SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Over the past decade in particular, sustainable development has become an important aspect of the construction industries. There are many ways in which sustainability issues can be incorporated into design, construction, operation and deconstruction of buildings. Importantly sustainability represents the link between society and built environment professionals. In relation to that, this study involves a look at the human outlook and interaction with the world in creating the attitudes and philosophies that have led to the violation of nature that has occurred in the past few centuries and which seems to be accelerating in our times. In this study, the focus will be aimed on the role of the Local Governments and how they play their roles and affect the industry. Therefore, this study intends to look into the sustainable development with regards to their practices. Another intended study is to provide an in-depth and better understanding the strength and weaknesses and other relevant factors that promote or hinder the sustainable development. This study is to contribute to the enrichment of knowledge on the role of Local Governments in Sustainable Development. Therefore, this research seeks to find out whether sustainable development is being practiced and seeks to find out what is happening with respect to issues of what and why things are being done with the development of Sustainable Development in Malaysia.
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Local Governments today faced with a very demanding and dynamic situation in development agenda. They are now experiencing various challenges and one of them is in the implementation of sustainable development concept as in the environmental, economical and social aspect (Hussai, 2006; Rowe, 2000). Nowadays, as a result of this development, studies about the aspects of sustainable development are increasing. The concept of sustainable development was first proposed by the Brundtland Commission in 1972. This definition has evolved since the United Nations Earth Summit held by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Rio de Janeiro (1992). The characterization on the impact of economic, social and environmental development was later formally adopted universally.

Local government is playing an important role in realizing the sustainable development agenda. A sustainable development agenda for the organization needs to be developed and implement accordingly, where the stakeholders such as the public, construction industry and businesses must be well informed (N.Zainul, 2009; Phang, 2008; Rovers, 2003; Shafii, 2006). The expression from the Unite Nation’s Conference on the Human Environment (1972) and the Rio Summit: “Think Global, Act Local” is how the local governments’ action at the local level. Furthermore, sustainable development has been promoted as a new large-scale vision to guide the local
governments. Therefore this study aims to identify the constraints of sustainable
development in Malaysian local governments.

1.2 Background of Study

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, everyone has a role to play in developing
sustainable development (Barrutia, Aguado, & Echebarria, 2007). In relation to the
development of human settlement, it is mainly on housing development with the
construction industry the main player. Therefore, construction industry must initiate
actions to reduce the negative impacts of development and sharpen this competitive edge
(Du Plessis, 2007; N.Zainul, 2009). This means that Local governments must bring
about changes and economic growth accordingly to become an effective machinery to
facilitate national growth and enhance the sustainable development? During the United
Nations Earth Summit held by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Rio
de Janeiro (1992), a sustainable development was defined as “Improving the quality of
human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco systems”. Hence,
the Bruntland’s definition (Adams, 2012; Urquidi, 2008) stated that the development
should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future
generations to meet their own needs.

Moreover, local governments are where the local community infrastructure
underpins the nation’s economy and provides significant support to the state and
national development projects (Evans & Theobald, 2003; McLaren, 1998). This extends
beyond the traditional concern of local governments’ practices, which is about
profitability and increasing shareholder value.

Local government should play an important role in encouraging the sustainable
development. A sustainable development for the organization needs to be developed and
implemented according to its concept. Currently there have been several actions in the
Malaysia’s sustainable development agenda. The sustainable development issues are not
new and were in the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1995-2000) and the formulation of the
Total Planning Doctrine indicates that the concern for one of the element in sustainable development, which is environment, begins to gain firmer ground (Hezri, 2004; Omar, 2008; Tooley, Hooks, & Basnan, 2009). The initiatives taken by Malaysia in response to the needs identified in Agenda 21 as well as those identified through its own development project, namely the five-yearly Malaysia Development Plans and the longer-term Outline Perspective Plans. It included initiatives undertaken by the Federal Government of Malaysia (the central government), by the State Government and private sectors.

