# RETHINKING EMPOWERING DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT TO IMPROVE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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## DEDICATION

This thesis dissertation is dedicated wholeheartedly to my father and mother who taught me that there is no stopping in doing what you love in life. It is also dedicated to my partner, my siblings, and all my great friends who were there convincing me to believe in my thesis and support me with love.

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## ABSTRACT

The lack of youth empowerment has becoming a major concern for the socioeconomic growth of a nation, including Malaysia. Poor execution of policy and planning for the youth, and the lack of acknowledgment of youth capabilities on their contributions to the national economy has widen the generation and knowledge gap. This will become a major issue as the increasing number of youth in the world, and the rising rate of youth unemployment and the low average salary of fresh graduates, where it will expose to the risk of political instability, economic pain for the modest income-earners, and worsening communal value relations that will hinder Malaysia's economy to the right path towards new growth engines that is sustainable and inclusive. Due to the lack of youth empowerment, there is a need to approach and acknowledge the hidden assets that the youth and the community represent, and make the public services as driving factor of Malaysia's economic boost, as to generate meaningful economic contributions from community empowering processes to empowered production. The aim of this study is to look into the use of empowering development environment for the youth through civic engagement and participation of Sherry R. Arnstein's civic engagement concept in order to improve the quality of life of the youth and their community. The objective of this research is to investigate the use of empowering development environment through youth engagement, empowerment, and integration through architectural design approaches in order to reduce the socioeconomic impacts of the community. Qualitative research paradigm was used to conduct this study as the empowering development environment is reliant on the qualitative data and feasibility literature. The analysis is carried out at the end of this dissertation by incorporating the empowering development environment with architecture design approach as an intervention of the youth empowerment.

# ABSTRAK

Kekurangan pemerkasaan belia telah menjadi kebimbangan utama bagi pertumbuhan sosioekonomi sesebuah negara, termasuk Malaysia. Pelaksanaan dasar dan perancangan yang lemah untuk belia, dan kekurangan pengiktirafan keupayaan belia terhadap sumbangan mereka kepada ekonomi negara telah melebarkan jurang generasi dan pengetahuan. Ini akan menjadi isu utama kerana peningkatan bilangan belia di dunia, dan peningkatan kadar pengangguran belia dan purata gaji graduan baru yang rendah, di mana ia akan mendedahkan kepada risiko ketidakstabilan politik, kemelesetan ekonomi, dan hubungan nilai komunal yang semakin teruk yang akan menghalang ekonomi Malaysia ke jalan yang betul ke arah permodenan baharu yang mampan dan inklusif. Disebabkan kekurangan pemerkasaan belia, terdapat keperluan untuk mendekati dan mengakui aset tersembunyi yang diwakili oleh belia dan masyarakat, dan menjadikan perkhidmatan awam sebagai faktor pemacu rangsangan ekonomi Malaysia, untuk menjana sumbangan ekonomi yang bermakna daripada proses memperkasakan masyarakat kepada pengeluaran yang diperkasakan. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk melihat ke dalam penggunaan memperkasakan persekitaran pembangunan untuk belia melalui penglibatan sivik dan penyertaan konsep penglibatan sivik Sherry R. Arnstein untuk meningkatkan kualiti hidup belia dan komuniti. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk menyiasat penggunaan memperkasakan persekitaran pembangunan melalui penglibatan belia, pemerkasaan, dan integrasi melalui pendekatan reka bentuk seni bina untuk mengurangkan kesan sosioekonomi masyarakat. Paradigma penyelidikan kualitatif digunakan untuk menjalankan kajian ini kerana Persekitaran Pembangunan Pemerkasaan Belia bergantung kepada data kualitatif dan literatur kebolehlaksanaan. Analisis dijalankan pada akhir kajian ini dengan menggabungkan Persekitaran Pembangunan Pemerkasaan Belia dengan pendekatan reka bentuk seni bina sebagai intervensi pemerkasaan belia.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| UTM | - | Universiti Teknologi Malaysia |
| SDG | - | Sustainable Development Goal |
| FAMA | - | Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority |
| MARA | - | Majlis Amanah Rakyat |
| NKRA | - | National Key Result Areas |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background Study

The idea of citizen participation is there is no one against it on the basic principle since it is beneficial for each every one of us. Essentially, the cooperation and participation of the representatives in any party, is the foundation of democracy, where it is a venerated idea that is energetically commended by everyone, and it is also defined into numerous shades of through, and through racial, ethnic, philosophical, and political opposition. This however does extend to the issue of the major role of the young generation in achieving good governance of a country. The young generation aged 15 to 30, of Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668), now make up 25% of the world's population in 2020, and by this sheer volume, it is the young people that dictate the economy, markets, and future trends.

However, in Malaysia, it may not be surprising that there are still issues with the rising rate in youth employment, or even the average salary of fresh graduates. The current Muar MP, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman reported in 2018 that there is scarcity of quality, high-income jobs in Muar constituency, where the youth are forced to seek opportunities outside their hometown to more economically active such as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, and Singapore.

Representing the voice of the youth during his tenancy as Minister of Youth and Sports, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman also mentioned that it has made the local born youth that have strong affinity for their hometown, often stuck in the middle-income or lower middle-income trap. This, however, relates to the neglected opinions and needs of the youth, and the lack of youth empowerment, where they want the government to satisfy their needs, particularly their economic needs, and give them political freedom, as well as the freedom of speech. The youth also demanded more

political space for them to voice their opinions on the current issues. Without adequate and proper planning, the youth will suffer a few consequences, where Malaysia could not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by United Nations.

