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CONTENTS

<i>Note from the Guest Editor</i> <i>Aida Mokhtar</i>	825
 Research Articles	
The Extra Costs of Having a Disability: The Case of IIUM <i>Ruzita Mohd Amin and Nur Syuhada Md. Adros</i>	829
Advertisements Shape Our Social Reality: A Study of Apple Advertisements on Promoting PWDs and Inclusion <i>Aida Mokhtar and Souhaila Ahmed Elyass Hussain</i>	855
The Anticipation of Malaysian Urban Cities to be Inclusive and Accessible by 2030 <i>Nur Amirah Abd Samad and Asiah Abdul Rahim</i>	889
Parenting Children with Hearing Impairment: The Milieu of Parents' Practices and Experiences <i>Mastura Badzis and Rabiul Garba Idris</i>	899
Stress in Parents of Children with Autism: A Malaysian Experience <i>Nadzirah Ahmad Basri and Nik Nur Wahidah Nik Hashim</i>	923
The Costs of Caregivers for Children with Disabilities that Participate in Centre-Based and Home-Based Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Programmes in the East Coast of Malaysia <i>Haliza Hasan, Syed Mohamed Aljunid and Amrizal MN</i>	945
The Design of a Speech Delay Screening Mobile Application for Malaysian Parents <i>Siti Asma Mohammed, Nur Faizah Azahari and Wan Nur Shahirah W.A. Sayuti</i>	965

The Anticipation of Malaysian Urban Cities to be Inclusive and Accessible by 2030

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Abstract: Malaysia, in the Malaysia Urban Forum (MUF) 2019 aims to realize the vision of the World Urban Forum (WUF) 2018 theme of ‘Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda’ that is in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The introduction of the Malaysian Standard started in 1990 but not acknowledged until the establishment of the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2008 and gazetted in the Uniform Building By-Laws (UBBL) amendments despite the slow pace of accessibility awareness in urban development and implementation. The methodology compares the establishment of notable Inclusive and Accessible Cities with their planning strategies of implementing Universal Design. Findings and results will determine inclusive city’s strategies from each case study documented and device a framework of projection for cities’ inclusivity. Conclusively, this study would determine the anticipation of Malaysian urban cities to be Inclusive and Accessible in 2030 by strategising action plans and a framework for ten (10) year planning.

Keywords: Inclusive City, Universal Design, SDGs, Accessibility Strategies in 2030.

Abstrak: Di Forum Perbandaran Malaysia 2019, Malaysia berhasrat untuk merealisasikan visi Forum Perbandaran Sedunia 2018 dengan tema ‘Bandar 2030, Bandar untuk Semua: Melaksanakan Agenda Perbandaran Baharu’ yang

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sejajar dengan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan. Pengenalan kepada Standard Malaysia bermula sekitar tahun 1990 tetapi tidak diiktiraf sehinggalah penubuhan Akta Orang Kurang Upaya 2008 dan diwartakan dalam pindaan UKBS. Metodologi seterusnya membandingkan bandar inklusif dan bandar mudah akses yang telah diiktiraf dengan mengambil kira langkah-langkah perancangan dan strategi bandar dalam pelaksanaan rekabentuk sejagat. Penemuan dan keputusan akan menentukan langkah perancangan dan strategi daripada setiap kajian kes bandar yang didokumenkan dan merangka kerja unjuran inklusiviti bandar di Malaysia. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini akan menentukan jangkauan bandar-bandar di Malaysia untuk menjadi inklusif dan mudah diakses pada tahun 2030 dengan merancang strategi dan kerangka kerja untuk unjuran perancangan selama sepuluh tahun.

Kata Kunci: Bandar Inklusif, Rekabentuk Sejagat, SDGs, Strategi Aksesibiliti, pada tahun 2030.

Introduction

The main theme of World Urban Forum (WUF) in 2018 held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia aims to realize the vision of cities in the year 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’ where it states, ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. The WUF 2018 theme is ‘Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda.’ Under WUF 2018, the target is to implement the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and addressing inclusive and sustainable cities among other key aspects.

“Cities for All” is defined as, ‘the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, and seeks to promote inclusivity and ensure that all the city’s inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.’ The projection timeline of “Cities 2030” further ‘promotes a future of cities and human settlements that are environmentally sustainable and resilient, socially inclusive, safe and violence-free, and economically productive, while territorially connected and contributing towards sustained rural development and prosperity’, that sets a cut off period

of achieving those targets and in the case of inclusive cities (United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

The inclusivity approach of incorporating Universal Design should as well include other seemingly related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that can contribute to build and promote the realisation of an Inclusive City. The other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are: SDG3; ‘Good Health and Well-Being’ where it ‘Ensures healthy lives and promotes well-being for all at all ages that are essential to sustainable development’, SDG9; ‘Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure’ by ‘Building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation, where in return, is the primary source of income generation which allows for rapid and sustained increases in living standards for all people’, and, SDG10; ‘Reduced Inequalities’ where it focuses on ‘The increasing consensus that economic growth is not sufficient to reduce poverty if it is not inclusive and does not involve the sustainable development dimension of economic, social and environmental by reducing inequality, government policies should be universal in principle and pays attention to the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalized populations.’ Thus, more initiatives, intervention, effort and time are needed in the way forward of becoming an Inclusive City.

Aim and Scope of Study

Accessibility is in line with Universal Design principles to determine the minimum design requirements for persons with disabilities Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The inception of Malaysian Standard was in 1990 but it was not acknowledged until the establishment of the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2008 and this impacted the slow pace of accessibility awareness and design implementation in development despite the massive urban development happening in major cities in Malaysia of current (Nur Amirah, A.S, et al., 2018). The current existing PWDs Policy and Persons with Disabilities Action Plan 2016-2022 (*Pelan Tindakan Orang Kurang Upaya 2016-2022*), has been established to target all government agencies to collaborate and nationally initiate its short and long-term indicators and strategy for social inclusion in several aspects including built environment. The goal is to ensure that Malaysian urban cities achieve are Inclusive and Accessible Cities in the span of 10 years by the year 2030.

Methodology

The methodology is Qualitative Method that will be participatory worldview, and narrative design (Creswell, J. & Creswell, D., 2018) and the qualitative research design selected is Content Analysis with Case Studies approach of multiple-developed countries with Inclusive and Accessible Cities (Groat & Wang, 2013). This study further compares the establishment of notable Inclusive and Accessible Cities in terms of their planning of inclusion strategies for implementing Universal Design and to measure whether Malaysian existing initiatives and inclusion strategies by state and local governments have been effective in implementing Universal Design.

Findings

The Universal Design concept was introduced in 1985 by Ronald Mace. Universal Design is defined as a ‘design of products and environments usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design’. This applies to all ages, personal abilities and sizes, with an inclusive capability that surpasses barrier-free and accessible design. Universal Design has been accepted in a variety of design fields, such as architecture, engineering, product design, and also landscape design (Ostroff 2001; Erkilic 2011). Noted by Harrison and Dalton (2015), Universal Design intends to encompass nature, to enable a wider cohort of people than before to benefit from accessibility, safety and usability without discriminating against anyone. However, in designing the built environment, there are inevitable limits, where facilities should be designed to be usable ‘to the greatest extent possible’, rather than ‘by all’, recognising that there are limits to providing this inclusion to everyone in all situations (Preiser and Ostroff 2001).

Accessibility is defined as the quality of a built environment to be accessed by people with physical disabilities and/or older people while barrier-free design is defined as a design concept to make a built environment accessible to people with physical disabilities and/or older people by removing the architectural barriers present in existing buildings (Ostroff 2001; Saito 2006). As described by Fletcher (2016), accessibility impacts PWDs and people who have been affected leading to the consequence of physical disability or impairment that is in relation to the physical environment, the category of PWDs can be expanded and not limited to elderly persons, ambulant disabled, wheelchair-

bound, sensory disabled and temporarily disabled. Accessibility also sometimes refers to the characteristic that products, services, and people with various disabilities can independently use facilities.

The Accessible and Inclusive City concept is notable in developed and also some developing countries, as they have laid out strategies for inclusion in their cities. There are some measures that they have initiated with their leaders for example in cities in the European Union (EU) that have won the Access City Award organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum. Since the award started in the year 2000, all these winning cities in Europe have made initiatives and improvements in making their cities easier for PWDs and the elderly to live a better quality of life. The Access City Award competition is conducted annually and offers three (3) winners and up to four (4) Special Mentioned cities for recognising their commitment in improving accessibility and related efforts.

A statement made by Marianne Thyssen, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility of EU in 2017, mentioned that the Accessibility policy plays a main role in eliminating the barriers people with disabilities encounter in their daily lives with political will and dialogue with experts, people with disabilities, companies and service providers important for it to thrive European Commission (n.d.).

Figure 1&2: Example of Access City Award document published annually by the European Union Commission.



The Universal Design concept advances in a more comprehensive way as it has the formulation of the Seven Principles of Universal Design those characteristics of more usable design solutions, products and environments make this concept is more likely to be adopted and embraced internationally by all parts of the world including Malaysia and countries in the Asian region as noted by researchers (Yusof and Jones 2014; Gray, Zimmerman, and Rimmer 2012; Lid and Solvang 2016; Kadir and Jamaludin 2013).

