IMPORTANCE OF RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS IN GUARDED NEIGHBOURHOODS: A REVIEW

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Abstract

This review paper covers the important role of a residents’ association in governing a guarded neighbourhood. Nowadays, offering a guarded neighbourhood scheme has become a trend in the housing industry. There are two ways in establishing a guarded neighbourhood; that is through the developer or the residents. The developers attract the buyers by providing the elements of safety and security, while the residents in a housing area choose to secure their neighbourhood to prevent crimes. Problems arise in the establishment of a residents’ association due to the absence of legal provision that focuses on guarded neighbourhood management until it invites problems for the residents’ association to govern their neighbourhood. This aim of this paper is to determine whether there is a need for the residents’ association to govern their guarded neighbourhoods. Accordingly, using the residents’ association as a platform, this study will review some research conducted by other researchers regarding this issue. Thus, the findings show that the roles of the association are focused on managing safety, maintenance and care of common interest in the neighbourhood guarded. Therefore, in order to strengthen the role of community associations, there is a need for better cooperation and communication between the residents’ association with stakeholders such as residents and local authorities. It was found that the roles of residents’ associations should be given more focus with more clarity.

Keywords: Residents’ associations, Guarded neighbourhood, Residents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The demand for safety and security is trending in the housing industry. Having a house is a key necessity in life. The increase in the number of houses in Malaysia shows that there is a demand from the society regardless the income level. Now, most buyers are more sensitive in choosing housing environment that has security elements such as gated community or guarded neighbourhood. In fact, when deciding the location for their property, home buyers do not only prioritize on safety. But they also prioritize on freedom zone, where residents are free to use the facilities provided in the neighbourhood (Barton and Silverman, 1989). Moreover, for the future, concept of guarded neighbourhood is able to add value to the neighbourhood because of the element of sustainability (Tan, 2011).

Ying and Shamsudin (2016) describe that as for the existing neighbourhood, the safety element is much needed to reduce fear among the residents and they regard safety as a form of exclusivity as compared security, which is usually offered by the government for its people (Gruszczak, 2010). Normally, the form of security offered is in a form of defensible space, which is the entrance control as an active access control (Berkzo, 2009) in a neighbourhood. Indirectly, the family, the property and the neighbourhood can be protected from unwelcomed intrusion that cause disruption to the neighbourhood (Hadi et al., 2014). Good neighbourhood consists of good governance and governance must be viewed in the perspective of an organization or association (Gruszczak, 2010). At the same time, the residents’ association will carry out their role in maintaining the existing
facilities, and the process need funding, because without financial, the facilities cannot be maintained (The Star, 2013).

In reality, private governance is not an easy thing since a lot of things need to be refined so that there are no conflicting rules. Because of that, the formation of a residents’ association is crucial to ensure the neighbourhood’s efficiency. Through the importance of unity of people in the neighbourhood, to establish guarded neighbourhood schemes, only an application from a residents’ association will be considered (Town and Country Planning Department, 2010). It is found that previous studies conducted by scholars are less focus on existing neighbourhoods that use the concept of guarded neighbourhood. No specific data was recorded for the guarded neighbourhood application in Malaysia, and at the same time, it is difficult to monitor the progress of the current residents' associations that exist at the moment. Generally, the role of residents’ associations in the guarded neighbourhood is still not clearly defined due to the absence of legislation allocated for the guarded neighbourhood as compared to the gated community. The Strata Titles Act 1965 has allocated certain roles to be performed by the management corporations that facilitate the management body to monitor a gated community environment. However, there are similarities to both in terms of management fees to be collected from the population to pay the bills for maintenance work (Noor Faizah et al., 2012).

In this case, the absence of a law that controls the establishment of guarded neighbourhoods has caused problems not only to the community itself but also to the surrounding residents. The problems arise in the management aspect of it revolves around the payment of monthly fees, the implementation of the neighbourhood and the safety factor. The local authorities are also faced with the problem that they have to compromise applications that do not comply with guidelines to safeguard the interests of its social and security that should be established in the neighbourhood. These problems require a solution, and one way is to create more effective residents’ associations. Therefore, this study will discuss the roles played by the residents’ associations in Malaysia from the perspective of economic, social and political using theories in the residents’ association management so that the guarded neighbourhood governance can be implemented more systematically.

