THE ARAB WORLD GEOGRAPHER

LE GÉOGRAPHE DU MONDE ARABE

THE ARAB WORLD GEOGRAPHER / LE GÉOGRAPHE DU MONDE ARABE Summer/Fall 2013 Vol 16 No 2

THE ARAB WORLD GEOGRAPHER
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A quarterly journal publishing research articles of interest
to all geographers and specialists in the Arab World

Front Cover photograph: Iranian spaces far from geopolitics:
ordinary citizens enjoying their regular daily walk in a large city park in central Tehran

Photo credit: Ghazi-Walid Falah (16 September 2003)

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Vol. 16, No. 2 Summer / Été 2013

Contents

The Arab World Geographer
ISSN 1480-6800
http://arabworldgeographer.metapress.com
Editorial Office: Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies,
Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, The University of Akron
Akron, OH 44325–7904 United States of America
Published four times a year, Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter
Printed by Coach House for AWG Publishing

Research Notes / Notes de recherche

The Evolution of Regional Planning and Regional Economic Development in Malaysia

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This article explains the evolution of regional planning and policy in Malaysia and discusses the implications of the underlying regional economic theories and regional policies for the socio-economic development of Malaysia. Regional economic development in Malaysia is due to several factors, including the integration of geography and physical features, the need for cooperation beyond local jurisdictions, and the needs of local and national economic development. A review of the literature suggests that the achievement and development of regional planning would differ depending on the country's pattern of development and growth. However, the basis of regional planning remains the same: to promote competitiveness, create economic opportunities, and achieve balance in the socio-economic development of a country. In a way, regional planning is a tool to achieve sustainable development in a country.

Keywords: regional planning, regional development, regional economic development, Malaysia

Cet article propose une explication de l'évolution de la planification régionale et de ses politiques en Malaisie ; il passe en revue les théories de l'économie régionale et les stratégies de politiques régionales pour le développement socio-économique dans ce pays. Le développement économique régional est lié à plusieurs facteurs, dont l'intégration de la géographie et de la morphologie physique, la nécessité de coopération au-delà des juridictions locales, ainsi que les besoins spécifiques du développement économique local et national. Une analyse des publications sur le sujet indique que la réussite et le développement de la planification régionale varierait en fonction du modèle national de développement et de croissance. Néanmoins, la base même de la planification régionale reste inchangée : il s'agit de promouvoir la compétitivité, de créer des opportunités économiques et de réaliser un équilibre dans le développement socio-économique du pays. D'une certaine manière, la planification régionale est un outil pour réaliser un développement durable dans un pays.

Mots-clés : planification régionale, développement régional, développement économique régional, Malaisie

The Arab World Geographer / Le Géographe du monde arabe Vol 16, no 2 (2013), 228-243

Introduction

Following Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957, the implementation of regional development policies and strategies has sped up the urbanization and development changes in the economic growth. In Malaysia, development objectives are spread within the five-year Malaysia Plans. Regional planning in Malaysia began after World War II; the establishment of regional planning in the Draft Development Plan of 1950 was intended to rebuild Malaysian economic development (Eskandarian and Ghalehteimouri 2011). Since then, the regional planning has become a primary development strategy to spur economic and social development in Malaysia.

Regional development approaches and strategies in Malaysia have changed alongside development needs. In addition, various types of regional development initiatives have been implemented in Malaysia, such as the inter- and intra-regional policies, the opening of new growth centres under the jurisdiction of Regional Development Authorities (RDAs), and new regional economic development corridors involving jurisdiction beyond the local and national levels (Zainul Bahrin 1989). Identifying factors that promote regional development is essential in taking appropriate action to enhance, consolidate, or scale down development efforts in the regions concerned (Zainul Bahrin 1989, 5). The objective of this article, therefore, is to provide understanding and information on regional planning and development in Malaysia.

Regional Development in Malaysia

Regional development involves the interaction and function of spatial development toward income, employment, and welfare issues (Friedmann and Alonso 1964). The process of regional development describes the allocation of activities and investment decisions within a region (Friedmann 2001). Regional development has become a global phenomenon of Third World countries since the 1950s (Scott and Storper 1990) including Malaysia (Ghani Salleh 2000), where the implementation of regional development strategies is included in every Five-Year Development Plan.

