

ENHANCING URBAN FARMING AS A SOCIAL NODE VIA SPACE  
VISIBILITY STUDIES WITHIN KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTRE

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ENHANCING URBAN FARMING ACTIVITY AS A SOCIAL NODE VIA  
SPATIAL VISIBILITY STUDIES WITHIN KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTRE

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my supervising architect and lecturers for guiding me in completing this thesis paper. I am thankful that my family members and friends who have been giving full support throughout my research.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to study the potential nodes to enhance the urban farming activity as social node via spatial visibility studies within urban setting. Series of literature reviews illustrate the understanding of sense of place towards facilitating the placemaking process of a social node throughout urban farming activity. The studies are conducted in a selected urban area in Kuala Lumpur City Centre which is Kampong Bharu neighbourhood. This paper also studies the importance of community engagement in the placemaking process where urban farming activity can be performed and further to understanding the overall socioeconomic benefits to the community. There are several factors to be considered in developing public space within urban setting including of access and linkages, comfort, type of activity use, sociability as well as the social benefits can that public space provides. In this research where urban farming activity as the main topic, understanding the concept and framework of planning urban green spaces is essential to relate the connection with placemaking process with the activity that comes with social benefits to the local community. Based on the structured literature review, there are different types of urban farming can be performed that varies in terms of scale, techniques and locations of these urban farming can be. With the aid of two methodology used in this research which are space syntax tools and behaviour mapping, this study is able to identify the potential of proposing urban farming activity into making a social node within an urban area.

## ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji nod yang berpotensi untuk meningkatkan aktiviti pertanian bandar sebagai nod sosial melalui kajian keterlihatan spatial dalam persekitaran bandar. Siri ulasan kesusasteraan menggambarkan pemahaman rasa tempat ke arah memudahkan proses pembuatan tempat nod sosial di seluruh aktiviti pertanian bandar. Kajian-kajian ini dijalankan di kawasan bandar terpilih di Pusat Bandar Kuala Lumpur yang merupakan kawasan kejiranan Kampong Baru. Kertas kerja ini juga mengkaji kepentingan penglibatan masyarakat dalam proses pembuatan tempat di mana aktiviti pertanian bandar dapat dilakukan dan seterusnya memahami manfaat sosioekonomi keseluruhan kepada masyarakat. Terdapat beberapa faktor yang perlu dipertimbangkan dalam membangunkan ruang awam dalam persekitaran bandar termasuk akses dan hubungan, keselesaan, jenis penggunaan aktiviti, keramahtamahan serta faedah sosial yang boleh disediakan oleh ruang awam. Dalam penyelidikan ini di mana aktiviti pertanian bandar sebagai topik utama, memahami konsep dan rangka kerja merancang ruang hijau bandar adalah penting untuk mengaitkan hubungan dengan proses pembuatan tempat dengan aktiviti yang datang dengan manfaat sosial kepada masyarakat setempat. Berdasarkan kajian literatur berstruktur, terdapat pelbagai jenis pertanian bandar yang boleh dilakukan yang berbeza dari segi skala, teknik dan lokasi pertanian bandar ini. Dengan bantuan dua metodologi yang digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini iaitu alat sintaks ruang dan pemetaan tingkah laku, kajian ini dapat mengenal pasti potensi mencadangkan aktiviti pertanian bandar untuk membuat nod sosial di kawasan bandar.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
	<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>iii</b>
	<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>iv</b>
	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>v</b>
	<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>vi</b>
	<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>vii</b>
	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>viii</b>
	<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xi</b>
	<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xii</b>
	<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1	Problem Background	15
1.2	Problem Statement	17
1.3	Research Goal	20
1.3.1	Research Questions	20
1.3.2	Research Objectives	20
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1	Introduction	22
2.1.1	State-of-the-Arts	22
2.1.1.1	Sense of place	22
2.1.1.2	Placemaking	24
2.1.1.3	Community Engagement in Placemaking	26
2.1.1.4	Public Space	27
2.1.1.5	Significance of Public Space	28
2.1.1.6	Factors in developing public space	28
2.1.1.7	Urban Green Space as Placemaking	30