2.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF GUARDED NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

The guarded neighbourhood is one of the housing schemes that incorporate the elements of safety and security in neighbourhoods other than the gated community. It is a neighbourhood concept which appoints security guards to monitor the safety of residents in a residential area. According to the Gated Community and Guarded Neighbourhood Planning Guidelines 2010 prepared by the Urban Planning Department, a guarded neighbourhood is defined as:

“A residential area regulated wholly or partially within the new or existing housing schemes that the land holdings status is individual land title. It provides security services with or without a guard post. Legally, it cannot have any physical barriers on public roads and enforces sanctions out to residents and the public”.

Tedong et al. (2014) found that in Malaysia, the existence of guarded neighbourhoods is categorized into two phases: whether they are established by the developers or by the residents’ associations. In the development of a new resident, private developers create a housing environment that has safety elements such as fences, walls, and guardhouses to ensure safety. Creating a safety element will indirectly set the developer apart from its competition (Ainur Zaireen et al., 2015). As for existing residence, the establishment of a guarded neighbourhood happens when residents set up barriers on the road shoulder and appoint guards to prevent unwelcomed outsiders entering their neighbourhood (Tedong et al., 2014). In 1980s, Churchman pointed that residents hope that such measures can improve the living environment in terms of social and physical aspects.

The existence of guarded neighbourhoods showed that people living in the neighbourhoods share similar features in terms of location, interaction, and shared interests among
themselves (Embong, 2007) and will focus on specific issues limited to their ability (Moctezuma, 2001). Although road blocking and closing are not legally allowed in the public reserve area, the local authorities are tolerant about this (Tedong et al., 2014) as long as no complaints were recorded. This is because not everyone agrees with the idea of closing the main routes for their neighbourhood and there cannot be any unwilling coercion to participate and agree to the establishment of the guarded neighbourhood (Department of Urban Planning, 2010).

The components in guarded neighbourhoods can be demonstrated through the physical and social aspects. The physical aspect is demonstrated through the guard house or barriers and restrictions that exist to prevent outsiders from entering the neighbourhood. This is in line with the concept of crime prevention or environmental design through the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) concept that creates a physical design as crime prevention and at the same time improving life quality (Doran and Burgess, 2012). The social aspect of it gives more emphasis on the establishment of residents’ associations that run the management activities to ensure safety. This is because unhealthy social environment will increase the crime rate and will have a negative impact on the neighbourhood environment (Ainur Zaireen, 2006).

In addition, a neighbourhood will have features such as socio-interactive, local networks such as friends and relatives, there is interpersonal association, voluntary participation, social control in the neighbourhood (Warren, 1975; Fischer, 1982; Warren and Warren, 1977) and strong support given to the community in order to create an opportunity to provide more services that focus on the population (Catherine Durose and Vivien Lowndes, 2010). In terms of legislation, the main condition of the establishment of guarded neighbourhood must have a residents’ association. Residents’ associations composed of people who live in the same neighbourhood and organize their social life in a way they want, which can meet their needs (Edwards and Jones, 1976) and maintain the interest in managing the environment in private (Afrizal and Embong, 2012).

The aforementioned features focuses on the guidelines provided by the government as a control measure. According to the guarded neighbourhood guidelines, in South Africa, there is no policy that is specifically intended for enclosed neighbourhood until today. There, the people’s initiative to close their area for addressing crime issues has been approved by the government (Landman, 2006) through the passages controlled by a fence or barrier placed on the road. Most are walled and the local authorities are still responsible for works such as garbage collection, street light maintenance and so on. Newman (1972) mentioned that residents used formal supervision by installed electronic monitoring device such as CCTV and security guard in their neighbourhood.