In 1995, amendments were made to the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 which stressed the need for better environmental protection (Dola & Mijan, 2006; Omar, 2008). It means that good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development, where environmental, social and economic policies are responsive to the needs of the people. Therefore, in performing local governments' functions, the staff must be knowledgeable in protecting and utilizing the resources for sustainable development. Thus, knowledge in sustainable development should be an essential strategy in the project development.

1.3 Problem Statement

The local governments' function involves large resources and variety of mechanisms (Hussai, 2006; Meadowcroft, 2009). To make additional investments in human resources (expertise) and equipment are very often unable to comply with standards and practices of local governments. Hence, the knowledge of sustainable development should be inculcated as in training and encouragement from management. Therefore, local governments should not view sustainability as a luxury addition to normal practice or a necessity to drive business and development decisions. It should motivate local governments as well as stakeholders to equip its staff member with adequate knowledge of sustainable development.
Unmanageable waste of construction site, poor river management, low public participation in ensuring safety and health of housing area and sustainable public sanitation are issues that community experienced for several years now (McLaren, 1998; Saha & Paterson, 2008; Seow, 2012). It means that without proper and adequate knowledge of sustainable development, those scenarios are scenes that will be going on for years to come. However, public perception of local government performance on waste is poor because of the increasing environmental degradation and visibility of waste because of the unmanageable development. This means that staff at local governments must be aware of these issues.

However, many areas of sustainable development remain ambiguous, making it difficult to implement an effective course of action (Development & Authorities, 1997; Moore, 2011; OECD, 2001). As with wide areas of this topic, thus practitioners, stakeholders and policy-makers working in the built environment are calling not only for a common definition of sustainable development, but for a shared framework and classification system (Evans & Theobald, 2003; Rydin, Holman, & Wolff, 2003; Zhang, Dawes, & Sarkis, 2005). Simply managing the waste is not enough and therefore education, awareness and knowledge are needed to resolve such technical issues. Moreover, their functions include urban planning, sanitation, parking, business, landscaping and public event. Therefore, local governments must disseminate appropriate knowledge to their staff as to improve and enhance their sustainability deliverable.

Local governments have not so far developed or applied integrated management techniques or innovative technology solutions for sustainable development (Atkinson, 2002; Bacot, McCoy, & Plagman-Galvin, 2002; Rowe, 2000). Local government has significant potential to influence the thinking of businesses and residents, and, in turn, reflects the social and environmental values to the stakeholders. However, the construction industry and other stakeholders are accused of being resistant to change and seemingly focused on profit and bare regulatory compliance (Cifal, 2002a; Development & Authorities, 1997; Singaravelloo, 2010). In addition, it has been argued that lack of understanding and awareness in sustainable development has become the main hindrance to pursue sustainability (Gibson, 2005; N.Zainul, 2009). This means that it is
essential for the local governments to have understanding in sustainable development for stakeholders to follow. When local governments failed to realize the meaning of sustainable development, it will make it even harder to stakeholders to realize it meanings. Therefore, all sectors should develop understanding and awareness in knowledge transfer practice at local government in sustainable development agenda. Hence, the Malaysian local governments’ staff must have knowledge of sustainable development in their capacity.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the problem statements of the research, the following questions are posed:

1. What is the constraint of sustainable development in local governments’ functions?
2. What is the current local governments’ practice towards sustainable development at local governments?

1.4 Research Objectives

The following objectives are to answer the research questions:

1. To identify the constraint of sustainable development implementation in local government.
2. To study the practices towards sustainable development among Malaysian local governments’ staff.
1.5 Significance of Study

The research findings serve as to enhance the practices of sustainability in local governments. Opinions and views of officers/personnel who were assigned with specifically important roles in sustainable development are solicited and invaluable for this study. Therefore, significance of this study will benefit;

1. Industry:
To develop awareness among the staff and then the benefit can be conveyed to others (stakeholders).

2. Academic:
This study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge by filling the gap of practices towards sustainable development at local governments.

