

Re-positioning Urban –Based New Villages in Peninsular Malaysia towards Sustainable Living and a Better Quality of Life

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Abstract

A study into the history of New Villages (NV) in Malaysia indicates that there was a purpose and use for NVs when they were established and developed in the early 1950s. While initial assistance from the federal government did contribute marginally to the growth of these NVs, however, through the years, they were left to fend for themselves. Ultimately, the growth pattern of these settlements showed conspicuous disparity in terms of economic prosperity and development. Those NVs nestled in semi urban and urban peripheries thrived and became robust, while those in the rural areas languished. Using a case study, this paper will explore and examine events that are challenging NVs in Malaysia which may alter the fate of NVs in the future. NVs in Malaysia today are at a cross-road between sustainable growth and fossilisation. This paper will describe the living condition and housing environment of the NVs and narrate the political affinity of the NV community based on their voting patterns in the past general elections and groundwork investigations. Any re-development plans for the NVs should be viewed as a part of the mainstream of national development which has sustainable living and a better quality of life as one of the objectives.

Keywords: *New Villages, Sustainable Development, Liveability, Malaysia*

Introduction

Malaysian history has left a unique feature in this nation of multi-ethnicity in the form of a physical legacy namely the "New Villages" (NVs) in various states in Peninsular Malaysia. These NVs have been in existence for close to 62 years and their numbers are estimated to be around 607 (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2012) located mostly in the states of Perak, Selangor, Penang and Pahang; with a scattering in other states such as Perlis, Terengganu and Kelantan (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2005).

The establishment and development of the NVs in the early 1950s can be attributed to the colonial past of this country and linked to the period of the end of the Second World War and the communist insurgency in Malaya under the British colonial administration. With regards to the history of NVs, numerous articles and publications have enumerated their origins and described their existence until the present day. Many aspects pertaining to the NVs have remained unchanged until today such as the ethnic component being still quintessentially Chinese; conspicuous uneven growth pattern between rural and urban based villages; disparity in income distribution and shortcomings in housing settlements' environment. Through the years since their establishment, these disparities between the NVs became exacerbated by the nation's economic growth and development and the increasing urbanisation process globally from the mid-1970s (Malaysia, 1976).

Ultimately, the spill-over effect of economic development and spatial growth at the national level contributed to the uneven progress of the NVs in Peninsular Malaysia based on their location. Those NVs nestled in semi urban and urban peripheries thrived and became prosperous while the NVs situated in the rural areas languished. While a settlement's location does determine to a certain extent its prosperity, the Master Plan study by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government suggests that much of the success of a NV is largely due to the initiative and effort of the villagers themselves and also being close to an urban centre (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2005). In contrast, there are NV settlements that are poor, undeveloped and unchanged from since when they were set up. In essence, allowing these settlements to remain backward while the rest of the country advances towards a developed status in 2020, is not in sync with the nation's objective of Vision 2020. As the nation moves towards a developed status, it is essential that the NVs need to be integrated into the mainstream of national development. The relevant authorities have to take cognisance of their existence as the well-being of the NVs can have potential benefits too.

In Malaysia, the NVs are the responsibility of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government which had gathered findings compiled in the Master Plan for New Villages in Peninsular Malaysia (2005). The intention was to provide clear policy guidelines and strategies for the future direction of NVs and their development, but present indicators are that these actions taken by the relevant authorities in dealing with the problems plaguing the settlements have suffered many shortcomings.

Methods

This paper addresses the following questions:

Q1: What are the challenges faced by an urban-based NV community arising from the continual neglect from mainstream development of a nation?

Q2: What is the political consequence caused by pro-longed disenchantment of an urban-based NV community?

Q3: What are the possible ways for an urban-based NV community to achieve sustainability and liveability in the context of a better quality of life at the national level?

In order to answer these questions, an urban based NV (Kampung Baru Hulu Kepong) is selected as a case study (*see photo 1*). Twenty respondents from this case study were selected from among the villagers using a purposive sampling method. Interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured were conducted on a one-to-one basis, either through face-to-face scheduled appointments or through telephone conversation with the respondents. The researchers also carried out on-site survey and field observation for further evidence and information. Numerous documentary data from the relevant Ministries were analysed and tabulated. The interview data were analysed using content analysis and the transcribed data were coded and grouped according to several themes linked to the response of the interviewees as well as on-site evidence.

