

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL SPACE IN VERTICAL NEIGHBOURHOODS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Vertical neighbourhood is a new housing terminology that is closely linked to the socio-economic, political, neighbourhood and environment to create an integrated, stable and thriving neighbourhood community. In a vertical neighbourhood, the community always desires to participate in cultural, recreational, and religious practices in order to improve their quality of life in residential areas. However, the development process emphasizes only on the quantity aspect of housing rather than the community social aspects. Hence, this paper will focus on the significance of social spaces in the vertical neighbourhood in Malaysia. To conduct this study, content analysis of housing publications was used. Content analysis is a research method of analysing text-based data sets to identify the frequency of keywords and phrases and to discern patterns with the data. Total of 38 articles were analysed to identify keywords; The outcome of this paper revealed that there are certain features that may influence social interaction in the vertical neighbourhood among the community. Other than that, the study also found that the need for social space in a vertical neighbourhood is important and cannot be ignored to avoid decreasing social interaction between communities.*

Keywords: *Vertical Neighbourhood, Housing, Social Spaces, Community*

Introduction

In the context of multiracial society in Malaysia, the integration of the social spatial structure within a neighbourhood is important in fostering understanding in achieving levels of tolerance and social interaction and cultural expression. The need for social space in a vertical neighbourhood environment is undeniable given the need for residents to interact, express themselves and engage in community, leisure, religious activities and so on.

However, in Korte et al. (1983) study identified that high-rise residents had weak social relationships both within their own households and with the other residents. Supported by Evans (2003) research, the reason for social withdrawal in a vertical neighbourhood is actually triggered by their inability to control social contact within their respective high-rise environments.

Therefore, as one of the measures to avoid the social withdrawal and encourage social interaction among the residents in the vertical neighbourhood especially in affordable housing.

Jabatan Perumahan Negara (2019) has issued an outline named as Dasar Perumahan Mampu Milik Negara (Figure 1) which focussing toward the 'Community Empowerment' by offering community services for example community centres and spaces for interactive communities such as social spaces, multipurpose rooms, religious halls, and more to enhance residents' quality of life in residential areas.

Nevertheless, the facility provisions are not limited to social spaces, playgrounds and religious institutions (Bee et al, 2016), it also can be a common area. Where these social spaces actually serve as a gathering place for communities in vertical neighbourhoods to socialise and have fun. Since there are so many different facilities in one location, residents may form social groups of similar interests.

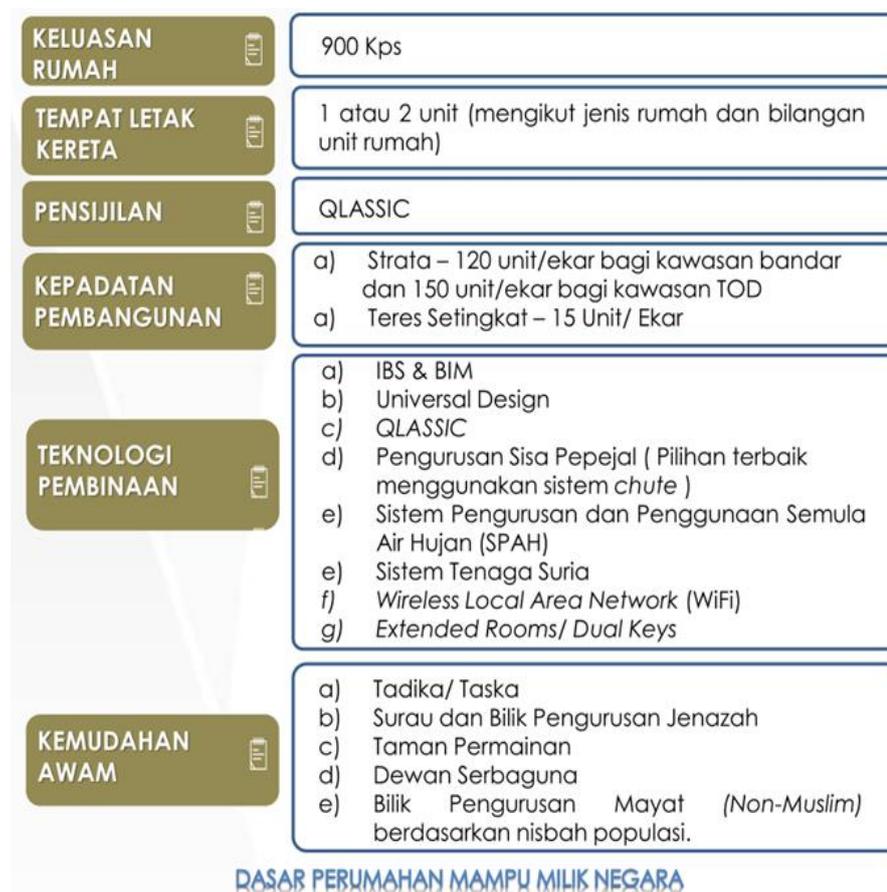


Figure 1 : Features of Affordable Housing Basis Through Dasar Perumahan Mampu Milik Negara 2019