1.6 Scope of Study

The probability of success in a research project is greatly enhanced when the ‘starting’ is defined as an accurate statement of goals and justification. This procedure creates a greater understanding of problems or hypotheses, and makes practical applications through theories, questioning and reasoning to achieve the research objectives in a hope to produce some new knowledge. Hence, the scope of this research is in the area covering the topic of knowledge transfer practices in sustainable development at local governments. To further elaborate the scope, the stages depicted in Figure 1.1 is to highlight the area of study and the respondents involved. The scope of research will be based on the officers/personnel who were assigned with specific important roles with regards to sustainable development at Local Governments for example Planning or Engineering Unit as well as the Subcommittee and Task Groups related to regional
planning & development in the Local Governments. The reason of focusing on these groups is due to the fact that they are the key players of sustainable development’s agenda in the local governments. Therefore, they have the ideas and knowledge related to sustainable development. Hence, they are within the control of the researcher.

The identified groups are discussed and shown in Figure where the attention of this study is directed at public-sector evaluation in general, and especially with respect to the knowledge of sustainable development. The data are collected from local governments involved in sustainable development. The stakeholders point of views also taken into account. This study is focused on the practices of local governments in sustainable development.

Figure 1.1: Scope of study
1.7 Organization of The Study

This report is arranged and divided into 6 chapters and briefly presented as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter is all about the research introduction, problem statements, research aim, research objectives, research questions, methodology and report arrangement. In general, it is about the fundamental and review of the research.

Chapter 2: This chapter includes the literature reviews of the research. It explores the matter related to sustainable development and its implementation. Besides that, the details study to emphasize the knowledge transfer of the sustainable development in local government. It highlights the overview on local governments, knowledge transfer of sustainable development and sustainable development in local governments.

Chapter 3: This chapter explains about the some of the related method that is used for the research. The description is explained in the chapter. Besides that, the method on how to analyze the data is also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4: This chapter explains the findings of the interviews. In order for the data to be more understandable and readable, all the data is analyzed, discussed and presented in a form of table and pie chart.

Chapter 5: This chapter explains the findings of the questionnaires. In order for the data to be more understandable and readable, all the data is analyzed, discussed and presented in a form of table and pie chart.

Chapter 6: The final chapter explains the reasons behind the recommendation and the research findings as well as the overall conclusion. It enlightens the research objectives and questions in chapter 1.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduces the study background and points to the problem statement in the implementation of sustainable development at Malaysian local governments. It is in the
handling of the issues and gathering the factors in the managing of knowledge transfer in sustainable development. Then, it looks into the research problems and its objectives. Next, the research significance is ascertained before the research scope is drawn. Lastly, the thesis arrangement is outlined. On this basis, the study proceeds with a detailed description of the research and its development processes to completion.
CHAPTER 2

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the current views of the literature relevant to the research objectives set out in chapter 1. The discussion is on the consideration surrounding the research area upon which this study is based. It begins with a brief discussion of standpoint surrounding the research and associated with these varying perspectives. Then the theoretical assumption is provided and guides this study and provides justification for the choice of research subject. Accordingly, this chapter presents the sustainable development concept and definition and further discussion in relation to local governments.

2.2 Sustainable Development

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, when Agenda 21 was formulated as the international blueprint for sustainable development, all sectors of society have been in the process of interpreting and pursuing sustainability and sustainable development
within their specific contexts. (Evans & Theobald, 2003; Lafferty, 2001) mentioned about the importance of management and planning for the implementation of sustainable development in Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action including sustainable development in the development project area (Courtney, 1999; Executive, 2006). Moreover, Agenda 21 has been a fundamental guideline to define sustainability in many areas in the development project concerning housing and building development.