Photo1: Kampung Baru Kepong Hulu



Source: Phang and Tan (2012)

Urbanisation and Out-Migration from New Village

As urbanisation becomes a worldwide trend, it has brought about increasing interaction between nations, bringing about capital flows, transfer of technology, ease in communication and human mobility (Seneviratne and Thanenthiran, 2004). In Malaysia, the effects of urbanisation are seen in the cities, influencing the development and growth of towns and cities. As a consequence, many of the urban-based NVs are exposed to such market forces taking place in these urban centres. Over the past three decades, Malaysia has undergone phenomenal economic development and with unprecedented urbanisation, it is inevitable that many of the urban-based NVs, especially those located at the fringe of Kuala Lumpur have been absorbed to become a part of the city. Those NVs further away which co-exist as neighbours of other urban conurbations find themselves carried along by the momentum of these fast developing areas too. As urban trend dictates, the push and pull factors associated with increasing urbanisation means that these cities are attracting droves of young inhabitants from these NVs.

From the 1970s onwards, the young generation from the NVs left for the urban centres in search of jobs and economic opportunities which were lacking or absent in their villages. Consequently, out-migration from NVs began to challenge the fabric of family institution and cultural norms aggravating existing social problems and living conditions within the settlements. There appears to be frustration amongst the younger NV inhabitants who are dissatisfied with the declining quality in their lifestyle and the living environment as a result of poor maintenance and shortfall in public service delivery (uncollected rubbish, clogged drains, unrepaired water pipes, broken sewers).

As a consequence, some of the NV inhabitants, especially the young and mobile have left their villages to seek better opportunities in the new housing estates that have sprouted within the city such as in Kota Damansara and Puchong areas. As pointed out by Voon (2011), the desertion of NVs by the younger generation of inhabitants has negative long-term social and economic impacts. This process of out-migration or relocation of the young inhabitants will ultimately affect the sustainability of the NVs' communities as a declining and ageing population will have an adverse effect on the ability of NVs to re-generate themselves. Table 1 shows the declining population figures in NVs in Peninsular Malaysia.

Table 1: Population Decline among NVs, 1970 – 95 and 1980 - 95

State	Rate of Decline 1970 – 95 (%)			Rate of Decline 1980 – 95 (%)			Total
	0 – 24	25 – 49	50 – 99	0 – 24	25 – 49	50 – 99	
Johor	5	1	1	4	-	1	12
Kedah	1	-	3	-	5	7	16
Kelantan	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Melaka	1	-	1	1	-	-	3
N.Sembilan	2	1	2	-	-	-	5
Pahang	4	4	-	4	1	-	12
Perak	13	6	8	4	-	-	32
Perlis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
P.Pinang	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Selangor	1	2	-	-	-	-	4
Terengganu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
KL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	27	14	15	14	7	8	85

Source: Voon (2009)

Liveability Issue in Urban-based NVs

There are various issues that contribute to the liveability of new villages. Liveability can be basically understood in terms of a healthier and satisfying way of living (Tan, 2012b). Measures of liveability can be found in the time taken to commute between home and workplace, or whether the living areas in new villages have the proper amenities.

The living environment of urban-based NVs has failed to provide an improved quality of life to their inhabitants. The living environment does not go through major changes to keep up with the rising housing and infrastructure needs of villagers. As the NVs were intentionally created to meet military contingencies; thus, NVs were not designed as sustainable settlements that had the benefit of proper planning. The original layout has persisted until today because ad hoc planning approach rather than holistic master planning approach was adopted at the time of resettlement.

The most conspicuous feature of the typical NV is the dismal depiction of densely-packed dwellings. The typical layout of a NV is that each village is built with a maximum number of wooden houses in a disorganized manner within its boundary. The lack of space has resulted in poor living conditions for dwellers in the NVs. It is important that houses should be built to provide an improved quality of life for their inhabitants. However, many of houses in the

urban-based NVs are unkempt and do not provide wholesome environment for families to thrive due to poor maintenance by village inhabitants. Also, some houses have been vacant for many years (see *photo 2*).

Photo 2: Old and dilapidated house



Source: Phang and Tan (2012)

Furthermore, the current restricted use of land in NVs is not able to meet the current needs of village inhabitants. Land use and spatial development within the NVs are only restricted for the purpose of dwelling. In other words, the use of available vacant land for cultural, commercial or recreational purposes is practically non-existent (Voon, 2009). The community hall is often the only non-residential use of the village land. As a result, the population density and man-land ratio of the average NV is high. Amenities in the villages are clearly lacking. The better served villages would have a primary school and limited recreational facilities. In the past, most NVs are supported by a narrow economic base. Today, the business environment in the NVs has changed marginally due to the encroaching business activities of the neighbouring towns and city.

Land Use patterns, Re-development and Regeneration of NVs

Through the years the NVs have retained their basic physical shape and layout which conformed to the general uniform grid-iron street pattern and uniform-sized house lots (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2005). In the past due to their distinction as “emergency new villages”, many NVs were enclosed within a barbed-wire fence, although this feature no longer exists in most NVs today. There were no proper land-use guidelines or

plans pertaining to the overall growth of the NVs. This meant that development within the bounded villages were rather haphazard and diverse with clusters of standard-sized houses being surrounded by a collection of facilities such as shops, police station, clinic, primary school and sub-standard narrow lanes.