In Malaysia, a closed residential area method is different than other countries due to the beliefs, practices and traditions of the country itself (Tedong et al., 2014). In Malaysia, development of guarded neighbourhood that uses a cone, ‘manual boom gate and safety signs as a physical barrier while in the neighbourhood can be considered provided there is a security guard on duty for 24 hours (Town and Country Planning Department, 2010). Since there is no legislation specifically enacted for the neighbourhood guarded, the urban and rural planning has been providing planning standards as a foundation so that developers or residents have to establish guidelines guarded neighbourhood. Among the aspects of the controls provided for the establishment of guarded neighbourhood is focused on aspects of planning control, the basic conditions of establishment, building guard, fence construction, the appointment of a security guard as well as matters relating to the release status in the event of liquidation status neighbourhood guarded done (Town and Country Planning Department, 2010).

The basic term for the guarded neighbourhood is by first establishing an association of people by either developers or residents. This is because, basically, the residents’ association was given a comprehensive task to manage their neighbourhood affairs (Khaidir, 2006). In terms of control, security guards will be stationed at the main entrance to limit the entry of outsiders into the neighbourhood (Tan, 2015) and only allow visitors with pass to enter the
neighbourhood as a security measure. Although there are some issues such as leaving the identification card at the guardhouse, resisting the entry of members who fail to pay the service fee, delaying the entry of non-members of residents' associations, if there are no complaints by the population, the local authorities will not impose any action on the neighbourhood. This is because the purpose of the barriers to entry is to reduce traffic congestion and ensure the safety of residents in the neighbourhood (Tan, 2011).

3.0 THE NEED FOR RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION IN GUARDED NEIGHBOURHOOD

An effective residents’ association will continue to meet the residents’ needs in the neighbourhood especially for social and economic aspects of the population (Roseland, 2005). Resident associations will be considered successful when people feel satisfied with the economic and social development in the neighbourhood (Tan, 2011). A study conducted by Tedong et al. (2014) showed that the population believe the residents' associations play an important role in protecting the safety population. The existence of residents’ association in a neighbourhood is a form of community-based organization that will be advantageous for the management of the neighbourhood environment.

3.1 The Role of the Residents’ Association from the Theoretical Perspective

Residents' associations should focus on governance-related management work, community involvement and public awareness. Indirectly, these activities could enable residents’ associations (Mohd Fareed and Mohd Yusof, 2013). The joint ownership of existing facilities in a residential area will encourage people to be more responsible in creating a healthy environment (Afrizal and Embong, 2012) and these facilities need to be maintained. Here, the residents' association in a position to collect maintenance fees from residents for maintenance work as agreed together (Ahmad Arifian, 1997). The ownership of existing facilities in a guarded neighbourhood will create an economic club. Manzi and Smith-Bower (2005) suggest that the existence of this economic clubs will allow members of the association to reap the rewards of the services provided, either limited to the individuals or shared with other residents. Residents in the neighbourhood will reap the rewards in amenities such as 24-hour security, maintenance and recreation facilities. Through the association, a sum of money collected from residents to pay for security guard services that have been appointed (Ainur Zaireen, 2006) and financing facilities are available to ensure that the facilities are in good condition to ensure safety of the people to use it (Barton and Silverman, 1989). Undeniably, in terms of facility, there will be free-riders who will use the existing facilities without any payment, and the residents’ associations have no rights to prevent it. This can be considered as a neighbourhood economic injustice because the facilities are funded by the members of the residents’ association (Glaze, 2003). Therefore, some of the measures that could be taken is to setup a membership for the facilities similar to gymnasiums, swimming pools and club houses. Only members are allowed to use the facility. Indirectly, this should prevent free rides. Hence the need for the residents' associations to play it role in ensuring that the economic club in the neighbourhood is taken care of.

To ensure that the residents give cooperation to the association, the residents’ association can use the political approach (Barton and Silverman, 1989). Realistically, not everyone in the residence would agree with the proposal to enclose the neighbourhood. Thus, there is a need for social formulation by the association to create common interests and direction within the population (Latifah, 1989). Moral and social importance of individual rights and responsibilities as citizens can be identified through the application of a ruled utilitarian in decisions to safeguard common interests as a whole (Harsanyi, 1980).