Using Bruntland’s definition (Brandon, Lombardi, & Bentivegna, 1997; Nathan & Sudhakara, 2012), where development meets ‘the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. In addition, the concept of sustainable development was firmly entrenched within the environmental movement and sustainable development was often interpreted as sustainable use of natural resources (Chatelain-ponroy, 2012; Gilham, 1998; Hawkins & Wang, 2011). Sustainability is not a new concept and the issues relating to sustainability have started to be widely noticed, when the United Nations declared the Brundtland’s report. In Figure 2.1, the environment, economy and social pillars have been emphasized and agreed to be the primary pillars of sustainable development.

![Figure 2.1: Sustainable Development adapted from: (Brandon et al., 1997; Johar, 2004; Redclift, 2005)](image)

Even though this definition leaves much to argue about, it has since become the basis for most work on sustainable development. Obviously, sustainable development is
the kind of development that needed to be pursued in order to achieve the state of sustainability. It is a continuous process of maintaining a dynamic balance between the demands of people for equity, prosperity and quality of life and what is ecologically possible (Evans & Theobald, 2003; OECD, 2001). Adams (2012) states that the Brundtland Report 1987 promotes the principle of sustainable development because of urgent needs to check and manage environmental degradation, population growth, resource depletion, loss of biodiversity and poverty. This indicates that the Brundtland Report 1987 recommends that organizations should adopt sustainable development as a central guiding principle since the principle was developed to deal with environmental, social and economic issues facing the world.

While all business enterprises can make a contribution towards its attainment, the ability to make a difference varies by sector and organization size where the role of business in contributing to sustainable development remains indefinite (Executive, 2006; Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005). In view of that, sustainable development is good business in itself. It creates opportunities for suppliers of ‘green consumers’, developers of environmentally safer materials and processes, firms that invest in eco-efficiency and those that engage themselves in social well-being.

Moreover, sustainable development is a process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological developments and institutional are all in harmony and enhance current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations (Bicker, Sillitoe, & Pottier, 2004; Brandon et al., 1997; Van Zeijl-Rozema, Cörvers, Kemp, & Martens, 2008). It is reflected on the UK Government when they take on sustainable development on the agenda for the development project (Evans & Theobald, 2003; Rowe, 2000). Organizations around the world that incorporate sustainable practices to strengthen their organization goals can increase shareholders values and building better global market share competition.
2.2.1 Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of ‘development’ can be defined as: “the process of developing, developing something, or of being developed, for example by growth, change, or elaboration” or with reference to buildings as “a group of buildings of the same kind that are built as a single construction project” (Shafii, Arman Ali, & Othman, 2006; Sjostrom & Bakens, 1999). Meanwhile, the concept of sustainability applies to all aspects of life on Earth and is commonly defined within ecological, social and economic contexts (Executive, 2006). Sustainability is not a new concept and the issues relating to sustainability have started to be widely noticed, when the United Nations declared the Brundtland’s report (Unesco, 2009). Consequently the concept of sustainable development has received growing recognition, but it is a new idea for many business executives.

This well known concept was shared by others (Amundsen & Asheim, 1991; Development & Authorities, 1997; Executive, 2006). Fundamentally, sustainable development is a concept based on the integration of economic, social and environmental concern. The concept of sustainable development approach seeks to rationalize development that promotes economic growth, but maintains social inclusion and minimizes environmental impact. It depicts the importance of sustainability in ensuring the future generation to be able to persevere. Simply stated, the three elements recognizes the importance of ensuring that all people should be able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, both now and the future. The three elements namely economy, environment and society must be a major consideration for sustainability in the development.

This sustainable development’s terms is the development that can be related to town and regional planning that covers from the planning aspect to enforcement. From various researches (Brandon et al., 1997; Cifal, 2002b; Du Plessis, 2007; Hawkins & Wang, 2011; Rashid et al., 2011; Zimmermann, 2007), there are major aspects which are environment, social, transport, housing and construction. These forms of sustainable development areas need to be considered, integrated, and improved to achieve a desired level of sustainable development.
2.2.2 Forms of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, in the broadest sense, is the ability to sustain a certain process or state at a certain rate or level, hence the term; sustainability. The concept of sustainability applies to all aspects of life on Earth and is commonly defined within ecological, social and economic contexts (Kizilaslan, Güler, & Kizilaslan, 2007; Ri Declaration, 2012). It means that Sustainable development has three important components which are economic, social development and environmental protection. The following sections discuss the form of sustainable development in housing, transport, construction, society and environment.