2.1.1.8	Community Garden as Placemaking	31
2.1.1.9	Urban Farming	32
2.1.1.10	Urban Farming in Malaysia	34
2.1.1.11	Community Participation in Urban Farming	38
2.2	Limitation	39
2.3	Research Gap	40
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1	Introduction	41
3.1.1	Proposed Method	41
3.1.1.1	Space Syntax	41
3.1.1.2	Behavioral Mapping	43
3.1.1.3	Selected Research Area	44
3.2	Tools and Platforms	47
3.2.1	DepthmapX	47
3.2.2	Behavior Mapping	48
3.3	Data Analysis	50
3.3.1	Space Syntax	50
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>PROPOSED WORK</b>	<b>53</b>
4.1	Analytical Proofs	53
4.1.1	Space Syntax Analysis Result	53
4.1.2	Behaviour Mapping Result	56
4.2	Result and Discussion	57
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>63</b>
5.1	Discussion	63
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>65</b>
6.1	Review of Research Objective	65
6.1.1	First Objective : Review the relationship between urban farming activity as a social node in urban area setting.	65



6.1.2	Second Objective : Understanding the concept and framework of developing a social node in placemaking process.	66
6.1.3	Third Objective : Understand the social benefits of urban farming activity within a community.	66

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>68</b>
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## LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE NO.</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Table 2-1	Benefits of urban farming.	38
Table 4-1	Illustrating series of analysis extracted from Depthmapx for Point A and B.	60

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE NO.</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Figure 1-1	Macro site analysis shows the lack of green elements in Kampong Bharu.	17
Figure 2-1	Diagram showing sense of place model.	23
Figure 2-2	Diagram showing key points making a great place.	24
Figure 2-3	Illustrating the definition of place.	25
Figure 2-4	Type of Urban Farming within Asian countries.	33
Figure 2-5	Types of Urban Farming based on different levels of ownership ranging from household gardening to larger scale commercial urban farms. (Kennard and Bamford, 2020)	34
Figure 2-6	Illustrating the urban farming participation in Malaysia.	35
Figure 3-1	Illustrating the understanding of axial sightline, convex space and isovist field in Space Syntax.	42
Figure 3-2	Map showing Kampong Bharu in Kuala Lumpur. (Source : Google Street Map 2022)	44
Figure 3-3	Extracted Map from Google Earth showing Kampong hBaru as the selected research area. (Source : Google Street Map 2022)	45
Figure 3-4	Selected nodes in Kampong Bharu neighbourhood. (Source : Google Street Map 2022)	46
Figure 3-5	Point A and B with close up view on map with surrounding photos. (Source : Google Street Map 2022)	46
Figure 3-6	Point C and D with close up view on map with surrounding photos. (Source : Google Street Map 2022)	47
Figure 3-7	Illustrating the understanding of terms used in Space Syntax.	48
Figure 3-8	Example of data collection sample used in behaviour mapping in table form.	48
Figure 3-9	Illustrating the sample of data analysis from behaviour mapping analysis.	49
Figure 3-10	Framework of Space Syntax analysis.	50

Figure 3-11	Illustrating the sample of data analysis from Space Syntax.	51
Figure 3-12	Illustrating the sample of VGA data analysis from space syntax.	52
Figure 4-1	VGA Map result showing connectivity analysis extracted from DepthmapX.	53
Figure 4-2	VGA Map result showing point first movement analysis extracted from DepthmapX.	54
Figure 4-3	VGA Map result showing point second movement analysis extracted from DepthmapX.	54
Figure 4-4	Axial Line Map result showing connectivity analysis extracted from DepthmapX.	55
Figure 4-5	Axial Line Map result showing integration (HH) analysis extracted from DepthmapX.	55
Figure 4-6	Behaviour Mapping results during daytime in Kampong Bharu.	56
Figure 4-7	Behaviour Mapping results during night time in Kampong Bharu.	56
Figure 4-8	Overlaying of VGA – Connectivity analysis with behaviour mapping during daytime.	57
Figure 4-9	Overlaying of VGA – Connectivity analysis with behaviour mapping during night time.	57
Figure 4-10	Illustrating series of analysis extracted from Depthmapx for Point A and B.	59
Figure 4-11	Illustrating series of analysis extracted from Depthmapx for Point A and B.	60
Figure 4-12	Close up of behaviour mapping analysis on selected nodes within Kampong Bharu.	62