Source :Jabatan Perumahan Negara,2019

Literature Review

Neighbourhood Space

The ability of a housing community to nurture and support social and psychological structures may be assessed. The condition of spaces may be affected by interior building architecture, spatial structures, and the neighbourhood (external or environmental factors). The hierarchy of different spaces must be specifically identified in high-rise residential projects in Malaysia so that the presence of multiple types of public, semi-public, semi-private, and private spaces can be facilitated.

Hence, a neighbourhood space is perceived as a place for a community to accomplish good quality of life driven by balanced social interaction and physical activity along with positive acceptance and manners (Gidlow et al., 2012). In creating neighbourhood space, it is crucial to encompass the human needs, environmental character, aesthetic values, sense of belonging and liveability for delivering the better quality of life. In order to create enjoyable scenery, play a role in supporting social interaction and emphasize physical activities among the residents (Cauwenberg et al., 2015). According to Zieff et al., (2016) a quality neighbourhood space is likely to smooth chances for youth to be physically active and socially engaged.

Current Housing Policies

Current housing policies already make the provision of open spaces ('*kawasan lapang*' in Malay) compulsory for residential projects, varying between 10% and 15% of the total land area depending on the state's Local Plan. The guidelines for the provision of common facilities are somewhat loose, as stated in the Draft Planning Guidelines for Common Facilities (2011) under the Town and Country Planning Department of Peninsular Malaysia (*Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, JPBD*), stipulating requirements for only basic facilities such as kindergartens, prayer rooms and multi-purpose halls.

Aim & Objectives

The main aim of this study is to identify the significance in the socio-spatial meaning in vertical affordable housing and focus on well-being and sustainability that is providing a vertical neighbourhood instead of a 'house'. This study will establish the implications of housing as a basis of social cohesion, which means that the country should be responsible for social welfare through its implementation and consideration of the guidelines and policies required by affordable housing and the implications for household demand.

Methodology

To conduct this study, content analysis of housing publications was used. Content analysis is a research method of analysing text-based data sets to identify the frequency of keywords and phrases and to discern patterns with the data. It provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena. Downe-Wambolt (1992) (p.314).

Articles were searched using Mendeley platform to find the keywords and phrases to identify descriptive variables and their linkage to each other. Once keywords and phrases were found, understanding the meaning of the keywords and phrases within the context of the article and to note the prevalence of the keywords and phrases across the complete set of articles. In total, 80 articles from 1971 to 2019 were analysed and filtered to identify keywords and only 38 articles matched the searched keyword. In this study, the main keywords that have been specified are the usage of social spaces, social space features and impact of social interaction.

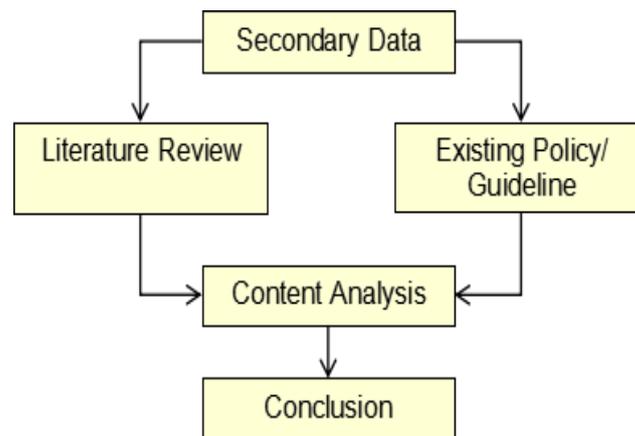


Figure 2: Chart of Methodology Procedure

Results

Social Space Issues in Vertical Neighbourhood (Usage of Social Space)

While vertical neighbourhood development is becoming more popular as a means of meeting urban housing demand, it has also led to a number of social issues. Due to demand, the development seems to comply with the quantity aspect of housing rather focussing on the social space aspect for the community. As a result, the presence of a large number of residents in a vertical neighbourhood may have a negative impact on the formation of societies. Based on the variables, it is found that scholars namely McCarthy et al. (1978), Baum et al. (1979), and Evans et al. (2000), excessive crowding in high-density housing results in social withdrawal, which is harmful to social contact.

Apart from that, by focusing only on the quantity aspect of housing, it also may lead to the scarcity of social spaces in a vertical neighbourhood. As a result, it can be frustrating for the community because it creates a sense of crowdedness and has an ability to negatively impact the community quality of life as well as the social stability (Freedman et al., 1971). Furthermore, as found by Ubale et al. (2012) the scarcity of social spaces is also found in 'People's Housing Project' (Program Perumahan Rakyat or PPR), the facilities available are minimal and more concentrated on commercial areas and parking space. The issue caused by this scarcity arises from the fact that space is reduced within the necessary ratio of green space in any housing development ("Housing Space Standards", 2006).

Other than that, as mentioned previously in DPMM 2019, the common facility provision for communities is a must in order to enhance their quality of life. However, the community provision is only seen to be provided as minimally as possible which did not consider the community satisfaction. As agreed by Glaser et al. (2012), the shared facilities in vertical neighbourhoods normally happen on ground floor, podium and selected intermediate levels, but this facilities provision is not sufficient for socialisation activity among the residents due to the presence of a large number of residents in a vertical neighbourhood. Ezzad et al. (2019) discovered the same condition in Malaysia's vertical neighbourhood. In this development, the communal space and facilities typically offered at the same level are either located on the ground floor, on top of the podium or at the middle level.

Factors That Influence Social Interaction in Social Space (Social Space Features)

A successful social space in a vertical neighbourhood may enable residents to interact in meaningful ways, fostering a sense of community (Huang, 2006). Furthermore, in dense, high-density areas, good social spaces will increase the quality of life. Therefore, there are many influencing factors in order to increase the community socialization in social space in a vertical neighbourhood.

Among the factors that contribute to social interaction in a vertical neighbourhood in the community are space types and design elements. For the space types factor, Huang (2006) in the study found that there are five types of space in a vertical neighbourhood. The majority of social activities take place in circulation areas, while in seating and ambiguous spaces, there are significantly less. Regarding the percentages of social interaction, scenic and activity spaces rank first and second, respectively, and are considerably higher than the other space types.

The situation where most social activities take place in circulation areas has been supported by Williams (2005); In the study, Williams found that by locating the common area especially in the centre of building will encourage residents to use it. This center can be thought of as the hub of all vertical circulation routes used in high-rise living, such as the stairwell or, more generally, the lift. Since it offers space for chance gatherings, the lift lobby can also serve as a social gathering place. Huang (2006) also disagrees with (Gehl, 1987); Carr et al., 1992) that sittings in social space is not a great stimulus for social interaction but suggests that convex seating arrangements as mentioned by (Osmond, 1957) on sociopetal supported by (Sherrod, 1977) and (Nasar, 1994) that attractive environments influence behaviour and enhance social interaction.

For the second factor, Huang (2006) identified that there are 10 design elements; Which route and node rank the first and the second, respectively, and out-weigh the other design elements in terms of the quantity of social interaction. As to the percentages of social interaction, visual focus, plant, play area, and social space rank first to fourth, and are relatively higher than the other six elements. The circulation space occupies most of the outer space of the housing but it is just the same as the other room and has less influence on social interaction due to its transitional nature and linear pattern. Nodal space is better at influencing social interactions and this is supported by Abu-Ghazze (1999) who states that spatial layout affects social interactions, not the amount of space, that determines the use of the area. In addition, a higher percentage of social interaction was observed on the nodal rather than on the pathway. Compared to routes, the node is relatively broad, allows people to pause and act without interrupting movement, and is more suited for social behaviour.

For the visual focus, Huang (2006) study shows that weak social relationships are formed through repeated visual relationships (Granovetter, 1973; Green-baum, 1982) and do not influence social behavior. Therefore, Whyte (1980) proposes to implement the presence of fascinating objects (sculpture, water fountain and others) or activities (performance, playground, mini amphitheatre and others) in the common area to encourage interaction within the community in a vertical neighbourhood. Being in second place for design elements in percentage of social interaction; A study from various scholars namely Coley et al. (1997) and DePooter (1997) confirmed that by providing greenery at social spaces in a vertical neighbourhood will encourage mutual interaction and strengthen social bonds among the community. Fleming et al (1985) found three variables that improve social interaction. Firstly, the opportunities for contact. Secondly, proximity between apartments and lastly the availability of proper places to interact.