2.2.2.1 Sustainable Housing

House is a human basic need and therefore, the housing industry is one of the main drivers in any nation’s development. Housing industry contributes to the economic and social development but lacking in terms of environmental protection (P. Harris & Holt, 1999; Zhu & Lin, 2004). However, sustainable housing should refers to a structure and using process that is environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building’s life-cycle from design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and demolition as suggested by (Buys, Barnett, Miller, & Bailey, 2005; Zakaria & Yang, 2004a). This requires close cooperation of the design team, the architects, the engineers and the client at all project stages.

Sustainable housing provides near transport mode and transit corridor, encourage the use of public transport rather than private car (Reid & Houston, 2013; Zhu & Lin, 2004). Therefore, sustainable housing provides many advantages to environmental, economy and social aspects. Hence, it encourages the use of public transport and reducing the carbon footprint. Moreover, sustainable housing main theme is accessibility to school, shops, entertainment and primary healthcare (Crabtree & Hes, 2009; C. Smith,
Clayden, & Dunnett, 2008; Ubale, Martin, & Wee, 2012). In addition, the housing layout is important in keeping with the theme of sustainable development where community is served without compromising the element of environment and economy.

Similarity of the aim in sustainable housing are to minimize negative environmental impacts, improve social security and economically viable for communities. Therefore, with respect to sustainable development in view, a proper knowledge needs to be managed by the local governments to materialize it.

2.2.2.2 Sustainable Transport

Transport systems are major emitters of greenhouse gases (Greene & Wegener, 1997; Jie, 2010), therefore when sustainability is implemented in transport system, it can reduce the effect. It means that any means of transport with low impact on the environment and includes non-motorized transport for example cycling, transit oriented development, transport systems that are fuel efficient and promote healthy lifestyles (Gao & Feng, 2010). Moreover, sustainable transport came into uses as a logical follow-up from sustainable development and is used to describe modes of transport and systems of transport planning, which are consistent with wider concerns of sustainability (Jie, 2010). Interestingly, sustainable transport system exists to provide social and economic connection as well as environmentally beneficial.

According to several studies (Burwell, 2008; Gao & Feng, 2010; Hsu, 2003; Jie, 2010), a sustainable transport system should:

i. Manage the environment and resources and in a manner consistent with human and ecosystem health, while minimizing the impact on the use of land and the generation of noise.

ii. Allowing the basic access and development needs of individuals, companies and society to be met safely and promotes equity within and between successive generations.

iii. Operates practically and efficiently, offers a choice of transport mode and supports competitive economical needs, as well as balanced regional development.
iv. Restrictions on emissions and waste within the planet’s ability to absorb them, uses renewable resources at or below their rates of generation, and uses non-renewable resources at or below the rates of development of renewable substitute.

Hence, sustainable transport makes a positive contribution to the economic sustainability of the communities they serve.

2.2.2.3 Sustainable Construction

The construction industry is the broad process for the realization of human settlements and the creation of infrastructure that supports those developments. However, the industry complains of lack of resources to invest in the technological changes required for the application of the sustainability concept and they are concerned that their level of profits will be reduced (Idris & Ismail, 2011; N.Zainul, 2009; Potbhare, Syal, & Korkmaz, 2009). Moreover, the construction industry which responsible for the building and other infrastructure development has a significant impact on the environment across a broad spectrum of its activities loosely grouped into off-site, on-site and operational activities (Sjostrom & Bakens, 1999; Zhu & Lin, 2004). While it is true that the change to more sustainable construction will incur some costs, however there are also associated savings resulting from efficient resource use, higher productivity and reduced risk.