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DBKL	-	Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur
DOA	-	Department of Agriculture
VGA	-	Visibility Graph Analysis

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This research reviews the feasibility of developing an urban farming building as a placemaking node in Kampong Bharu. The main scope of research is to understand the idea of placemaking in relation to sense of place.

### 1.1 Problem Background

With the rapid development of high rise and modern buildings in the current urban setting in Kuala Lumpur city center, the 110 years old Kampong Bharu being the last existing old traditional Malay kampong village has been negatively affected. In Kampong Bharu, traditional Malay kampong houses are considered as cultural assets of the Malay community which was sustained traditionally by agricultural activities in the past. An urban village is a generally populated area that is smaller than a town and is referred to in urban planning. The term "village" designates a local or regional neighborhood that is basically typical and bound to the prevalent sociocultural framework and values. As suggested by Ujang (2016), the socio-cultural characteristics of Kampong Bharu as well as its physical layout contribute to the city's feeling of place. The traditional values, high morality, a space of community and support, and pride in one's community are reflected in the Malay community as a social and political entity.

Due to the recent urban redevelopment and revitalization schemes into new urban centre in Kuala Lumpur, the village slowly transforms into a completely different urban area that affects the people and environment in Kampong Bharu. Ujang (2016) mentioned that urban transformation should be a significant and fundamental positive change ideally to support social progress and equality in a place. Depending

on outcome which supports by few factors such as acknowledging the existing conditions, constraints and opportunities to make this urban transformation happen positively.

Shamsuddin & Ujang (2008) also contend that Malaysian localized urban character issues are associated with a worsening in the definition of identity places, expansion that is inconsistent with the identity of the existing place, and worsening in the identity of the historic district. The problems are most obviously manifested in the monotony of building scales and forms, which leads to the loss of structures and areas with historic and culturally significant characteristics. The impact of globalization and modern living has undermined the Kampong Bharu community's strong social and traditional traditions. Within a Malay enclave, the existing architecture provides shared spaces among neighbors and informal transactions along the smaller streets. The kampong gives the sense of place, generating cohesiveness and informality.

It is still not apparent how Kampong Bharu's lack of public space availability and utilization will affect how its residents perceive modern public space and their feeling of local community. According to Ujang (2016), the enclave's traditional lifestyles are reflected in how the group conducts social and religious activities in Kampong Bharu. Their Malay community identify themselves as a social group through gatherings, traditional weddings and religious events which shows the social attachment that continued practice till today.

The proposed strategy is to develop a social node with urban farming activities to improve overall local residents' lifestyle and quality of life. The reason of proposing urban farming activities in Kampong Bharu as they are reviewed as part of the cultural assets of the Malay community which was sustained traditionally by agricultural activities in the past.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Kampong Bharu will be transformed on a huge scale with the ongoing development pressure from the authorities. It is important to regard that this movement will improve the socio-economic status of the Malays but may ended up in diminishing traditional Malay cultures and values too. Urban redevelopment redefines places and communities. The development could socially impact the lifestyle, cultural, community, quality of life and health for the urban dwellers.

### *Lack of Social and Green Nodes*

The agricultural image of Kampong Bharu is still being forgotten as well as with the socio-cultural values from the traditional Malay kampong community. Based on the macro site analysis findings, residential dominated most of the land with a minimal percentage of green spaces.



Figure 1-1 Macro site analysis shows the lack of green elements in Kampong Bharu.

