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Theoretical Review on Sustainable City Indicators in Malaysia

Filzani Illia Ibrahim*, Dasimah Omar, Nik Hanita Nik Mohamad

Department of Postgraduate Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract

There are many studies discussing the complexity's demand of city sustainability worldwide. This includes on the issue of developing tools and indicators for measuring the level of a sustainable city. Sustainability city indicators can be seen as a measure that gives a summary of information about the subject of the problem. As there are many sets of indicators are being implemented worldwide, this paper deals with a set of sustainability indicator tools that are implemented in Malaysia. The objective of this paper is to review the theoretical framework of sustainable city indicators implemented by the Malaysian local authority and organizations.

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Keywords: Urban sustainability; sustainable city; sustainable indicators; human interaction

1. Introduction

Sustainability can be defined as the capacity to endure. It derived from Latin word where it means to hold. Hence, sustainable development can be seen as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. According to the World Summit on Social Development, sustainable development requires three main reconciliation that are environmental, social equity and economic sustainability (Tanguay, Rajaonson, Lefebvre, & Lanoie, 2010). It provides a main domain for various sustainability standards in recent years. Thus, sustainable development can be seen as a way of developing urban areas by compromising both present and future generations' needs. The emergence of sustainability ideas during the

* Corresponding author. Tel: +6-013-636-5208; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .

E-mail address: filzanillia@gmail.com

past three decades has catalysed high levels of activity in generating ‘facts on sustainability’ in the form of indicators (Hezri, 2004). There are many efforts and research done to develop sustainability indicators among researchers, and this includes Malaysia governance and institutional. In this paper, it will be discussing the topic of sustainable city in the general while is taking sustainable city indicators in Malaysia as a case example.

2. Sustainable city

Jenks & Jones (2010) in *Dimension of the Sustainable City* stated that there has been a considerable amount of research that defines and characterises the form of a sustainable city and that urban forms may most affect sustainability. The physical dimensions of urban form may include its size, shape, land uses, configuration and distribution of open space; which comprises a composite multitude of characteristics, including the city’s transportation system and urban design features (Jenks & Jones, 2010).

However, its sustainability depends on more abstract issues, which include environmental, social and economic. Research suggests that no one, but some urban forms may be sustainable. Much of the debate about the sustainability of cities and urban forms has focused on increasing the density of development, ensuring a mix of uses, containing urban sprawl and achieving social and economic diversity and vitality, which is then often characterised as the concept of a ‘compact city.’

Sustainable city can be seen as a city that can provide the basic needs of city inhabitants such as infrastructure, civic amenities, health and medical care, housing, education, transportation, employment, good governance and ensure the populations needs are met benefiting all sectors of society. According to Marzukhi, Karim, & Latfi (2012), sustainable city is vital in controlling the development of a town based on the quantity and quality of infrastructure and facilities are sufficient to avoid other problems, for example lack of housing in urban areas that will cause squatter settlements.

Understanding the dimensions of the sustainable city is a complex issue. Care needs to be exercised over the content within which the cities exist, their cultural background and regional and national differences. There will be significant differences in different parts of the world of the interpretation of the sustainable city; however, there are common underlying and enduring themes that appear to inform both the debate and claims for urban forms that promote sustainability. Overall, research indicates that there are unlikely to be single spatial or physical solutions, rather that there may be many forms that can achieve sustainability, depending on the context in which they are applied.

Hence, sustainable and urban planning is vital for the establishment of a further urban envisioning where it is a key element for the creation of sustainable cities (Rosales, 2010). At the regional and municipal levels, sustainability takes on greater complexities shaped by the nature of the place and the varying demands of citizens (Agency, 2012). Leaders at the regional and municipals levels are faced with the challenge of balancing the broader theoretical demands of sustainability and the specific practical demands of citizens. Thus, cities and organisations are focusing on the development of indicators to measure progress.

Thus, sustainable development can be seen as a way of developing urban areas by compromising both present and future generations’ needs. The sustainable city can be seen as a complete by meeting the demands of the present and future generations. Hence, leaders, municipal organisations and academicians are developing the indicators as to measure the level of the sustainability from time to time.

3. Sustainable city indicators

As cities and organizations are focusing on the development of indicators to measure progress, an indicator can be seen as a provider of information on the state or condition of something. In terms of sustainability indicators, it can be defined as a policy-relevant variable defined in such a way as to be measurable over time and space (Agency, 2012).

According to Othman, Hamzah, & Abdullah (2013), sustainable referred as a management tool. It has predicted to be one of the best yardsticks to determine the well-being of a development. Hence, it can be seen that indicators are most useful in sustainability planning when linked to sustainability threshold or targets. Thresholds are scientifically determined points where the state of thing will change dramatically. Targets are often determined by

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