Malaysian national development planning can be divided into three phases: the Long-Term Plan, the Five-Year Development Plan, and the Mid-Term Review of the Five-Year Plan (Nik Hashim 1994). The Long-Term Plan is the Outline Perspective Plan (OPP), which began with the First Outline Perspective Plan (OPP1, 1971–90) during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1970–90) under the Second Malaysia Plan (1961–65). Its goal was to improve rural living standards (Zainul Bahrin

1989; Fatimah and Mad Nasir 1997). The Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2, 1991–2000) was implemented during the period of the National Development Policy (NDP, 1991–2000), and the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3, 2001–2010) covered the period of the National Vision Policy (NVP, 2001–2010).

During and After the Colonial Era, 1786–1970

There is a lack of literature on the development planning and urbanization process in Malaysia during the British colonial period (1786–1957; Dani Salleh 2002). According to the contemporary studies, the urbanization process began with the British exploitation of natural resources for export activity and the growth of the Straits Settlements of Penang and the mining towns of Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur (Dani Salleh 2002). During that period, development policies were structured with minor involvement from the government (INTAN 1992), resulting in regional disparities (INTAN 1992; Eskandarian and Ghalehteimouri 2011).

TABLE 1
Growth of output and income: 1956–65

Development indicators	First Malaya Five-Year Plan (1956–60)	Second Malaya Five-Year Plan (1961–65)
Real GDP growth, %/year	4	6.4
Private motor vehicle consumption, persons/vehicle	82	56
Wireless ownership, persons/set	24	21
Annual domestic electricity consumption, kWh/person	31	44

Source: First Malaysia Plan, 1966–70

The first Five-Year Development Plan began with the First Malaysia Plan (1966–1970). Before Malaysia became independent, however, the First Malayan Development Plan (1956–60) was introduced to improve living standards for the local people (Chandra Muzaffar 1989). This plan was the first systematic development planning approach (Evers, Ramli, and Nienkemper 2010) that laid the foundation of national development planning in Malaysia. The First Malayan Development Plan (1956–60), also known as the First Malaya Five-Year Development Plan (Nik Hashim 1994) or the First Malaya Plan (Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003), was prepared by the

Economic Secretariat in 1955 to strengthen rural development (Nik Hashim 1994) and the agriculture sector (Lin 1994) in Malaysia.

According to the First Malaysia Plan (1966–70), the Malaya Development Plan was successful in improving economic conditions. As Table 1 shows, between 1960 and 1965 the real gross domestic product grew at an average annual rate of 6.4 %, compared to 4 % per year over the previous five years. There was also some improvement in income levels, judging by the increase in private motor vehicle ownership and per-capita annual domestic electricity consumption.

The period of the Second Malaya Development Plan (1961–65) was a continuous effort by the government to promote economic growth and achieve comprehensive national development planning (Nik Hashim 1994). Moreover, the plan was part of the government's strategy to achieve sustainable economic and social development, which was incorporated into the modern agriculture and industrial sectors (Lin 1994). Before the 1970s, there was a gap in economic development among Malaysia's 11 states, notably between the developed states of the western region (Selangor, Perak, Penang, and Negeri Sembilan) and less developed states in the northern and eastern parts of Peninsular Malaysia (Hamzah Jusoh 1992; Ghani Salleh 2000; Wee 2006). This led to the establishment of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) as part of the strategy implemented under the introduction of regional planning in the First Malaysia Plan (1966–70; Hamzah Jusoh 1992). Regional planning was introduced in response to the economic gap between states. According to Mohd Yusof Kasim (1992), the regional planning strategy to overcome this crisis involved opening more new land and reducing land hunger, poverty, and unemployment in rural areas. Regional planning strategies to reduce disparities among states were carried forward into the second period of the five-year development plan.

The New Economic Policy (NEP), 1970–90

The Second Malaya Development Plan (1961–65) established manufacturing activities in less developed areas as one strategy toward industrializing the country (Evers et al. 2010). This policy was continued in the First Malaysia Plan (1966–70). The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1971–90) under the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–75) was the regional development strategy to overcome disparities that contributed to race riots in 1969 (Chee 1990; Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003; Evers et al. 2010).