Sustainable construction is a way for the building industry to move towards achieving sustainable development. It aims at reducing the environment impact of a building over its entire lifetime, while optimizing its economic viability and the comfort and safety of its occupants (Shelbourn et al., 2006; Sjostrom & Bakens, 1999). The inclusion of construction in sustainable development was first proposed and defined as “The creation and responsible management of a healthy built environment based on resource efficient and ecological principles” (N.Zainul, 2009; Shafii, Arman Ali, et al., 2006; Shafii & Othman, 2007; Tatari & Kucukvar, 2012).
Table 2.1: Improvement Caused by Sustainability for Construction Industry

<table>
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<td>- Site assessment where the contaminated brown field sites are remediated and</td>
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<td>developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ecological damage and waste minimization during construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Site design to maximize passive solar, hydrological, ecological and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Selection of sustainable and low impact materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrated design of site, building structure, insulation, lighting, HVAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systems etc. to minimize running costs, heat losses and energy use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consideration of the environmental impacts of buildings throughout their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life and continued facilities management to minimize them.</td>
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Sources (Kibert, Sendzimir, & Guy, 2000; Kibert, 2007)

In table 2.1, it can be elaborated that sustainable construction is a way for building and other infrastructure development to move towards achieving sustainable development. Construction industry has a significant impact on the environment across a broad spectrum of its activities and sustainability can improve its off-site, on-site and operational activities. Interestingly, sustainable construction has different approaches and different priorities in various countries resulting from the different views and needs (Cushman, Venters, Cornford, & Mitev, 2002; Tatari & Kucukvar, 2012; Zhu & Lin, 2004). Although there are various definitions, the aims and goals of sustainable construction remain the same. Ideally, in construction industry, all parties should engage in initiating, developing, planning, designing, advising, constructing, maintaining and operating in an effort to materialize sustainable construction. Therefore, sustainable construction is a way towards achieving sustainable development by taking into account the knowledge of environmental, social and economic issues.

2.2.2.4 Sustainable Society

Living sustainably depends on accepting a duty to seek harmony with other people and with nature (Abdullah, Shuhana, Ruzita, & Mohamed, 2009; Baker, 2009; Tovey, 2009). It means that people must share with each other and care for the Earth, where
infrastructure, buildings development and its construction has significant impacts on earth’s resources (land, materials, energy, water, human and social capital) and on the living and working environment. Moreover, sustainable development revolves around the pillars of sound theoretical framework, accurate and relevant data, appropriate institutions and policies, good governance and transparency and accountability, effective implementation and enforcement and public participation and awareness.

In the face of rapid growth and the pressure to fulfill multiple needs of the local citizens and the private sector, Malaysian government is preparing and building more public transportation such as MRT (Monorail Transit) within Kuala Lumpur area. Accordingly, these actions are the principles of a sustainable society that are interrelated and mutually supporting in order to fulfill the needs of the community (Baker, 2009; Buys et al., 2005; Lehaney, Clarke, Coakes, & Jack, 2003; Loraine, 1982). This means that the sustainable societies should:

i. Respect and care for the society.
ii. Improve the quality of human life.
iii. Conserve the Earth's vitality and diversity.
iv. Minimize the depletion of non-renewable resources.
v. Change personal attitudes and practices.
vi. Enable communities to care for their own environments.
vii. Provide a national framework for integrating development and conservation.
viii. Create a global networking.

2.2.2.5 Sustainable Environment

Environmental sustainability is the process of making sure the current processes of interaction with the environment are pursued with the idea of keeping the environment clean and safe for society (Adams, 2007; Bacot et al., 2002; United & Conference, 1992). Hence, the environmental elements in sustainability include climates change, air pollution, ozone depletion, oceans, wildlife, soil, land use, waste, noise pollution and
light pollution. Thus, environmental elements demand that society design activities to meet human needs and preserving the life support systems of the earth.

The overall aim of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve a continuous long-term improvement of quality of life through the creation of sustainable communities (Evans & Theobald, 2003; Milutinovic, 2010; Rowe, 2000). Where, it is able to manage and use resources efficiently, able to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy and in the end able to ensure prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Moreover, the matters are predominantly environmental such as:

i. Climate change and clean energy
ii. Sustainable transport
iii. Sustainable consumption & production
iv. Conservation and management of natural resources
v. Public Health
vi. Social inclusion, demography and migration
vii. Global poverty and sustainable development challenges

In addition, the construction industry consumes a large volume of raw material, over exploitation of raw material resources and extensive use of energy can cause depletion of natural resources (MacDougall, 2008; Sjostrom & Bakens, 1999; Zhu & Lin, 2004). Moreover, matters regarding the whole process from the inception of project to completion in which the environments are taken into account. Matters such as the management and selection of site, material, design and finishes for the sustainable construction are essentially being considered.

Ignoring the environment element in the uncontrolled built-up land with respect to the construction industry can lead to unsustainable development. The Bukit Antarabangsa landslide tragedy makes it the ninth landslide disaster on Malaysian soil in the year 2008, bringing with it four fatalities. (Michelini & Razzoli, 2004; Seow, 2012) stated that the environment is an important element for sustainability. Hence, the concern for sustainable development has been echoed by subsequence five years plan in Malaysia (Omar, 2008; Unit, 2006). This five years plan is in accordance with local government’s intention to bring forward sustainability in its planning development.
2.3 Local Government

The Malaysian government system is divided into three levels, namely federal, state and local government (Hussai, 2006; Phang, 2008). The local government forms the third tier of the government and as such, there are constraints to the capacity of the local government and often local governments also assume the mediatory role between the different levels of governments and the people. The enforcement of Local Government Act 1976 established in essence only two types of local council - one for municipality and one for rural area. However, a city status can be conferred to a municipal council by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong with the consent of the Conference of Rulers once it reached the necessary criteria.

The position of local government in Malaysia is stated in Federal Constitution. By virtue of items 4 and 5 of Ninth Schedule of Federal Constitution, local government outside the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya is a subject under the State List. All local governments outside the Federal Territories are directly under the exclusive jurisdiction of States Government. This means local State Government has wide powers to control the local authorities. Generally, the concept of local government is as follows (Hussai, 2006; MHLG, 2013; Phang, 2008):

i. Local Government is responsible for local associations as what the state and federal government had set.

ii. The status of the Local Government is lower than the state and federal government.

iii. The Local Government autonomy in administering aspect is set by the state and federal government where it gives services to the public.

iv. The Local Government has the power to sue or be sued, to sign or agree on contracts and to gain properties.

The local government is a dominant local public entity at the local level (Singaravelloo, 2010). Moreover, a local government is often viewed as an institution that provides urban services to its local communities (Cifal, 2002b; Development & Authorities, 1997). In general, local government involves the conception of a territorial,
non-sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. Generally the local governments are responsible for public health and sanitation i.e. the provision and maintenance of public places and amenities, waste and rubbish disposal, environment protection, town planning and building control, social and economic development and maintenance of all infrastructures within the local authority areas. In addition, local government exercises great influence over the social and economic well being of local communities as it also plays the role of a local planning agency.

The demands of the local communities for more efficient and equitable services as well as economic and social growth in their areas are on the rise (Barrutia et al., 2007; Cifal, 2002b). In the case of Malaysia, the local government forms the third tier of the government and as such, there are constraints to the capacity of the local government. The Act for Local Government (Urban Authorities) and their amendments, the village, district and urban authorities are responsible for: planning, financing and implementing development program within their areas of jurisdiction (Watt, 2006; Zakaria, Vikneswaran, Mohd Said, Saleh, & Mustaffar, 2012a). This means that each local government has to suppress crimes, maintain peace, good order and protect the public and private property; promote the social welfare and economic well-being of persons within its areas of jurisdiction. Therefore, local government exercises great influence over the social and economic well being of local communities as it also plays the role of a local planning agency.