Today, many urban-based NVs which are in close proximity to the city centres have benefitted from the spill-over effects of growth and prosperity from these cities and have “prospered”, but yet they are hampered by the inability to upgrade properly without clear guidelines and plans for their physical development. For urban-based NVs to thrive and stay relevant, it is important to have in place well thought out plans and clearly defined objectives that conform to sustainable growth and development. It is time for urban-based NVs to re-invent and create niches for themselves to ensure greater comfort for villagers. There should be a clear understanding on how the villagers’ needs can be addressed as the villagers’ requirements shift.

Urban-based NVs will age and decay; thus, it is important to inject new features and redevelopment plans to revitalize urban-based NVs and ensure that they move with the time. While the pursuit of redevelopment and regeneration in urban-based NVs is good in the name of growth and development, there is a need to ensure that at the end of the day the redevelopment process should be done right and not at the expense of the well-being of the village inhabitants. The gauge on how much it benefits the residents should not be based merely on its quantum of material or monetary benefits, but what is equally important is that it must offer a greater net benefit after weighing both the economic and monetary, as well as non-monetary costs. Ultimately the success of redevelopment should be measured by the accrued benefits to the villagers and how it will help towards adding value to their overall well-being.

To achieve the goals of improvement of inhabitant’s livelihood in the process of redevelopment, the planners should identify the prevailing inadequacies and shortcoming that have rendered NVs’ living unappealing for many village inhabitants, particularly the young inhabitants. Any attempt to formulate redevelopment plans to improve the liveability of urban-based NVs will have to begin with detailed investigation to understand the specific conditions and irregularities of individual villages. The planners should also stress the importance of applying the principles of sustainability in the course of redevelopment.

Given the fact that there is restricted land use of the NVs, the planners could do with some re-developing to turn urban-based NVs into a sustainable living place. There is a need to diversify the land use pattern and layout of NVs to improve the quality of life of its residents by incorporating lands for other than residential uses, such as commercial, cultural, educational, and recreational uses. These new land uses will be planned according to appropriate models that would provide for a systematic and efficient utilisation of land resources of NVs.

Land has become a scarce commodity and the cost of land has escalated many folds over the years in urban areas (Tan, 2012b). The scarcity of prime land as well as rising cost of land in the urban area gives rise to the need for redevelopment of urban-based new villages. Land use and spatial development within the new villages need to be managed properly by focusing on sustainability and a better quality of life.

Redevelopment is a good way to effectively utilise land banks, unlock land value and pursue new developments that cater to current needs of village inhabitants, which can raise the liveability of urban-based NVs as this redevelopment can bring back vibrancy to the village. Before upgrading NV land-use patterns, there is a need to relax the existing land laws to allow for the redesign of land sources in the NVs. If NVs are able to get away from the current restriction of out-dated land use, they can be transformed into sustainable settlements. There is also a need to have a system where general consensuses from the majority of villagers are required to allow for the redevelopment of their villages.

Currently, land matters are under the purview of the state governments and the local authorities. Instead of leaving the responsibility to regenerate urban-based NVs to villagers, it should be a joint initiative between the different levels of government. It is necessary to adopt a well-planned approach in the redesign of scarce land resources. Proper village planning must be done with all relevant authorities, taking into account the problems which are associated with redevelopment planning.

With regards to redevelopment and renewal of NVs, the initiative to revitalize the new villages by giving them a new lease of life should be based on a holistic master plan instead of the current ad-hoc and piece-meal actions. It is crucial for the local administration to

engage with village inhabitants and other stakeholders so that they can communicate their needs and ideas on the important aspects that should be included in the regeneration of new villages. The local dwellers and stakeholders should be invited to contribute their views before decisions on the new village's future are made. Any concerns from village inhabitants should be properly addressed before the plans are gazetted into law.

Housing Issue

There are some NVs which are better off than others due to their being near to the urban centres. However, most NVs remain simply as living units for their inhabitants without any prospects for diverse and vibrant growth. For some NVs, the environment may have deteriorated due to the years of neglect and general disenfranchisement by the national government. Economically and socially they have less appeal for the younger inhabitants who have abandoned their villages through out-migration. These manifest itself into NVs which become isolated, poorly maintained and unsustainable. Their human settlements become unliveable and the quality of life within such NVs is low.

In order to create a place for quality living, the Malaysian government needs to maintain a high quality of living by ensuring adequate housing opportunities based on fair pricing. For the past fifty years, housing policy makers have been giving low priority to NVs as there is no formal planning that includes the NVs being mentioned in the National Housing Policy. As stated in the National Housing Policy, the sustainability of the quality of life of the people in the country can be enhanced only if adequate, comfortable, quality and affordable houses are provided to dwellers (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2011). All this while, the housing development of NVs was viewed in isolation. As a result, housing policies need to integrate NVs into the government's overall national plans.