The introduction of NEP was also aimed at eradicating poverty and restructuring Malaysian society (Chee 1990; Shamsul Amri 1994; Fatimah and Mad Nasir 1997; Siwar and Kasim 1997; Cheng 2011). In

order to strengthen the strategy, the Regional Development Authorities (RDAs)—Southeast Pahang Regional Authority (DARA), Northern Pahang Regional Authority (JENGKA), Central Terengganu Regional Authority (KETENGAH), Southeast Johor Regional Authority (KEJORA), Southeast Kelantan Regional Authority (KESEDAR), Kedah (KEDA), and Pinang Regional Development Authority (PERDA)—were established (Ghani Salleh 2000; Ibrahim Ngah 2010) under the purview of the Minister of Land and Regional Development (Hamzah Jusoh 1992).

As well as raising living standards, the regional development strategy also focused on reducing income disparities between regions and states in Malaysia (Mohd Yusof Kasim 1992). Through opening new land, the strategy was able to enhance rural incomes and create jobs in the agriculture sector. As Table 2 shows, the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–75) was successful in create employment in the agriculture sector. This was especially true in the states of West Malaysia.

TABLE 2
The Growth of Employment in West Malaysia, 1971–75*

Sector	1970 (est.)		1975 (target)		Increase 1971–75
	No. (000)	% of total	No. (000)	% of total	No. (000)
Agriculture	1 454	49.5	1 579	46	125
Industry	456	15.5	594	17.3	138
Mining	64	2.2	60	1.7	-4
Manufacturing	270	9.2	378	11	108
Construction	103	3.5	133	3.9	30
Utilities	19	0.6	23	0.7	4
Services	1 030	35.0	1 262	36.7	232
Commerce	340	11.6	419	12.2	79
Transport, storage & communication	110	3.7	122	3.6	12
Other services	580	19.7	721	21	141
Total	2 940	100	3 435	100	495

*Data on employment include employed persons under 15 and over 65 years old.
Source: Second Malaysia Plan (1971–75)

In the late 1970s, the Malaysian economy underwent some significant changes as a result of of NEP programs. Lin (1994) and Wood (2005) argue that the period of the Third Malaysia Plan (1976–80) saw a significant transformation and increase in growth. On the other hand, regional planning was expanded to further eradicate disparity among regions and

society (Dayang-Affizzah and Muzafar Shah 2006). In 1976, the incidence of poverty was high in several states, including Kelantan, Kedah, and Terengganu, as shown in Table 3; these states had the lowest mean monthly household incomes relative to other developed states such as Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor.

TABLE 3
Incidence of Poverty and Mean Monthly Household Income, 1976

State	Incidence of poverty (%)	Mean monthly household income, ringgit Malaysia (RM)*
Johor	29	513
Kedah	61	306
Kelantan	67.1	269
Melaka	32.4	568
Negeri Sembilan	33	505
Pahang	38.9	477
Pulau Pinang	32.4	589
Perak	43	436
Perlis	59.8	338
Sabah	58.3	513
Sarawak	56.5	426
Selangor	22.9	735
Terengganu	60.3	339
Wilayah Persekutuan	9	1058

*Current prices
Source: OPP2 (1991, 51–52)

The regional development strategy continued to be a major development instrument in reducing the economic disparities between regions and states. Data from the 1970s and 1980s indicate a decline in the incidence of poverty, from 49.3 % in 1970 to 29.2 % in 1980, as a result of rapid economic and social development programs implemented during this period (Fourth Malaysia Plan, 1981–85, 106). The Fourth Malaysia Plan introduced more changes in the regional development strategy, with an emphasis on balancing the socio-economic development of the population (Shafari Che Hashim n.d.). In addition, Malaysia's states were divided into six regions, based on similarities in resources and economic activities (Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003): Northern region, Central region, Eastern region, Southern region, Sabah, and Sarawak (Cho 1990). Each region is dominated by a single metropolitan area or growth centre (Cho 1990; Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003). Under the regional development strategy, all states have undergone the process

The regional development strategy formulated under the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011–15) continued the aim of achieving developed country status by 2020. The strategy includes the implementation of cluster and economic corridor developments within the framework of New Economic Model (NEM) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) (Evers et al. 2010; Allauddin Anuar 2011). According to Evers et al. (2010), regional development plays an important role in promoting and controlling development in the states within each economic development corridor.

Overview of Regional Economic Development in Malaysia

In developing countries, regional economic development is regarded as an important tool to boost national economic growth (Rondinelli 1990), create job opportunities, and increase the tax base (Danielson and Wolpert 1991). Several authors (e.g., Nijkamp and Abreu 2009) have identified regional economic development as a multidimensional concept with multidimensional factors. Stimson and Stough (2008) describe regional economic development as the outcome of a process of development of available regional resources and activities.

Regional economic development or regional economic corridors are defined by the Asian Development Bank (2011) as a well-defined geographic space of two countries within strategic borderlines with concentration to achieve positive benefits. Malecki (1991) summarizes regional economic development as a process derived by combining the quantitative and qualitative resources of a region's economy, while Blakely (1994) defines it resulting from the continuous engagement of a government or a society in the process of business and employment (Stimson and Stough 2008).

Regional development has played a significant role in accelerating development growth in Malaysia. Regional economic development began in Malaysia before independence, with the introduction of the Draft Development Plan of 1950 (Ghani Salleh 2000; Eskandarian and Ghalehteimouri 2011). Regional development was introduced to enhance economic development during the launch of the NEP (Ghani Salleh 2000; Ibrahim Ngah 2010). According to Zainul Bahrin (1989), the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986–90) stated two major types of regional development in Malaysia: inter- and intra-regional development models and the establishment of areas under RDAs.

An example of regional development under the inter- and intra-regional development model is the development of the Northern, Central, Eastern, and Southern regions and of Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak regions. The Southern region, Sabah, and Sarawak were

designated as regions based on their large physical size, location, and different socio-economic activities. The Northern, Central, and Eastern regions, on the other hand, were established based on their similar resources and economic activities. The Northern region comprises the states of Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, and Perak, while the Central region consists of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Melaka, and Negeri Sembilan, and the Eastern region comprises Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan states. According to Zainul Bahrin (1989), this regional development involves *multi-state* or *supra-state* regions.

The second type of regional development is a region governed by one of the seven RDAs (DARA, JENGKA, KETENGAH, KEJORA, KESEDAR, KEDA, PERDA). All regions are governed by the regional planning framework and operationalized by their respective RDAs.

Involvement in ASEAN

Malaysia is also an active participant in various regional economic developments at the level of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN; Asian Development Bank 2011). ASEAN, established in 1967, includes Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei became a member in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, the Lao PDR and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999 (Cuyvers 2002; Chia 1997). ASEAN was established in order to overcome the Asian economic crisis (Lai and Yap 2004) by reducing gaps in socio-economic development among member countries (Cuyvers 2002). ASEAN aims to achieve a respectable economic growth rate among countries in the developing world (Norazlina Abdullah, Zalina Abu Naim, and Yasmiza Long 2010).

One instrument to speed up economic development among ASEAN members is the promotion of growth areas or "growth triangles" (Cuyvers 2002; Hampton 2009). The concept of the growth triangle was developed to reduce regulatory boundaries so as to exploit economic resources and increase competitiveness by linking areas from three or more countries (EAAU 1995; Smith 1997; Ishak Yussof and Mohd Yusof 2003; Sparke et al. 2004; Dayang-Affizzah and Muzafar Shah 2006). A growth triangle is also defined as a sub-regional economic zone (Smith 1997; EAAU 1995), extended metropolitan region (Robbins and El-Khoury 2004), or economic territories (Fauza Abd. Ghaffar 2000). However, none of these definitions has any official status (EAAU 1995). According to Ishak Yussof and Mohd Yusof (2003), the growth triangle concept integrates the economies of regions to become regional economic development or cooperation.

Three growth triangles at the ASEAN level share the mutual aim of enhancing existing economic growth and competitiveness (Fauza Abd. Ghaffar 2000). These growth triangles are described below.

I.
Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT)

One of the regional economic developments established under the ASEAN economy is the Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT), also called SIJORI or JSR-GT (Chia 1997) and the Southern Growth Triangle (Fauza Abd. Ghaffar 2000). This growth triangle was first proposed by the prime minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong, in 1989 (EAAU 1995), integrates Singapore, the Riau Islands and West Sumatra of Indonesia, and the Malaysian state of Johor.