The theory of Civic Engagement, or specifically Civic Participation by Sherry R. Arnstein, is introduced to address the youth empowerment issues. This study will investigate on exploring implementation possibilities of empowering development environment through civic engagement, and how architecture can be a medium of power to promote empowerment for the youth.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

As the number of world's population increased, there is a need for more job opportunities, and better high-quality income jobs, as the growth of national gross domestic product determines the size of the economy and the status of a country. As the population of a country increased, there is also increasing of socioeconomic issues, where it could be seen through Malaysia's economic activity, and the slow growth of the annual gross domestic product trend in 2020 where it has declined in 5.6% compared to year 2019. The pressing matters at hand could be seen in the mean monthly salaries and wages of employed graduates in Malaysia, from RM3,224 to RM2,933 as reported by the Department of Statistics Malaysia.

This problem may persist because, from a socioeconomic standpoint, there are lack of work ready skills and knowledge, as there is an invisible gap in our Malaysia formal education curriculum system, where the youth are not exposed to important experiences and skills, such as life coping skills, manipulative skills, communicative skills, and artistic skills, which could be beneficial in making the youth to be empowered.

This socioeconomic problem will have a negative domino effect. It could not be a major concern as of right now, but it will affect the nation with the risk of political instability, economic pain for modest income-earners, and worsening communal value

relations. With the lack of youth empowerment, there is the issue of navigating the country's economy to the right path towards new growth engines that is sustainable and inclusive.

This research is focusing on engaging the youth, where the citizen participation concept is being used in order to empower them and integrate the empowered youth with the community in order to recognize the valuable resources and blur out the distinction between the youth and community, also in generating meaningful economic contributions to the nation.

## 1.3 Research Aim

The purpose of this research is to discover the methods of engaging the youth to empower them while also integrate the resource from youth to reduce the socioeconomic impacts of the community. The aim of this research is to investigate the usage of empowering development environment in improving civic engagement of the youth.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The objective is to analyse and reflect, by answering the following three questions:

(a) What are the issues and problems of empowerment in youth through civic engagement?

(b) What is the suitable program brief for youth empowerment through civic engagement?

(c) What is the best approach of empowering the youth in improving the civic engagement?

## 1.5 Research Objectives

The goal of this research will be to address these three objectives:

(a) To study the issues and problems of empowering the youth through civic engagement.

(b) To investigate the suitable program brief that can empower the youth through civic engagement.

(c) To identify the best approach of empowering the youth in improving the civic engagement among the youth and community.

## 1.6 Significance of Research

The world has acknowledged that the people are now living better lives if we compare it to a decade ago, and this global commitment is to achieve more resilient, inclusive development and sustainable nation which are encapsuled in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by United Nation. Malaysia and the other 192 nations have endorsed the Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2015. This research is meant to address the issue as it is a part of the commitment to achieve these following SDGs goals:

Figure 1.1 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nation, 2015)

The empowering development environment will fall under these five Sustainable Development Goals:

(a) SDG 1: Reduce the struggle to fulfil the most basic needs like health and education.

(b) SDG 4: Increase access to formal and non-formal education.

(c) SDG 8: Reduces the endangered global economy and the escalating job losses.

(d) SDG 11: Making relative income inequality to be reduced.

(e) SDG 16: To promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

## 1.7 Research Methodology

Qualitative research paradigm was used to conduct this study since the adaptation mechanism is mostly dependent on feasibility literature and qualitative data rather than quantitative data. The focus of this paper is on subjective and exploratory findings in order to prove the theory that architecture and empowering development environment are linked together. The method is largely implemented through literature reviews, with secondary data coming from case studies and being assessed qualitatively through a feasibility study.

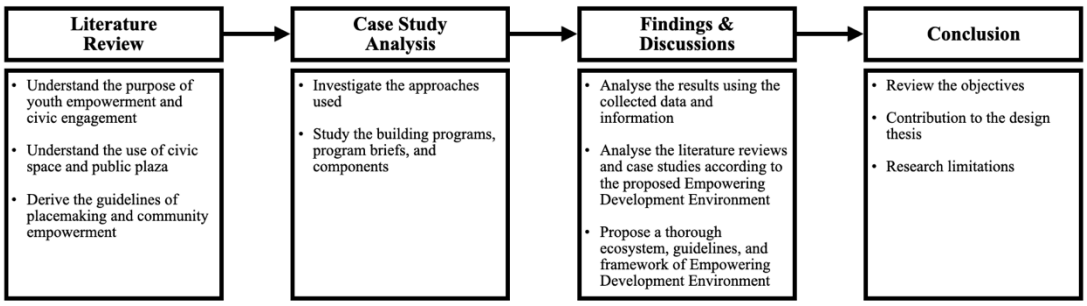


Figure 1.2 Research Framework (Author, 2022)

## 1.8 Chapter Summary

The first chapter covers the background research and issues pertaining to the effects of empowering development environment and civic engagement on the youth and community. The significance of the study is discussed in order to guide the exploration of the original research direction. The research goals and objectives are determined by the issues and hypothesis presented. Forming an architectural design plan necessitates extensive readings, literature evaluations, and analysis.

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