As mentioned earlier, there are many houses that have been vacant for many years. Instead of leaving the houses in a dilapidated condition, it will be logical for the government to acquire them from the owners to redevelop into better dwelling houses for the community as an effort to improve liveability. This redevelopment of old and vacant houses should be planned with the intention of providing a healthy living environment indirectly projecting a more vibrant new village. Owners who are willing to dispose their houses for this development process will be appropriately consulted and compensated.

Vacant and dilapidated houses should be demolished to make way for new housing projects or be given "facelifts" that may involve changes to their external façade. There is a need for the development of multi-storey structures in urban-based NVs to address the problem of limited land in urban areas. High-rise living will become the norm as land in many urban areas around the world have become grossly expensive with house prices inflated beyond the reach of the lower income.

There is a basic acknowledgment that owning a house is an ultimate desire of every Malaysian. In recent times, however, it has been an uphill task for the average Malaysian to achieve this target. Home price inflation appears to be an issue in the country now (Tan, 2012b). In order to raise the Malaysian quality of life index, good quality and affordable high-rise housing projects should be built in urban-based NVs that can add value to its living environment and quality of life. Furthermore, it is essential to build a house that is adequate to cater to the inhabitants' needs through the ages. Properly thought out housing is not only meant for the present population but also to cater to the needs of future generations.

A major challenge for the NVs is the present high rental for housing in the neighbouring urban areas resulting in many foreign and migrant workers who cannot afford to stay there to choose to reside in the urban NVs instead. Conveniently, these foreign workers have converted some of the vacant houses in the NVs into their living quarters (*see photo 3*). The presence of foreign workers in NVs has created uneasiness among the village inhabitants as their presence invokes a sense of insecurity and danger. They are concerned about their ability to enjoy a good quality of life and to live in a safe environment. With increasing daily reports on crime linked to foreign workers such as snatch thefts and rampant break-ins, public confidence has eroded with the inhabitants feeling unsafe in their own neighbourhoods (Performance Management and Delivery Unit, 2011). An environment that is free from crime is necessary to make a place liveable and endeared as a neighbour to live beside. Since most urban based NVs are close to cities and towns, there is a pressing need for the Malaysian government to deter crime in these NVs and make them safe and pleasant to have in the neighbourhood.

Photo 3: Houses for Foreign Workers in NVs



Source: Phang and Tan (2012)

Public Transportation

Sustainable living environment must be supported by investments in infrastructure facilities. Many of today’s human settlements have become unattractive because they are not equipped with well-planned infrastructure, such as an integrated and complementary public transport system that can add value to the living environment and improve quality of life.

There are various modes of public transportation in the city of Kuala Lumpur, including the light rail transit and mono rail systems, commuter trains, buses and taxis. However, they are not integrated and do not complement each other. Despite the Malaysian government investing heavily in public transportation infrastructure with three major rail systems completed in the mid-1990s within the Klang Valley conurbation; the ridership percentage dropped from 34% in 1985 to 20% in 1997 (Performance Management and Delivery Unit, 2011). Due to the shortcoming of the nation’s public transportation system especially in the urban areas, urban dwellers are left with no choice but to depend on private and personal modes of transportation. For many years, the number of newly registered private vehicles has been increasing significantly, and this has led to a rise in traffic congestion (*see table 2*).

Table 2: New Passengers and Commercial Vehicles Registered in Malaysia (1980 – 2010)

Year	Passenger cars	Commercial Vehicles	4 X 4 Vehicles	Total Vehicles
1980	80,420	16,842	-	97,262
1985	63,857	26,742	4,400	94,999
1990	106,454	51,420	7,987	165,861

1995	224,991	47,235	13,566	258,792
2000	282,103	33,732	27,338	343,173
2005	416,692	97,820	37,804	552,316
2010	543,592	61,562	-	605,156

Source: *Malaysian Assurance Alliance (2011)*

Infrastructure and physical facilities, including road linkages, proper bus routes, motorcycle lanes and an inter-connected public transport system should be properly planned to enable NVs to develop sustainably and be integrated into the mainstream of national growth. The planners should ensure that the right infrastructure be put in place to ensure that those who live in the NVs have access to affordable public transport and other facilities. There are many non-monetary benefits from a well- integrated and efficient public transport system. These include higher productivity because the villagers will spend less time on the road; and may not warrant the need to possess their own private vehicle.

For the lower income group in particular, the ability to get around for work, school and other daily necessities with minimum costs is essential. Having a house in a NV that is adequately served by efficient and affordable public transportation is only logical for these villagers. As such, the city's public transportation network should be integrated and be complementary to each other, serving the overall needs of both the city and NV dwellers. Once the public transportation system is efficient and in place, many of the young villagers will voluntarily stay back in their NVs.