Within ASEAN in addition to three (+3) countries of which encompass Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia that strive to make their cities inclusive and accessible with their success rates varying amongst developed and developing nations. A more local context example, that is Singapore that has been marked as a notable inclusive city, as it had developed its Accessibility Master Plan (2006-2015) and identified key strategies to mitigate all issues and initiate measures in creating solution for enhancing universal design and user friendly built environment and has proven successful in integration in most aspects of the built environment, and in terms of accessibility and mobility.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion will determine the inclusive city's strategies of each city and device a framework of projection for the Malaysian urban cities' anticipation to achieve inclusiveness within the span of 10 years to make it Inclusive and Accessible by the year 2030.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis and Union of Indicators for Strategies of Inclusive and Accessible Cities

CITIES	London, United Kingdom; Chester, United Kingdom; Oslo, Norway; Turku, Finland; Rotterdam, Netherlands; Jūrmala, Latvia; Lugo, Spain; Singapore; Skellefteå, Sweden; Alessandria, Italy; Funchal, Portugal; Lyon, France; Ljubljana, Slovenia; Luxembourg; Bangkok, Thailand; Tokyo, Japan; Sendai, Japan; Seoul, South Korea. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia; Kuala Lumpur; Malaysia; Pulau Pinang, Malaysia; Putrajaya, Malaysia.
DETERMINANTS	
Measures & Strategies for Inclusive & Accessible City	<p>a) Accessibility Policy and Political Will – The awareness and implementation should start from the top down administration as Mayor or State Minister has the authority to initiate the policy.</p> <p>b) Accessibility and Inclusive at the heart of city planning - The Plan puts accessibility high on the agenda. Part of the success in creating a smart and accessible environment is close collaboration between the city and organisations representing disabled people.</p> <p>c) Creating A city for everyone - The city is implementing an action plan which identifies key issues of accessibility in the urban environment and sets out a timetable and agenda to tackle them. All public buildings should meet national accessibility laws and standards. There is a municipal access expert who works with developers from the earliest stages of construction and systematic monitoring and inspection of building plans makes sure that high levels of accessibility are maintained. A Communal Policy on Accessible Public Spaces should be developed. It provides guiding principles and layouts to assist city planners. The aim is to ensure that there is consistency and coherence in design in features such as pedestrian crossings and bus stops. This approach not only ensures access but also increases safety and usability for the public as a whole.</p> <p>d) Creating barrier free public spaces - Guidelines for the outdoor space to improve accessibility and were created jointly through dialogues between the municipality and stakeholders. This inclusive policy extends to playgrounds which are systematically being upgraded and improved to ensure that they can be used by all children, regardless of their abilities.</p> <p>e) Standard for road design was modified to reflect accessibility requirements - Whenever major works are planned, accessibility experts are involved to ensure that the proposal meets the needs and wishes of disabled people.</p> <p>f) Accessible Technology and Access to Information - redesigned its city website to make it accessible to people with vision impairments. Information can also be accessed through the Visitor Centre and all of the city’s libraries. There is also an app available which gives information about accessible sites and destinations for people with disabilities and those with young children. It includes integrated voice synthesis, sign language and easy read sections within a digital inventory/database on access to tourism, sports, cultural and other activities.</p> <p>g) Transportation: the key to Independence – Most cities recognises that access to public transport is one of the most important aspects of independence. So all the city’s buses are fully accessible with kneeling mechanisms, ramps, text screens and voice synthesis. Bus drivers and transport personnels should have all received disability awareness training.</p> <p>h) Promoting independent living - A key goal for the city is to support elderly and the disabled people into employment and independent living.</p>

Source: Access City Award, 2017; Norway universally designed by 2025: The Norwegian government’s action plan for universal design and increased accessibility 2009-2013, 2009; Inclusive Design Standards London, 2013 and interview notes of authors with Malaysian Local Authority’s officers (personal communication), 2018.

Conclusion

The findings should determine the anticipation level of Malaysian urban cities to be Inclusive and Accessible in 2030 by strategising action plans and framework for the ten (10) year planning. There are concerning issues about the indication of a potential gap between having legislation and standards in ensuring their implementation pointing to questions about perceptions, knowledge and the understanding of professionals in the construction industry on these legislation and standards and the role these legislation and standards have in influencing these professionals to incorporate Universal Design in their design.

To enhance further the Universal Design concept of inclusion to innovate and instead of stifling creativity for architects, planners and designers but to push them to be inventive. Significantly this research will formulate an Accessibility Implementation Framework for use under ministerial and governmental agencies in innovating possibilities of expanding the existing policies for empowering accessibility for all in our physical built environment, for effective implementation for our public building, public amenities and public spaces by conforming the government's plan of action that is the PWDs Policies and Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2016 – 2022 in line with Rancangan Malaysia Ke-11 (RMK-11) or the Eleventh Malaysia Plan.

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In This Issue

Note from the Guest Editor

Aida Mokhtar

Research Articles

Ruzita Mohd Amin and Nur Syuhada Md. Adros

The Extra Costs of Having a Disability: The Case of IIUM

Aida Mokhtar and Souhaila Ahmed Elyass Hussain

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Nur Amirah Abd Samad and Asiah Abdul Rahim

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Mastura Badzis and Rabiū Garba Idris

Parenting Children with Hearing Impairment: The Milieu of Parents' Practices and Experiences

Nadzirah Ahmad Basri and Nik Nur Wahidah Nik Hashim

Stress in Parents of Children with Autism: A Malaysian Experience

Haliza Hasan, Syed Mohamed Aljunid and Amrizal MN

The Costs of Caregivers for Children with Disabilities that Participate in Centre-Based and Home-Based Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Programmes in the East Coast of Malaysia

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