The Maintenance of External Spaces in Low Cost Public Housing: Case Study of Taman Melati, Selangore

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Abstract- The purpose of this paper is to identify the effect of poor maintenance of external spaces in low cost housing. The focus will be on the residents' satisfaction perceptions of the good external spaces. Identification and determination of resident's preferences is very essential in the understanding the views of residents that may help in identifying the sense of belonging to the owners and the image of housing in the eyes of residents. This study investigates the way in which external spaces were maintained and kept clean. It is also covers the willingness of residents to participate in the maintenance activities of theirs external spaces. The analysis of the external spaces treatment utilizes information collected from relevant literature on low-income public housing management in Malaysia and overseas contributing to the present conditions. A survey on the residents of low cost housing in Taman Melati, Selangore in Malaysia was also conducted to determine their perception and preferences of external spaces. The finding is used to formulate series of recommendations, which will be of use to the management housing agencies undertaking the improvement of low cost housing in the context of urban development in Malaysia.

Keywords— Poor maintenance, external spaces, low cost housing, resident’s satisfaction, resident’s participation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The creation of a home is one of the most central experiences in many people’s lives. Being at ease with life in town depends in particular upon the quality of housing. House environment can have an enormous impact on the overall well-being of dwellers. It is important to consider the type and location of housing, the physical and psychological responses of dwellers to their surrounding’s and the importance of management and maintenance to improve the quality of external space.

During the period from 1971 to 1980, many urban areas in Malaysia experienced rapid immigration of rural people. Modernization and search for better standard of living have attracted more and more Malaysian into the urban areas.

The shortage of low cost dwelling units, along with the high cost of limited land resulted in rapid expansion of squatter settlements in the urban areas. Providing low-cost for the squatter is a positive action to overcome the housing problems. One of the possible ways to accomplish this action is to provide cheap land for the low-cost housing development (REHDA Malaysia, 2000).

In Malaysia, housing is built rapidly and in large numbers due to the current demand. However, living standards and income will continue to improve while financing methods and technology are changing rapidly. Therefore, in order to allow the existing housing to be suitable for future living, they should be required to have the physical capacity to fulfill the present requirements as well as the living requirement of the future. As Malaysia enjoys good economic growth and development this improved housing will continue to improve the quality of life. That means standards and good quality of external spaces will contribute to a healthy social development. Since people spend a large part of their lives close to their homes, the condition of their houses influences their lives considerably. Thus, careful thoughts should be given to their construction, maintenance as well as to their surroundings.

In recent years, there has been considerable improvement in the design of houses to reflect the needs and requirement of residents. However, not much attention and thought have been devoted towards the external spaces surrounding these houses. Most literature on housing development regards external spaces as just a setting to the building rather than a functional part of the total home environment. This limits the horizons of the residents to within the building wall. More residents these days are spending more of leisure time on their own property and with good reason. As public recreation areas become crowded and more expensive, and traffic, coming and going, gets worse, there is a real need to create better facilities for outdoor living and creation at home.
In today’s housing, designers are facing with challenge of creating outdoor environments as collective, unifying frameworks for new development, the resident are most deficient the greatest importance to the outdoor spaces they wanted it as both social paces and living spaces for extended family outings and social interaction.

II. CLASSIFICATION OF HOUSING IN MALAYSIA

Conventional housing in Malaysia is normally characterized as residential areas developed by private or public agencies classified as low cost, low medium cost, medium addend high cost. The economic factors have strangely influenced the product of contemporary housing. Indeed, industrialization and urbanization have been shown to be the two important influencing factors at work resulting in acute housing demand amongst the lower and middle income in Malaysia. The scope of quality housing has been limited to the price listed and the size (see table 1). Classification of the house types in relation to the cost, the household’s income level.

Table 1
Classification of house types in relation to the cost, the floor area and the household’s income level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing types</th>
<th>Price (RM)</th>
<th>Floor areas</th>
<th>Target group household income</th>
<th>Type of dwelling units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>Less than 25,000</td>
<td>500-600 sq.ft.</td>
<td>less than 750 RM a month</td>
<td>walk-up flat, cluster link houses, high rise flat single story terraced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-medium Cost</td>
<td>25,001 to 50,000</td>
<td>651-800 sq.ft.</td>
<td>751-1,500 RM a month</td>
<td>single story terraced, double story terrace, flat and cluster link houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium cost</td>
<td>50,001 to 100,000</td>
<td>801-1,000 sq.ft.</td>
<td>1,501-2,500 RM a month</td>
<td>Single story terrace, double story terrace, flat and cluster link houses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on building types the densities of housing required are as follows:

In the terrace house where the density is 12 units per each acre, in the Semi detached house where the density is 8 units per each acre, in the Bungalow where the density is 6 units per each acre, in the Flat where the density is from 40 to 60 units per each acre, in the Apartment where the density is from 40 to 60 units per each acre (see table 2).

