

## Connecting Urban Engagement

Sustainable Tropical Environmental Design Exhibition 2011

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STEdex'11 – Mohamad Fakri Zaky Ja'afar, **Connecting Urban Engagement, Sustainable Tropical Environmental Design Exhibition 2011**, ISSN : 2180-0685, Vol : 3, [52-53], Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia

This studio revisits the basic needs of human settlement – namely Live, Work and Play. Currently, these three basic human activities necessitate a high dependence on fossil fuel transportation to move people. People live in a town, work in another, shop in yet another and go to faraway places for recreation. The main idea is to create a development whereby all these three can happen within an autonomous society. This exercise is named ‘WOLP Cosmos’ – a cosmos where all the basic needs: Work, Live and Play (WOLP) are clustered together to minimize the generation of new vehicular artery in and out of the city.

At the outset, students were asked to investigate the issue of density. Buckminster Fuller once said, “If all people living at the time be placed shoulder to shoulder, they can all fit on Long Island”. However, to provide the need for work, live and play, we need more land for that. So, the important question is: how much more? There need to be a balance between super high density and sprawling development. At both extremes, they are unsustainable. Sprawling development uses up a lot of land and resources. Super high density living also creates large ecological footprint in terms of provision of basic needs as well as social stress.

The site chosen is the junction between Jalan Ampang and Jalan Tun Razak, right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. The challenges of development in inner city are abound: heavy traffics on two sides, the issue of land cost as well as the need to optimise the value of this particular site, and the much sought after view of the gleaming Twin Towers. The solutions are varied and interesting; pushing the limits of what is acceptable today, to explore a potentially sustainable solution for the future.

Meanwhile, the second project–Sepang Permaculture Centre–requires the students to seek the true meaning of sustainable living in Malaysian context in the locality of Banting and permaculture techniques that could be promoted and extended to existing farmers and industry partners. This could improve the way conventional and unsustainable farming is done.

The interpretation and portrayal of permaculture depends on the students' creativities. The project should address the local context made up of farmers who come from traditional and medium scale commercial farming background that do not emphasize on ecology and sustainability lifestyles. The site which is located near a mangrove riverfront presents opportunity to students to expand their ideas in integrating the environment and site context with the local community. The ultimate aim is to design farming facilities that function as a holistic permacultural environment and learning centre for the town and community. It will ultimately assist in improving the economic growth and urban lifestyle.