Environmental and Community Issues

Human settlements must be designed to be sensitive to the natural environment. Achieving environmental sustainability goes beyond mere greening the environment in the surrounding areas. It incorporates efforts in well thought out designs and activities to reduce harm to the existing eco system. Both villagers and town planners need to adjust to this concept of holistic planning whereby human settlements need to be understood and developed in a particular way that caters to the overall development of the community and its environment. Designs and concepts should not be based upon alien ideas or models that have little relevance or appropriateness to the villagers needs and preferences. Roads should be built broad enough for breathing space between houses. There should be provisions for gardens

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and parks, playgrounds, facilities for rubbish collection (*see photo 4*), and public spaces for residents to congregate and interact.

Photo 4: Environmental Issues



Source: Phang and Tan (2012)

The open space in the village plays an important role in supporting social sustainability (Choguill, 2008). Creating space for people to walk, mingle, communicate and interact is essential to portray the NVs as an attractive and liveable neighbourhood. As pointed out by Tan (2012a), social links with other inhabitants living nearby can contribute to higher housing satisfaction among residents.

As mentioned earlier, there is little communal space in the urban based NVs at present. Human settlement should be developed with the concept of communal activities (Tan, 2008). Residents live in a communal setting where they can spend time with one another. The rationale behind this would be to build a close knit community. People living in a big city generally do not have enough time to bond and planning for such self-rejuvenating community features in the NVs are platforms for the villagers to develop social capital.

Political Factors

In 2005, under the New Villages Master Plan the policy was to transform the NVs into an integral part of the nation’s aspirations towards a developed status in 2020. Financial allocations are continuously disbursed to the NVs for in-situ development projects with the aim of assisting them to “catch-up” with the rest of the country. The main problem that

besets the NVs is “the lack of a regular operational budget for day-to-day administration” (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2005). Indeed, the NVs often resort to fund-raising activities and “the village committees operate like ordinary voluntary organisations, depending on the wits and initiative of their members to function” (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2005). Generally, the support from the Ministry is inevitable as there is much reliance from the Ministry for policy direction, strategies and finance. However, there are NVs that are very capable of looking after their own needs especially those in Category A (Tertiary NVs) and some in Category B (Primary NVs). NVs can be grouped into one of the three categories, namely Category A, Category B, and Category C. The differences between these categories are listed in Table 3. This has given them a sense of independence and autonomy allowing them to chart their own destiny. But there is a realisation that the role of the government is considered necessary for monitoring development in the NVs and ensuring adherence to overall national goals. This is apparent following the aftermath of the 2008 general elections when there were indications that the political inclination of the inhabitants in the NVs was towards the opposition party rather than support for the ruling government party.

Table 3: New Villages with their Classes of Respective Characteristics

Criteria	Category A	Category B	Category C
Population	From 1, 000 and may up to 10, 000	Between 1, 000 to 5, 000	Less than 1, 000
Distance from nearest town	Less than 10km	In between 10 to 30 km	More than 30 km
Infrastructure and facilities (tar road, concrete drain, electricity supply, piped water supply, flush toilet, garbage collection, fixed telephone line, mobile phone line, public transport)	More than 90% of new villagers enjoying a quality basic infrastructure and services	Basic infrastructure is provided to at least 90% of new villagers	Lack of some basic infrastructure
Social facilities (primary school, secondary school, kindergarten, health centre, security facilities, postal facilities, fire fighting services, community hall, public library, public computer centre)	All social facilities are provided	4 to 5 social facilities are provided	Less than 3 social facilities are provided
Recreational facilities (children’s playground, football field, recreational park, sports court)	All recreational facilities are provided	2 to 3 recreational facilities are provided	Less than 2 types of recreational facilities are provided

Source: Ministry of Housing and Local Government (2005)