Vertical Neighbourhood Social Interaction (The Impact of Social Interaction)

Social interaction, as described by Unger and Wandersman (1985), primarily refers to people's interactions with one another, such as playing with others, greeting others, and conversing with others. Also passive interactions including eye contact and smiling, observing events, and listening to others are called social.

Gehl (1987) has defined three forms of operation in outdoor social spaces. There are three types of activities: necessary, optional, and social. As a result, and type of action necessitates specific physical settings in order to occur in the area, and the physical environments required for various forms of activity are vastly different. Hence, according to Zuzana (2012), social interaction has a significant impact on the well-being and physical fitness of all humans, regardless of age. Furthermore, social interaction has a significant impact on children's progress, as children continue to improve their social skills and cognitive development by engaging with their families and peers. Children with high self-esteem and trust would be better to work with than an introvert who has not had any social contact.

Summary of The Review

The review has highlighted some issues regarding the facilities provision at the vertical neighbourhood area. The spatial provision for outdoor activities faced conflict due to the contradiction at the higher level of decision making. Malaysia Housing Policy has required all the Public Housing developers to provide sufficient space for recreational and outdoor activities but they refuse the green space requirement and facilities for recreation as they are focusing on high rise housing schemes for medium income groups. Some of the court has been used to park cars after office hours and during the whole weekend. Thus, the main access to the facility is also covered by the improper motorcycle parking and several food stalls. The pedestrian linkages also faced the same problem. Even though there are some facilities located nearby this residential area, this youth still cannot reach it due to transportation issues e.g.; distance is too far if reaching by walking, traffic flow is heavy with vehicles and trouble for them to cross the road.

Analysis & Discussion

| Keywords | Author |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Usage of Social Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huang, Shu Chun Lucy, 2006 - Dillman and Dillman, 1987 - Zuzana, 2012 - Korte and Huismans, 1983 - Evans, 2003 - Sabine Windlin - Leng, Andrew, 2013 - McCarthy, D. and Saegert, 1978 - S. Baum, A. and Valins, 1979 - S. Evans, 2000 - G. W. Conklin, J. E., 1971 |
| Social Space Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bechtel, 1977 - Francis, 1987 - Archea, 1977 - Burgess et al, 1988 - Harrison, 1983 - Huang, Shu Chun Lucy, 2006 - Fleming, R., Baum, A. and Singer, J. E., - Siew Bee, Aw & Poh Im, Lim, 2016 - Williams, 2005 - Glaeser, E. L. and Sacerdote, B., 2000 - Abu Bakar, Mohammad Ezzad & Majid, - Roshida & Ng, Kar King, 2019 - Coley et al., 1997 - DePooter, 1997 - Whyte, 1980 - Freedman, J. L., Klevansky, S. and Ehrlich, - P. R., 1971 - Cristopher Day, 2002 |
| Impact of Social Interaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huang, Shu Chun Lucy, 2006 - Coley et al., 1997 - DePooter, 1997 - Whyte, 1980 - Freedman, J. L., Klevansky, S. and Ehrlich, - P. R., 1971 - Cristopher Day, 2002 - McCarthy, D. and Saegert, 1978 - S. Baum, A. and Valins, 1979 - S. Evans, 2000 - G. W. Conklin, J. E., 1971 |

Table 1: Article table of analysis.

Location (Successful Social Space)

Based on literature reviews, a successful social space in a vertical neighbourhood may enable residents to interact in meaningful ways, fostering a sense of community (Huang, 2006). Firstly, the success of social space must be set by the government regarding the number of housing units in the vertical neighbourhood to avoid the sense of crowdedness which will promote social withdrawal among the community. The provision of vertical housing guidelines should prioritize social issues first, rather than achieve a number of housing units.

Other than that, it appears that most social spaces offered in a vertical neighbourhood are located in one level either at ground floor or on top of podium level (Glaser et al. (2012); Ezzad et al. (2019) which is may difficult for the community to reach for having a social interaction with others. For instance, it is troublesome for the residents if they live at level 15 and the only social space is offered in the vertical neighbourhood located at ground floor. As a result, in

Figure 3, the community tends to use open spaces such as the corridor in front of the houses as an alternative to social space (Harrison (1983); Ezzad et al. (2019)). In fact, the most valued urban open spaces are not those that are significant or large, and away from home but those that are familiar and close (Burgess et al., 1988).