(Source: Planning Department, Seremban Municipal Council) Negri Sembilan
III. ANALYSIS OF DETERIORATION OF EXTERNAL SPACES

A. Diagnosis process

To determine the degree of deterioration of external spaces in low cost housing in Taman Melati is to disclose its causes. It also assists to show the gap between the conception of managers and the various necessities of residents and their using of facilities. Furthermore, this gap makes the external spaces lose its mechanism of management. This diagnosis must consider the following points:

- Technical diagnosis for adequate studies of external spaces and technical system with life styles of habitants and their practices.
- Social interaction analysis for developing new relations between the habitants.
- The type of management and maintenance: selection of the best procedure according to the economics and techniques condition.
- The exploitation of the resources: analysis the manner of external spaces in its development.
- Diagnosis of the deteriorating part in the external spaces (see table 3)

Table 3
The deterioration of architectural elements and its condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural element</th>
<th>Present Condition</th>
<th>Suggested improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main entrance</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Keep it as attractive element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street road</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian path</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Repairing and maintaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car parking</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>maintaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s playground</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
<td>Providing Children’s playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting areas</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
<td>Providing benches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape elements</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public lighting</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Periodic Reparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Aspects of diagnosis

To diagnose a deteriorated part of external spaces in low cost housing in Taman Melati, the first important thing is the period of habitation means the comparison between the primary state of a project and then the actual state the low cost housing in Taman Melati has been built in 1983 that means the period right now is 19 years. Then, we look at the most deteriorated places in the quarter after habitation. So, we can then see the changes that have happened to the external spaces after habitation. And finally, we can bring out the result of comparison between the two states after we have seen the changes in the actual state.

C. The residents’ participation

The participation of residents is a necessity tool for the success of any improvement project because the negligence of residents may become the direct cause to its failure. For that, it will be a mistake to isolate the residents of low cost housing in Taman Melati from the operation of improvement of external spaces, which is accomplished through their participation.

D. The scope of participation

The participation of residents must be made in the following steps that the project goes through according to the circumstances of residents and their abilities of participation. These steps are as follows:

- Preparation of improvement external spaces project.
- Management of operation.
- Finance of maintenance.

The success of the maintenance operation of external spaces is based on two important concepts: working for residents and working with residents.

E. The community participation techniques:

The participation of residents in the improvement external spaces can be divided into social and physical process those involved:

1. Vertical participation: to collect primary data (questionnaire -interview…), to have direct contact with residents.
F. Improvement of external spaces and green areas:

The main objective of improvement of external spaces and green areas in low cost housing in Taman Melati characterize in the integration of residents with environment of their housing at the functional and physical levels across following measures:

- The keeping of functional unity in the external spaces,
- the assurance of its future life with inserting a new function as commerce, recreation, children’s playground, sitting areas to develop the social interaction of residents.

The above list indicates that the management characteristics of the dwelling and quality of spaces and public facilities are the most perceived problem in the housing improvement.

IV. RESULT & DISCUSSION

A. Population Growth and Economic Challenges

The current quality of housing requires certain degree of improvement. The standard design solution has not fulfilled in social and cultural needs. The finding suggests that designers should take the responsibility of exercising society’s concern into comfortable built environment.

There is a tendency that people accept what is given to them without campaign and without participating in a campaign that is why the deteriorated situation makes people feel uncomfortable and lead them to think about moving to live in other places, which are in good condition, more maintained and more comfortable than theirs.

From this questionnaire we can exploit people’s skills depending on the capacities of residents and their willingness for the efficiency performance of the housing improvement operation. Good management and maintenance of external spaces can be resulted in:

- A direct site link between residents and estate management services.
- Higher standard in the cleanliness to upkeep of the external spaces.
- A reduction in levels of voids and squatting.
- A reduction in vandalism.
- Less damage to the elements of external spaces (telephone, lighting, seating…) thereby reducing the downtime of these services.
- Provision by staff of a low –level care in the community role through regular contact with residents.

- Provision of on-site information and advice to residents.
- Increased community development opportunities by staff. For example by encouraging a residents’ association.

Managers and residents who participate in the improvement operation of external spaces in public housing must be aware of both long term and short term consequences of their decisions. In the short term they should ensure that the upgrading process is as simple and painless as possible. In the long term they need to consider how the improvements will be look alike and how it can be managed?

This will involve the efficient managing side to reduce the amount of maintenance necessary and to make repair and replacement simple and inexpensive. For common areas yet on of the pleasures of well-managed to enable residents in the external spaces to be able to sit out and watch the world go by or chat to neighbors in shared common areas.

V. CONCLUSION

Maintenance of external spaces in low cost housing is an important part of the external spaces treatment, which has been defined as combination of design concept, management, financial and other practices applied to physical asset in pursuit. The success of any maintenance operation depends on the real actions taking in the field, this should be viewed in the context of the organization’s approach and the overall outdoor spaces needs.

The main aim of maintenance is to preserve external spaces in its initial state, as practicable, so that it effectively can serve its purpose. The main purpose of maintaining external spaces is to maintain external spaces in a good condition in which it continues to fulfill its function and presenting a good appearance.

Reducing deterioration of external spaces and facilities in low cost housing in Taman Melati is crucially linked to improved management and maintenance of services by housing authority, private agencies, and residents perceptions will make a significant contribution to improvement of way of life. It is important that the implementation of such measures is planned in accordance with wishes of the local community. Physical aspect is only part of the solution. For people to have a sense of awareness about their spaces and their local environment where they live, they need to know that their dwellings and their external spaces are not constantly under threat by only technicians, they have to play an important role and their contributions are highly appreciated.
REFERENCES