In terms of jurisdiction, many of the NVs are without clear and gazetted boundaries thereby limiting their status, jurisdiction and representation. However, since they fall within the ambit of each state government and defined as “a village”, the NVs are treated as special enclaves by the respective state government as well as the federal government. By virtue of the NVs being also treated like a local authority, it is inevitable that the Ministry of Housing and Local Government is involved at the federal level and appears to be championing the cause of the NVs. In addition, the NVs are mainly inhabited by ethnic Chinese, and the said Ministry has always been under the purview of a Minister from the MCA which is historically linked to the NVs. It can be hypothesised that this ethnicity factor of the NVs has contributed to the identification of many urban-based NVs with the MCA which is a coalition partner of the ruling party, the BN. Indeed, in the past, many of the NVs whose settlers were mainly Chinese, had the support of the MCA and many of them were either supporters or even members of the MCA party (interview respondents from case study). A visual survey of these NVs will reveal the location of an MCA branch office in these villages. In the past, this trend was reliable and it was assumed that the ruling party through the MCA could depend upon the Chinese community in these villages for votes during the general elections. However, disenchantment with regards to daily issues that affect the lives of the inhabitants began to disenfranchise the villagers from the MCA and the ruling coalition BN party. These issues pertain to the livelihood of the settlers and their surroundings, Chinese education and education as a whole for the younger settlers, employment opportunities, and influence from social media technology; more the concerns of the Chinese community rather than the nation as a whole. As a result, the dissatisfaction has translated into decreasing support for the MCA and the ruling party as a whole. This is evidenced from the election results from the past three elections (1999, 2004, 2008), which depicted a declining trend in votes for the MCA and BN party in the case study NV. The case study of Kampung Baru Hulu Kepong and the results of the three general elections are shown in the following Tables.

Kampung Baru Hulu Kepong is situated within the Parliamentary constituency of Selayang and for the state it is in the constituency of Taman Templer. There are indications that the perception of the inhabitants towards the various political parties has transformed over the years since the NVs were first set up. The results of the three general elections in 1999, 2004, and 2008 indicate that a process of change has occurred in the NVs and the voting

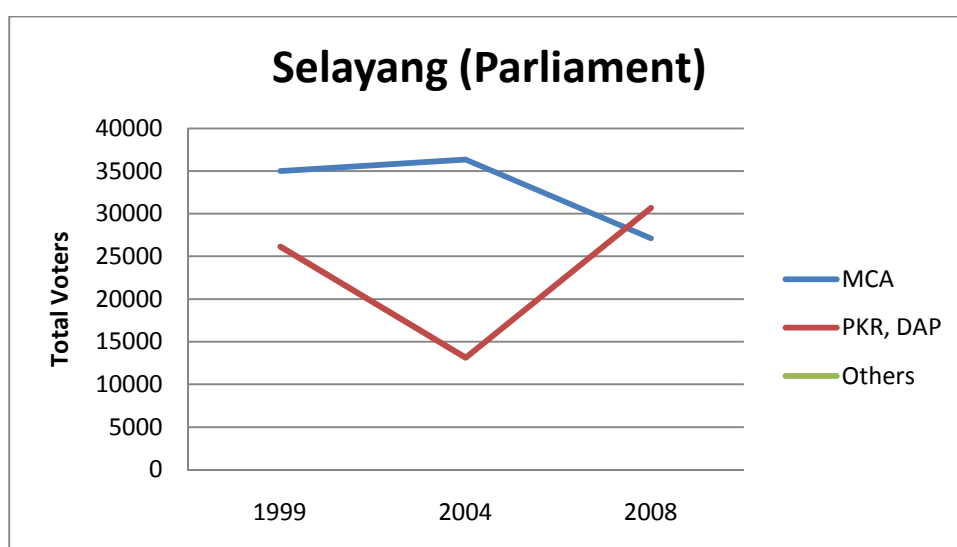
trends show a shift of support away from the ruling coalition BN party to the opposition parties.

Table 4: Selayang (Parliamentary Constituency)

	1999	2004	2008
MCA	34979	36343	27134
PKR, DAP	26144	13117	30701
Others	NA	NA	1332

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/election/results/results.html>

Graph 1: Selayang (Parliamentary Constituency)



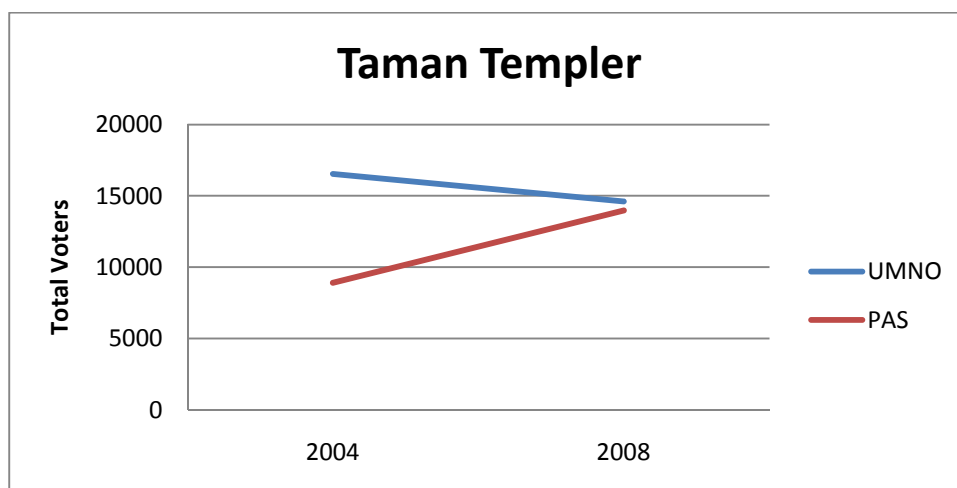
With reference to Table 4 and Graph 1, there was a drastic decline in MCA's popularity in Selayang of 25% between 2004 and the next election period in 2008. The gain went to the opposition coalition parties of DAP and the PKR which saw a net increase in the number of votes from 13117 to 30701; an increase of 134%. As such, the parliament seat in which the NV case study is located is currently controlled by the opposition party. As for the three state constituencies also linked to the case study of Kampung Baru Hulu Kepong, the pattern did not differ much. The results are shown in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5: Taman Temple (State Constituency)