The formation of the IMS-GT is one of the better-known examples of catering to intensified urban size and fabric (Robbins and El-Khoury 2004). Dayang-Affizzah and Muzafar Shah (2006) argue that the IMS-GT development has been successful and leads to the formation of another subregional economic cooperation; Chia (1997) states that the future of the IMS-GT depends on continuous investment flows in Johor and the Riau province, and points out that the most important factor contributing to the development of IMS-GT is "geographical proximity and economic complementarity" (Chia 1997, 27).

II.
Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT)

Another growth triangle involving Malaysia is the Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). The IMT-GT covers an area and population larger than the IMS-GT, designed with five connectivity corridors (Asian Development Bank 2011). The IMT-GT, also known as the Northern Growth Triangle, was established based on the success of the IMS-GT (Chia 1997).

Similar to the IMS-GT, the IMT-GT was designed to encourage development within the growth triangle through the development of economic or connectivity corridors (Robbins and El-Khoury 2004; Banomyong, n.d.). Five connectivity corridors link the growth areas within this region:

1. Extended Songkhla–Penang–Medan Economic Corridor (Thailand–Malaysia–Indonesia)
2. The Straits of Melaka Economic Corridor (Malaysia)
3. Banda Aceh–Medan–Pekan baru–Palembang Economic Corridor (Indonesia)
4. Melaka–Dumai Economic Corridor (Malaysia–Indonesia)
5. Ranong–Phuket–Banda Aceh Economic Corridor (Thailand–Indonesia)

This approach was launched during the declaration of the IMT-GT flagship project in 2006 (Banomyong n.d.). The IMT-GT operates based on an agreement to share supporting industrial infrastructure and advanced information technology (Robbins and El-Khoury 2004).

III.
Brunei–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA)

The development of the BIMP-EAGA was inspired by the success of the IMS-GT (Dayang-Affizzah and Muzafar Shah 2006). Malaysia is a founding member of the BIMP–EAGA and IMT–GT growth triangles (Asian Development Bank 2011). The BIMP–EAGA, also known as the Eastern Growth Triangle, is another sub-regional economic cooperation within the ASEAN economy (Chia 1997).

In addition to the aim of promoting the development of Sabah and Sarawak (Dayang-Affizzah and Muzafar Shah 2006), BIMP–EAGA also has the goal of complementing growth centres within the regions to improve socio-economic status and living standards (Ishak Yussof and Mohd Yusof 2003). This growth triangle also aims to integrate the economic development of the participating countries (Ishak Yussof and Mohd Yusof 2003). A key element of the success of regional economic cooperation is creating linkages and facilitating the development of transportation infrastructure (Chia 1997).

Conclusion

This article has focused on the evolution and development of regional planning in Malaysia and assessed the establishment of local and international regional economic developments in the country. Regional planning strategies in Malaysia are implemented throughout the long-term development plans (Wood 2005), which have reduced regional disparities in the country (Dani Salleh 2002) while at the same time closing income gaps among states (Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003). Although some researchers have found that regional development strategies in Malaysia were successfully achieved (Wood 2005; Mohamed Aslam and Asan Ali 2003), others have argued that the implementation of such strategies under the federative system were mostly unsuccessful because of the conflict of wealth distribution between states and regional authorities (Eskandarian and Ghalehteimouri 2011). However, according to Snickars, Andersson, and Albegov (1982), the achievement of regional development planning differs depending on the pattern of development and growth of countries.

Our objective in this article was to describe the implementation of regional planning and development in Malaysia. The literature suggests that the achievement of regional planning and its development will differ depending on the pattern of development and growth. The literature review raised some areas of concern that can be improved in relation to regional planning and development in Malaysia, as discussed above. There is thus a significant need to study the impact of regional development in Malaysia. A study of the impacts of regional economic development will help to identify the issues and problems with current regional planning practices so that recommendations can be made to address them. However, the basis for regional planning remains the same: to promote competitiveness, create economic opportunities, and achieve balance in the socio-economic development of a country. Regional planning is one tool to achieve sustainable development in a country.

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