

Urban Planning: Neglected Agenda and Some Thoughts Toward Sustainable City

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Town planning - history

- Town planning: formally introduced in Malaya in 1921;
- Charles Reade was invited from South Australia to become the town planner;
- A follower of Garden City. (Ebenezer Howard Garden City movement 1898).
- Drew up a very detailed town planning law;
- Left Malaya to South Africa – committed suicide in 1933.

Where are we now?

- Town and Country Planning Act 1976;
- No new building without application by town planners and the approval of the Town Planning Dept;
- Town planners: 50 – 60 town planner members of MIP;
- Every state has a Town Planning Dept.;
- Many more student members.

Structure Plan

- First town or municipality to have Structure Plan was Seremban and quickly followed by Penang Island Municipal Council;
- Most if not all state and local authorities have Structure Plans.
- Relatively easy to draft Structure Plans and get them approved and gazetted.

Local Plans

- Many local councils have Local Plans, although some cover only areas under development pressure;
- Very difficult to get draft Local Plans approved and gazetted. Example: Kuala Lumpur and Penang Island.

Liveable cities

- Rankings by Economist Intelligence Unit (IU), Mercer, Monocle;
- Cities at the top: Melbourne, Vancouver, Vienna, Adelaide; Mainly Australian and Eastern European cities;
- Singapore among the top;
- Bottom: South Asian and African cities;
- Kuala Lumpur and George town used to be ranked in the 70s;
- 2014: KL 76th and George Town 74th.
- According to ECA, KL and GT ranked 16th and 17th in Asia;
- (Have been told that KL has jumped much higher in NST on 10.3.15).

Neglected agenda

- City form;
- High rise building sprouting up everywhere. Must learn from the European cities;
- Do town planning and urban planning courses include urban form?
- Green spaces – Malaysian towns and cities tend to use green spaces for roads and government projects; Green spaces along rivers neglected and many places occupied by squatters;
- Good example of green spaces is Adelaide.

Neglected Agenda 2

- Bicycle lanes – more and more people are using bicycles as transport mode or for health;
- Needs dedicated bicycle lanes as can be seen in many European and Austrian cities;
- Walking paths – poor provision of walking paths;
- Even if provided, they are not good for walking, especially for the senior citizens and the physically handicapped;
- Example: one has to step up and down every time one passes a house because of driveways;
- Walking lanes used by hawkers or shop keepers by putting tables and chairs.

Neglected Agenda 3

- Affordable housing for the middle class, especially KL and Klang Valley, Penang;
- Growing number of gated communities; failure of town planning and urban management; eg. Not friendly to pedestrians;
- Coastal reclamation: outside the control of the local councils, thus the town planners;

Time to change the Structure Plan- Local Plans system?

- Town planners and their professional institution must take a stand on what to do with this town planning and development control system;
- At the very least, think about the system.

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Thank you