	2004	2008
UMNO	16536	14600
PAS	8911	13987

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/election/results/results.html>

Graph 2: Taman Templer (State Constituency)



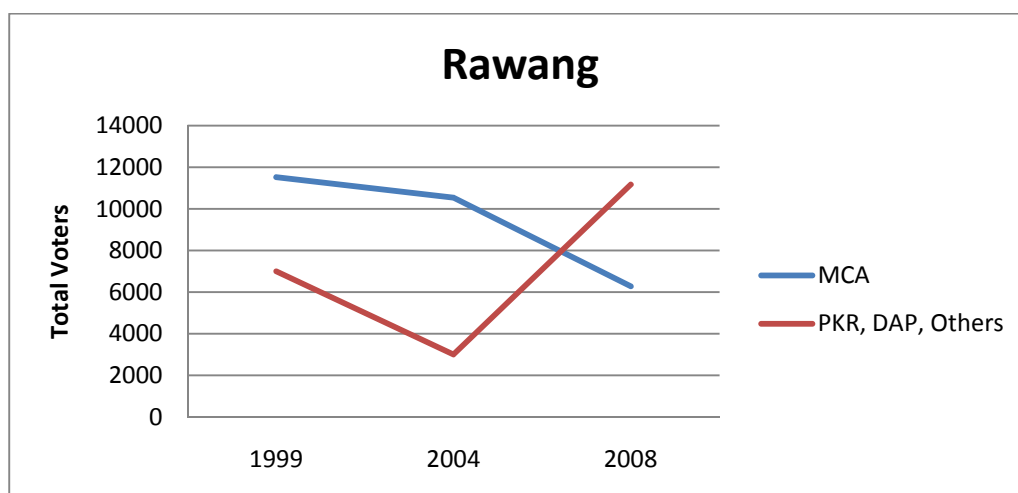
In the Taman Templer constituency, the choice was either for the UMNO (BN) or the PAS (PKR opposition). Again between the two election periods, the percentage loss by UMNO was 11% as compared to PAS's gain of 57%. Although this seat was still retained by the ruling coalition party, it won by a narrow margin of votes (613). In fact, PAS has gained a substantial number of votes and this is an indication again of the declining support for the BN party.

Table 6: Rawang (State Constituency)

	1999	2004	2008
MCA	11518	10534	6275
PKR, DAP	6880	NA	10467
Others (Ind.)	114	2990	704

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/election/results/results.html>

Graph 3: Rawang (State Constituency)



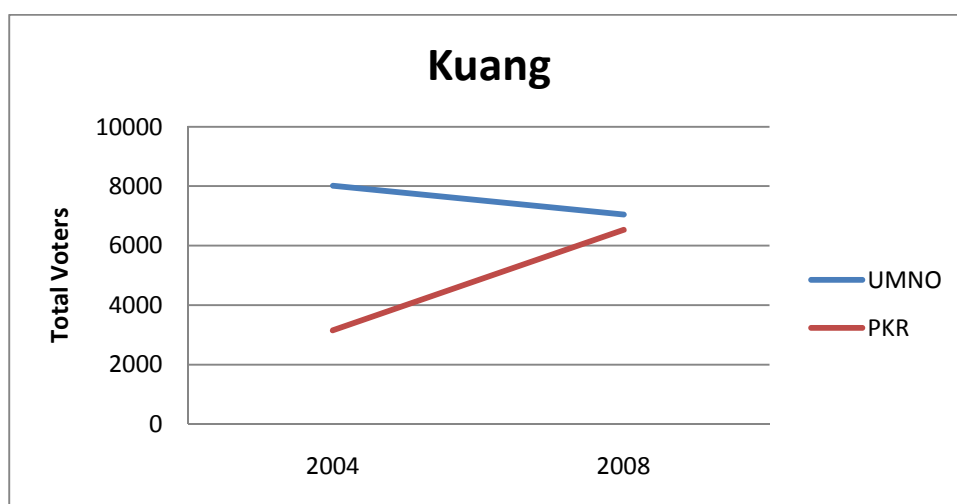
In Table 6, for the Rawang state constituency, the figures reveal a declining popularity for the MCA from 1999 until 2008. Although MCA retained its seat in 1999 and 2004, it was by a reducing majority and in 2008, it lost this seat to the DAP/PKR by 4192 votes or 24%.