3.2 The Role of the Residents’ Association from the Practical Perspective

When looking at the benefits of private governance, transformation in urban management has also led to the creation of a
community-based committee representative of the population as resident representatives, rukun tetangga (RT) and resident associations. Generally, RT and resident associations focusing on issues related to the safety, welfare and harmony in their neighbourhood. Local communities at this point has decided to set up a residents’ association or RTs as an incentive for people to participate in community activities as well as to create public awareness and social integration (Hafazah and Siti Mareenah, 2010). Gruszczak posited that philosophy of good governance indicate the efficiency of the various parties working together (Gruszczak, 2010).

In Malaysia, residents' association is a community that governs the guarded neighbourhood and Management Corporation will undertake the responsibility of managing the scheme gated community. Residents' associations are run by people living in the residential landed area as an ad-hoc basis, and there is no law that controls them, while the management corporations are governed under the laws of the Strata Titles Act 1965, which established especially for people living in high rise residential.

There is a variety of interests derived from public participation in a community, either to an individual or the whole community. Community involvement will lead to developing sustainable communities (Sufian, 2016). The existence of a sustainable community will only be realized through the strategy used in creating a safe environment in an area with community participation and public awareness as to join the residents’ association. Ling (2005) observed that practice done in Hong Kong is more about the distribution of the parties will manage the residential community whether the developer handed over the management to a resident after their housing projects completed or managers in their own companies that will control for maintaining the good management of the property is adjacent to gain reputation good (Ling, 2005). Shenjing (2015) presented in China that the role of the homeowner association (HOA) to gain more control and better housing quality, especially when the Property Management Company (PMC) has failed to provide a reasonable collective that could endanger their interests.

In South Africa and Nigeria, the residents' association was created because people are concerned about security issues (Oluseyi, 2008) and residents’ association had strategies to control crime. In the United States, aspects related to the maintenance and management of private housing has been discussed since the 1990s and revealed that there exists a form of territorial organization which consists of the Community Association Institute (CAI), a community member of the guarded neighbourhood and voluntary organizations in the management of gated and guarded neighbourhood communities (Barton and Silverman, 1989). Their services such as maintenance aspects, will encourage resident’s associations appointed, paid services provided through fees charged to residents who participate in the residents' association (Nelson, 2004).

In a neighbourhood, the perspective of the population felt that they had bought a house and the neighbourhood and also expects to maintain individual control over both aspects (Barton and Silverman, 1989). Despite the fact that the facility is not owned by individuals in particular, people voluntarily choose to live in the neighbourhood and are able to pay for the rights to a vast array of features (Gruszczak, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for maintenance of existing facilities to ensure that these facilities are safe.

Maintenance work is a very important scope of work to provide comfort to residents by monitoring the street lights, whether working or not, the road condition and sanitation. According to Katherine et al. (2010), communities are encouraged to participate in community activities organized by residents' associations such as maintenance, gardening, neighbourhood beautification or meetings because that way they can show a more positive perception.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study discusses the roles of residents' associations in the guarded neighbourhood. Safety is a major factor to why people establish a guarded neighbourhood. There are two conditions how a guarded neighbourhood was established; either by the developer or by the
residents. The parties must first establish a residents’ association as a body that will govern the guarded neighbourhood. So far, there is no legislation in place to the establishment of a guarded neighbourhood. Yet, only guidelines are provided to prevent illegal practice by the parties involved. The emphasis here is how the residents' associations play a role in the governance by using the knowledge to ensure the environment in the neighbourhood is managed. This review has found that it is important that residents’ associations focus on the social, economic and political indicators. From the social aspects, residents' associations should have good communication between all parties so that there is no inferiority among social classes in terms of psychological view or thought among participants.

The guidelines also emphasize there should be no forced obligation on residents if they refuse to agree with guarded neighbourhood establishment. On the economic view, the role of the residents’ association is related to the collection of fees and maintenance work to ensure the neighbourhood is at least at a satisfactory level. While in the political aspect, it focuses more on how to influence people to join the activities to strengthen the bond between them. Therefore, study concludes that the role of the residents’ association is very important to govern the guarded neighbourhood, because residents’ associations will take over the role of government in creating an environment and a more sustainable community.

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