Locals normally gather at Masjid Jamek which is the central node where people gather for *solat*, wedding, funeral and other social events. With Jalan Raja Abdullah



being the main vehicular road in Kampong Bharu, noticeably locals are rarely seen walking along this road especially towards the north side. Kampong Bharu seems to be lacking of in communal space and has lost its role as social and cultural incubator.

The main aspect in creating a city is urban space. Urban areas are being used by everyone else in the nation, regardless of age, origin, or rank. The setting in which city people and other users transmit and learn cultural development is provided by urban spaces. Research evidence on liveability in urban areas, people's standard of living, the enhancement of urban space condition, and also a broad critique of the idea of urbanisation, have been done concurrently with global science and innovative advancements, notably over the last decade. On the other hand, placemaking demonstrates how the design of places extends beyond the physical realm and incorporates elements like socialization, purposes, activities, mobility, interconnections, convenience, and identity to foster a feeling of place and linkages between individuals. The significance of meaning and connection in developing environments with a profound sense of place has been underestimated, despite the fact that much has been stated about the role of physical elements and activities in the establishment of place identity.

According to Dennis & James (2016), urban green spaces are referred to areas such as gardens, parks, greenways as well as any areas with grass, trees and shrubs in any forms, shapes, functions and purposes, varies based on community preference or requirement and normally publicly accessed. Green space can be also referring to park where children are playing, recreational green fields and also community garden. Ghani & Tan (2020) suggest that urban green spaces are practical environmental assets with various benefits, including improving urban health and well-being, supporting social and economic growth, providing habitat for flora and fauna, and reducing the negative environmental repercussions of expanding human populations.

### *Diminishing of community interactions*

The smallest social unit is a neighbourhood, and an urban neighbourhood's space fulfils this role as a place for all kinds of interaction. A local territorial community is a larger and more powerful form of urban society that distinguishes between its basic interests like home and secondary interests like recreation and needs a place for all of its intercommunicative activities. The system of urban residential areas is strongly related to the typology that is being presented. Housing is crucial for maintaining the liveliness of public places, it's true. However, appealing and useful areas could be built near to business hubs and shopping malls, regional government entities or municipalities, or any form of public amenities (Vilnius is home to several instances of such endeavours). However, the lack of a strong local community keeps the area from developing into a bustling, vibrant public space that operates reliably throughout the year.

Social sustainability is the capacity of a community to grow its institutions so as to satisfy not only the demands of its current members but also the future generations in maintaining a healthy community. Definition of social sustainability is to improve livelihood while enhancing current assets and capabilities in a community. Some aimed to reduce poverty, improve wellbeing and capabilities, adapting to livelihood and sustaining via natural resources. Ghafouri and Khan, 2015 highlighted in their studies that neighbourhood spirit was the most important element in kampungs. The researchers also suggest that the community engagement was respectful with responsible behaviour in helping each other. This is a general characteristic of a kampung living that promotes tight local community bond.

Despite the understanding above, these are rarely visible within Kampong Bharu neighbourhood. A fenceless compound allows constant interaction between the communities which is one of the main spatial characteristics in traditional Malay kampong areas. Looking at the current urban setting in Kampong Bharu neighbourhood, now the houses are being enclosed where the locals are bounded by their perimeter fences. This results in a community gap between different age groups due to lack of community participation.

### **1.3 Research Goal**

The aim of this research is to study relationship of a social node with enhancing urban farming activity via spatial visibility studies within urban setting.

#### **1.3.1 Research Questions**

The key research question is where to provide a social node to enhance urban farming activity within an urban neighbourhood?

The questions of the research are :

- (a) What is the relationship between social behavior patterns with local nodes?
- (b) What is the relationship between urban farming activities helps with social interaction within the community?
- (c) How can spatial visibility studies enhance the urban farming activity within the community?
- (d) What are the factors that support or obstruct the development of urban community garden projects with the placemaking in action?

#### **1.3.2 Research Objectives**

In order to answer the research questions, the following objectives are formulated:

- (a) To review the relationship between urban farming activity as a social node in urban area setting.
- (b) To understand the concept and framework of developing of social node in the placemaking process.
- (c) To understand the social benefits of urban farming activity within a community.

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