Figure 3: Residents place chairs and tables near the staircase as an alternative space to socialize with the neighbours.

(Source: Ezzad et al., 2019)

As the current provision of social spaces are insufficient for the community to have an activity and social interaction. A suggestion by scholar study namely Williams (2015) should be able to consider and implement it. By locating the common area especially in the centre of a vertical neighbourhood which will encourage residents to use it. This center can be thought of as the hub of all vertical circulation routes used in high-rise living, such as the stairwell or, more generally, the lift. Since it offers space for chance gatherings, the lift lobby can also serve as a social gathering place. Another study has also been done by Bee et al. (2016) where there are several possible interpretations of the lift lobby as an enabler of social interaction (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Illustrations on how the lift lobby should be used for more than just circulation.

(Source: Bee et al., 2016).

Design (Social Spaces Feature)

Beside the placement of social space in a vertical neighbourhood, the other element that should be taken into consideration to encourage social interaction among the community is the social space design itself. From studies done by scholars (Williams (2005); Huang (2006)), the social interaction in a vertical neighbourhood mostly occurs in circulation areas as these places are

the best opportunities for communities to contact each other. Therefore, more attention should be given in the circulation area.

In social space, the seating design also plays an important role to make sure it is able to encourage social interaction among the community in a vertical neighbourhood. Huang (2006), stated that seating in social space is not a great stimulus for social interaction but suggests that convex seating arrangements. The same concept was also mentioned by Osmond (1957) on sociopetal seating arrangement (Figure 5) then supported by (Sherrod, 1977) and (Nasar, 1994) that attractive environments influence behaviour and enhance social interaction.

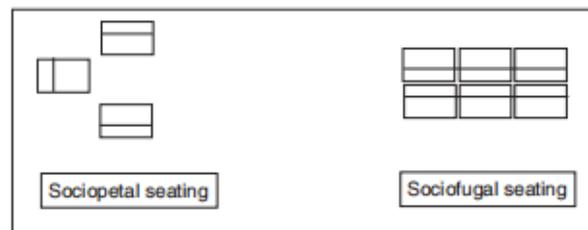


Figure 5: Sociopetal and Sociofugal Seating Arrangements. Sociopetal Seating Orients Chairs to Enable Conversation; Sociofugal Seating Discourages Interaction.

(Source: Rollins, 2009)

In addition, another important feature in determining the social interactions that take place in a social space is the presence of activities and the presence of interesting objects.

Conclusion

This study, manifests the true description of the selected scholarly interpretation of social space and social integration that has been obvious to the text and emphasises on the significance of social interaction in vertical neighbourhoods.

The Production of Space, as criticised by Lefebvre, 1974 socio-spatial theory and the concept of 'functional city' that correspond to industrial capitalism rather than social needs. The reflection of this concept is still visible in the current scenario which emphasises on the production of a number of housing units rather than responding to the occupants needs or social needs to make it a functional housing and providing a neighbourhood rather than merely a 'house- without a soul'.

This study concludes that there are certain features and characteristics that may influence the social interaction of the population. These characteristics are the hierarchical structure of space, physical security support, proper socialization and access, socio-cultural behaviours, needs support and population activities and increased accessibility. Many studies confirm the existence of a close relationship between socioeconomic status and social interaction patterns in residential areas (e.g. Willmot 1960; Hanson 1977; Abraham 1981 & Wan Halim Othman 1986) and Greenberg et al. (1994) noted that in addition to the environment of unmanaged environment, pollution and congestion, neighbours who are unfriendly and indifferent (individualistic) are also factors that affect the quality of a neighbourhood unit.

DPMM's desire to "provide protection to its residents and be closely linked to the socio-economic, political, neighbourhood and environment in establishing an integrated, stable and thriving neighbourhood community with the provision of integrated and comprehensive public facilities might be the answer to the ongoing crisis.

However, the extent to which the DPMM 2019 wishes can be understood and expressed by the designers in the project underway depends on the extent to which DPMM 2019 realizes the perception and desire of affordable housing needs to be established. No doubt that 'sites', 'location' and 'neighborhoods based on social cohesion' and 'quality of vertical neighbourhood design' are seen as a key criteria in the Affordable Housing scheme, although it should prioritise on social space provision rather than focusing on the provision of number of units.

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