaction among residents are not intimate as those in the traditional. The dwellings are designed in such a way, that informal visits are impossible. Heterogeneity could also be the reason. Besides, the schemes are not made for people to stay there throughout their life and mobility does not allow them to settle down long enough to really get to know neighbours.

4 - Basic services and amenities are not up to the level of satisfaction.

Expectation on moving into housing schemes is high in all aspects. Besides improving the dwelling unit, resident also hope to have an improvement in other services and this is not so. Eventhough services are available, yet they are unreliable. The reason being lack of co-ordination among agencies responsible, while the need for forward planning has been overlooked. As a result, housing schemes are constructed, while basic facilities are still beyond capacity to serve the new areas.

5 - Housing choice is limited due to the spiralling of prices.

The increase in the price of houses is tremendously high. Such an increase is not mainly due to economic reasons, but also speculation. The increase would not have been that high, if authority had imposed control. With this high increase, those affected are the consumers. Choice is limited to those within their reach. The situation worst, when supply could not meet demand.

THE METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the study, a conceptual model of a livability (Onibokun, 1973)¹ is being adopted. This concept refers to the tenant-dwelling-environment-management interaction system. It is defined as the sum total of the level of satisfaction which the tenant derives from the interaction of the components of the tenant-dwelling-environment-management system. In other word, it evaluated the level of satisfaction of a tenant, living in a particular housing unit located within a particular community and managed under a type of institutional management.

The Components of the Concept

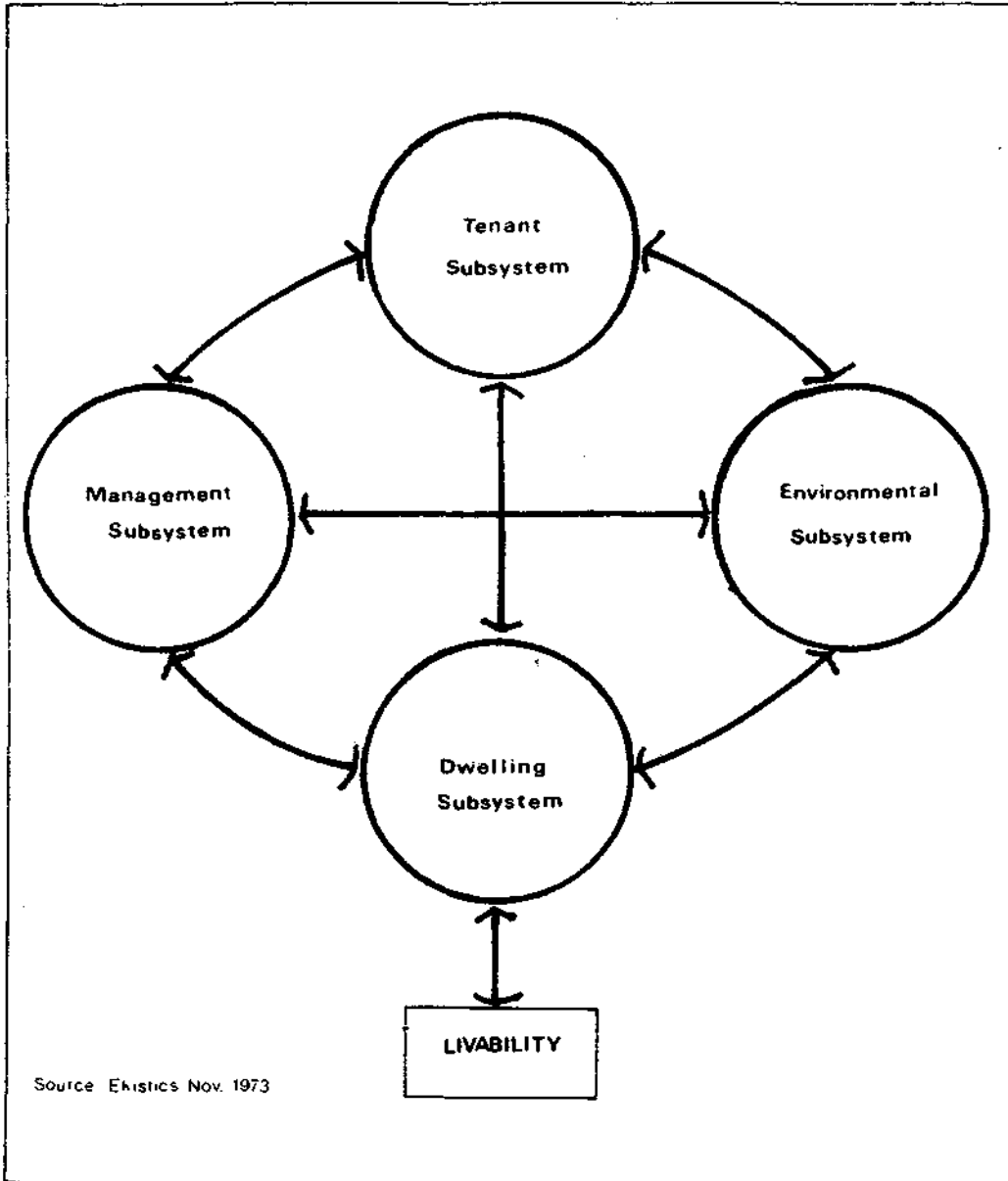
The linkages of the components of the model are shown in figure 1. Satisfaction with any components as expressed by a resident is dependent upon the evaluation on assessments to several attributes of that environment.

A person's assessment of a particular attribute of his environment is considered dependent upon two things:-

- 1) his perception,
- 2) the standard against which he judges it.

These assessment are based upon several factors which may give the kind of environment that one prefers. The concept of a standard of comparison is a complex one. Thus, the respond from residents will be based on his experiences and his past living environment, whether planned or unplanned settlement. To a certain extent, his assessment has been influenced by his level of

Fig 1 The Concept Of Livability



education.

INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Research into the quality of the residential environment has taken many forms (Sanoff - 1970, Shelly - 1969, Cantril - 1969)⁸. For the purpose of this study, the approach used were:-

- 1 - Questionnaire interview,
- 2 - Observation,
- 3 - Literature review.

Questionnaire interview

Questionnaire interview was carried out on residents at the selected schemes. It was felt that through direct interviews, the questions could be better communicated and residents would be able to express themselves through conversation sought. In fact the conversation led to a very interesting discussion regarding their satisfactions or dissatisfactions.

Due to the constrains of man-power and time, quota sampling of residents was carried out. It is regarded as an adequate cross-section of population sampled. Eventhough it has its advantages in term of convenience and less cost, it still has its disadvantages:

- 1) Unless the interviewers are well trained and reliable, their personal bias in selecting people for an interview may affect the sample adversely.