The current established concept of sustainable development gives rise to many issues regarding the physical resources required for human existence and overall quality of life for both present and future generations. Furthermore, it has to control and improve agriculture, trade and industry, further and enhance health, education and social life of the people, and fight poverty and diseases. However, the challenges remain colossal and some of these challenges can be attributed to lack of the necessary capacity to fulfill the shared vision of an effective and innovative local government.
2.3.1 The Structure of Local Governments

The Malaysian government system is divided into three levels, namely federal, state and local government (MHLG, 2013). The local government forms the third tier of the government and as such, often local governments assume the mediatory role between the different levels of governments and the people.

![Hierarchy of Government](image)

Figure 2.2: Hierarchy of Government

Figure 2.2 shows the hierarchy of government, where the local government is in the third tier and the capacity in terms of planning and development of community is below from the first and second level. The enforcement of Local Government Act 1976 established in essence only two types of local council - one for municipality and one for rural area. However, a city status can be conferred to a municipal council by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong with the consent of the Conference of Rulers once it reached the necessary criteria. Generally the local governments are responsible for public health and sanitation i.e. the provision and maintenance of public places and amenities, waste and rubbish disposal, environment protection, town planning and building control, social and economic development and maintenance of all infrastructures within the local governments areas. Therefore it is essential for local governments to have
knowledgeable staff in order to provide the services particularly when comes to sustainable development matter.

The local government's status and position is provided in the Malaysian Constitution, whereby the Constitution states that the local government is under the power and control of the respective state governments. Apart of that mentioned by the Act 171, where there are many other agencies established and charged with the role of a local government. In relation, these so-called modified local governments were established under newly created, separate and special Act of Parliament or state enactments or ordinances. There are currently four types of local governments in Malaysia (MHLG, 2013), and at present, they are: City, which is called City Hall or City Council, Municipality, which is called Municipal Council, Rural area, which is called District Council and Special and modified local authority, which is called Corporation, Development Board, Development Authority or simply *Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*.

For City Hall or City Council, fundamentally it has the annual income of more than 80 million, population should be more than 300,000 people, and infrastructure should be systematic, organized and completed. Moreover the center of administration and the infrastructure, population, political interference and certain income are stipulated in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG). Example of City Council is Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Ipoh City Hall and North Kuching City Council.

In the Municipality, which is called Municipal Council, the fundamental criteria are in terms of annual income where it should be more than 10 million and population should be more than 100,000 people. Moreover, the control of administration is clearly stated and can manage their own financial. Example of Municipal Council is Ampang Jaya Municipal Council and Batu Pahat Municipal Council.

District Council is for rural areas which are based on state government opinion and view. Furthermore, the area is outside the town centre. Fundamentally, the population must less than 100000 people and the annual income should be less than 5 million. Example of District Councils are Yong Peng District Council and Kerian District Council.

As for Special and modified Local Authority, they are called Corporation, Development Board, Development Authority or simply *Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*. They
are the Agencies that are authorized by the State Government to carry out the functions as Local Government. Examples of Special and Modified Local Authority are Putrajaya Corporation, *Lembaga Bandaran Johor Tenggara (Johor)*, PBT Taman Perindustrian Hi-Tech Kulim (Kedah) and Lembaga Pembangunan Tioman (Pahang) (MHLG, 2013).

Accordingly, there are a total of 149 Local Governments and 5 Modified Local Governments in Malaysia at present. Table 2.2 shows the categories of local governments for each state. There are 3 types of local governments namely, City Hall/Municipal council, District council and Modified local authority. The breakdowns can be simplified as every state has City or Municipal council and District council, however it depends on the Federal Government or the rules and regulations stipulated by the constitution.

Table 2.2: Categories of local governments for each state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>City Hall/Municipal Council</th>
<th>District Council</th>
<th>Modified</th>
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Source: MHLG, 2013
REFERENCES