Table 7: Kuang (State Constituency)

	2004	2008
UMNO	8016	7049
PKR	3151	6532

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/election/results/results.html>

Graph 4: Kuang (State Constituency)



The Kuang state seat was still retained by the ruling coalition partner, UMNO which competed against the PKR by a much reduced majority. In terms of percentages, it can be seen that between 2004 and 2008, UMNO's votes had declined by 12% while that of the PKR increased by 107% (see Table 7). As Graph 4 indicates, the winning margin by the BN/UMNO is narrowing from one general election to another. Hence, as stated earlier, it cannot be assumed that the NVs will consistently support the ruling parties of BN as the voting pattern and figures in the Tables and Graphs have shown a declining trend for the BN.

This case study on the politics and voting trend in an urban-based NV reveals a sense of dissatisfaction among the NV Chinese community and perhaps they feel rejected by the MCA and ruling party as the same old problems besetting them for many years have yet to be resolved with some becoming worse. It was mentioned in a previous article that only during election periods, will the NVs be given some attention whereby political leaders from all

sides will visit these NVs and campaign for their votes. During such occasions, some funds or financial aids will be granted to them (Khalid, 2012). In other words, the NVs are looked upon as pockets of potential votes for the political parties, but at other times are left to fend for themselves. It appears that they are not given the necessary support to bring them into the mainstream of the country's development. As a result, there are disparities in development in the NVs. Some NVs which are near to the cities have prospered due to the spill over effect while others are still unable to "catch-up" and are left behind. The issues discussed have shown that the inhabitants have decided that their frustrations as settlers in NVs can only be acknowledged if their political support is not taken for granted by the ruling government parties.

The Relevance of Better Urban Governance to NVs

In an increasingly urbanising world, sustainability of cities, towns and even NVs will depend upon the governance capacity of the city itself and to a great extent the support of the citizens and key stakeholders. This brings forth the concept of urban governance which has been referred to as a complex set of values, processes and institutions by which cities are managed. Within it is entrenched a system of good governance which works towards making cities more efficient, equitable, safer and sustainable (Taylor, 1999). It is necessary for the NVs to be integrated into the overall national structure of development and this can be carried out only if there is a concerted effort in providing the NVs with the proper direction by the authorities concerned. It cannot be denied that NVs are today at a cross-road between sustainable growth and fossilisation and any redevelopment plans for the NVs must be carried out as a part of the national agenda. The current transformation plans of the national government have to take cognizance of the existence of the NVs and their potential in contributing to overall economic growth of the country. However this can only be successful if urban governance also includes the NVs. This means that what the nation hopes to achieve for its cities in the future as a common vision has to include the NVs. At the moment, urban governance for the cities to achieve good living and working conditions, sustainable environment, a high quality of life index; excellent infrastructure should also be applicable to the NVs.

Conclusion

In the present context of Malaysia's rapid economic growth amidst global challenges, NVs in Peninsular Malaysia can contribute positively to the overall development of the nation, only if given the proper support and guidance. NVs when properly nurtured can be a boon as they have potentials waiting to be cultivated and reaped. They can contribute to national economic productivity and politics, but require proper policies and planned programmes by both the federal and state governments.

May it be suggested that serious efforts should be made by both the private and public sectors involved in the housing industry to re-think what is appropriate and necessary in the larger context for our towns and cities. Within this conurbation lie the aging NVs waiting to be given a new lease of life and to be brought into the overall growth and development of the nation. While the NVs may expect a quality living environment as part and parcel of this renewal concept, it is upon the onus of the government to provide that reality through the approval of layout plans and operationalizing the mechanisms for implementing the structure and local plans. Local governments may want to encourage the planning and building of houses and towns that will allow for closer cooperation between local authorities and the community and ensuring sufficient flexibility to support future upgrading when necessary especially in the NVs.

It is justified to state that the present strategies outlined by the federal government through the MHLG consisting of physical planning, social issues, economics, agriculture, housing and land ownership, landscaping, infrastructure and administration should be carried out in tandem with overall national objectives. Otherwise, the NVs will still appear to be left out of the mainstream of growth and development and will never be able to "catch-up" with the rest of the nation. This will not be conducive to the objective of national integration and could be a hindrance to the nation's pursuit of a developed nation by 2020. Indeed, there has to be a political will to ensure firm direction for matters pertaining to NVs and their future contribution to the overall nationhood building process of this country.

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Abbreviations

BN	Barisan National
DAP	Democratic Action Party
IND.	Independent
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NA	Not available
NVs	New Villages
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia
PK	Parti Keadilan
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation