

Environmental Sustainable Design (ARC 1413)

Project 2 : Nature & Us

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Table of Content

<u>Content</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. Group Essay (Nature As A Community)	3-5
2. Reflective Essay (Meera Satheesh)	6-9
3. Reflective Essay (Felicia Novera)	10-12

Group Essay : Nature as community

There are a lot of different creatures and components in a nature. Each has its own characteristics and specific unique appearance that create a beauty of the nature itself. Also each individual provides positive affection towards other individuals and supporting each other for their livings.

Community in general is the natural relation where all the 5 element of the earth comes together as one: water, fire, earth, wind and nature. Nature as community on the other hand literally means nature which includes water, air, trees, insects, birds and everything in it as one community. As one community itself represents that all those elements in nature are better if they stay as one and not separated. Each component in the nature itself has its own role. Each helping and developing one another to maintain a healthy eco-system in the midst of retaining its own individuality.

As an architecture student, we are required to view and take note of the effects and concepts of this unity in terms of concepts and relation between the natural and the artificial. In Taman Negara itself we can see many components which is in completely contrast to each other but yet attaining its purpose within the community.

But nature as community in architecture concept is how nature and its surroundings provide shelter and create spaces for those who live in it. Most issues about nature nowadays are the unoriginal nature due to the interferences of human being in its development, unless the human being himself can maintain nature as its original shape. In return of the good protection of human being to the nature then the nature can provide a good environment to the human being.

Problems and issues such as air pollution, water pollution, greenhouse effects, concrete jungle is all we here from authorities, but what we don't realize is the actual cause of all these destructions are humans. Inconsiderate human beings, but yet we still can complain and play the blame game. Not being bias to the construction industry, but they on of the core reasons for all these destructions. Research shows that in general the increase in the market for construction has definitely increased its fair share of pollution caused by a double.

We forget the fact that nature plays a huge part in our community. Without Mother Nature, we would live a more suffering and unhealthy life. Nature is the source of our existence. Mother Nature has been in existence for more than 10 billion years but we have only had our existence for only a few billion years, yet we conquer it as though we own its very existence.

The clearing of dense jungles are now replaced with concrete jungles, the very core of the construction industries; factories are now doubled in numbers to accommodate its demand, the construction of dams, oil and waste spillage from factories and the list goes on and on. People seldom blame themselves for these destruction, but yet has the nerve to complain.

There was ones a poem written about this destruction which goes;

“Complains, Complains, that’s all we here,

From dawn to dusk,

The haze we complain, the heat we complain,

But who are to be blamed,…….”

This whole poem can very well be clarified by many researches and observations done no matter where you are in the world.

We don’t need to be a Harvard graduate to realize what it’s done to the world, especially to the very luxurious, rich and dense natural surroundings.

The ice in the Antarctic is melting; the migration of birds has been disturbed along with its unnatural behaviors. As Malaysian, we very well know the terrible heat and irregular weather we are experiencing throughout the year. This is the key hint that nature has been disrupted in many ways

The consideration of human beings as a creature within nature which has no difference from others then human being should be the smartest among all. That’s why as the smartest within the nature and its surrounding environment, we should get back to the issues nature are facing right now such as vandalism or devastation of the jungle and forest as the largest population in nature. People being part of the nature in a community should as well take care of the environment instead of vandalizing it.

This issue is not always about vandalism within nature but sometimes also about the condition we face nowadays which is global warming. Of course it has strong relation with nature and environment. Because the some of the jungle were pretty much destroyed back then, especially tropical country like Indonesia which should has a lot of forests, for residential area, and also as the technology has developed back then. Global warming is mainly come from carbon monoxide gas which often came out from vehicle’s and factory machines’ residue. As the world keep on developing and people were more attached to machinery, then more CO gas are produced while forest getting lesser and lesser. This kind of imbalance is what I think causes the global warming.

Like Taman Negara for example, the government successfully creates a recreational park with the nature itself as the main attraction. And the government was able to build up resort in it without creating damage for the environment. It is a right action to do so; maintaining and even remake the environment to a safer and nicer place for tourism and educational purpose. Not only maintaining the jungle, but also the aborigines living around there. It was such a good example to show how nature is better when it has its components protected and well-maintained. Also not forgetting to mention the river and whatever within the national park, those were all which attracted tourists. So every component in the nature is better when act as a community and play their own role.

Nature is not only about jungle actually, as cities and skyscrapers are already built-up, then it's not ethical to demolish the beautiful architecture to get nature back to its original shape which is forest, jungle, lake or mountains.

The thing we can do best as future architects and young generation is by choosing the most eco-friendly material with lowest embodied energy and carbon emission for our buildings and spaces designs. And also consider on how to design the buildings without making the environment worse than now. The life cycle span of the materials is important too as it would be better if the building is long lasting.

These steps are easier said than done. In many cases, fresh graduates may have all this in their minds and many ideas to improve the world's eco-system, but they stop half way just to accommodate with their expectations.

As students in this field, we don't have to go half way across the world to find inspiration that involves nature, but we have one right here in our country. Ken Yeang is one of the few architects which have fulfilled his duty as an occupant and as an architect. He is very well known for his eco-architecture and eco-master plans. All his designs take into considerations, the effect it has on nature and its community.

All in all, nature is a very big community too large to be ruled by anyone but itself. In other words, without nature, there are no humans, without us the world will be a lifeless planet. As the wiser community, we have to work together to make this environment as beautiful and as rich as it was when it first started and let nature take its course.

Individual Reflective Essay

Nature holds the key to our aesthetics, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction. Taman Negara is one place where nature is at its best in Malaysia. It is the most extensive protected area of pristine, lowland, evergreen rainforest full of life which serves the main purpose; which is “to utilise the land within the park in perpetuity, for the propagation, protection and preservation of indigenous flora and fauna”



The wonderful trip that we had to Taman Negara has definitely left a huge mark in my heart, as it gave me a sense of unity and similarities of us as humans with nature. It is somewhat of an apparition, containing a great deal of surface value. To me, this reflects us as a whole, in a sense that in order to show people who we really are one has to experience and get to know a person well enough before knowing their true nature. This similarity is very well shown in nature where we have to go deep in to actually see the true beauty rather than its very plain façade.

I learnt so many valuable lessons during the trip, especially in terms of team work, exploration and realization. The night jungle walk definitely enhanced the view and importance of team work to all extents. This definitely brought the quote, “Individually we are one drop, but together we are the ocean” to a whole new level. Through this experience, I can say that not only I’ve found my true friends. It also brought out many traits, fears, abilities as well as attitude that were very surprising. Just as the natural yet complex surrounding, the need to go in deeper to see the finer things in life is something that I’ve learnt and will cherish and remember for the rest of my life.



A sense of everything has a purpose in life and existence also struck me. We saw many insect and bugs during our short walk and truthfully, I'm personally not that interested or in favour of insects in anyway. It was definitely an eye-opener to me to see how all these creatures come together as one and interact with each other, making the forest as lively as possible. Some you may see, not even being visually appealing but even the slightest movement can indicate their presence, just like the stick insect in Figure 1. To me, this reflects every single person living in this planet. We all try our very best to blend in and get accepted by everyone we know and don't know, suppressing and hiding what we can do just so that we don't seem different but in actual fact we are all different and unique in our own way and just a handful will take that wonderful opportunity to act and make a difference regardless of how small or young a person may be. Just like the tiny butterfly which flew right across me just when I thought the forest was just filled with insects.



All these events has got me thinking even though I personally act as the stick insect, I still have so much that I can show and give rather than just being confined to one particular thing. As an architecture student, this encouraged me to push myself further and to explore different styles of designs, no matter how tough it may get rather being confined to a style that I'm favourable and comfortable with.

The next day, we went for another jungle walk but this time during the day. This enabled me to view all that I've viewed the night before with a completely different perspective. This showed and realisation struck when all that I saw had a new and more defined look. Now, the trees and surrounding looked so much more alive and refreshing. the wonderful scent of nature and vibrant colours of nature came together as a whole, so contrasting but yet seemingly meant to be together. I wouldn't have it any other way. The hot bright sun shining above creating an environment fit to fry an egg, but having the larger crowns of the trees shading us throughout our journey gave me less to complain about. The contrasts between two very different elements were clearly portrayed throughout the whole walk.





This lesson can be further developed and analysed especially in my designing ideas in the future. Completely contrasting aspects that interrelates and helps each other to be utilised to its very extent and enhancing them to be at its best all the time.

A feel of life as a journey was very well felt especially during the refreshing canopy walk. After the long and tiring jungle walk, it was undeniably very satisfying and refreshing to go up and walk among the crown of the trees. From the moment I started walking on the thin yet seemingly dangerous plank, the view was without a doubt one of the best seen yet. The never ending walk which was meant to be short, took quite some time due to the time consumed just for the admiration of the breath taking view while having your heart pump like you just got chased by a mad dog. I didn't know where I was walking towards but I realised that it doesn't matter how you get somewhere, but the journey is what matters most. The memories and experiences during this journey are the important thing that is going to mould us as a person rather than the final destination. This life lesson is what I'm going to keep in mind throughout my studying life as an architecture student.

This also reminded me that from now on, the process of designing and the journey and how I got there has much more value than just my final product.

The visit to the Orang Asli Village definitely opened my eyes about sustainability and working with what we have. They built their houses and all their needed appliances just by using what is found around them. Unknowingly, this has created an impact in my mind that whatever design that I plan to do in the future to be more eco-friendly. Besides that, the skills shown by the natives were very interesting and fascinating and proved to me that hard work, perseverance and practice is something worthwhile for now and for the future.



All these experiences were such an eye-opener to me as a human being, as an architecture student and as a future architect. It made me think of ways as a future designer I can help reduce the problems Mother Nature is currently facing due to the selfishness and greed of the human kind, regardless of any separations. Even the smallest step of learning to recycle in our own homes is a start, and it's better than just being the spectator or the supervisor, as they say, 'Actions speak louder than words.'

As a future designer, I would most definitely learn and utilise recycled materials as a huge part of my design. Metals, glass, plastic, rubber, pulverised fuel ash, asphalt, and many more has high potential to be recycled in the production of newer materials rather than blindly demanding for a completely new set of materials. This not only reduces the production cost, but in the same time reduces the damage it does to the environment.

The concept of eco-building or also known as the green building is another step that I, as a future designer should live by. This concept, is one of the best ways to reduce the environmental impact construction has to Mother Nature. It may require close cooperation of the designing team, the architects, the engineers and the client at all project stages, but the end result will be the best in its class concerning the economy, utility, durability and comfort.

Besides that, a structure growing from nature, rather than just placed there is also another step. A building such as the Falling Waters by Frank Lloyd Wright is a fine example in which a connection of a structure and nature comes together as one. This unity abruptly reduces the intrusion effect and outlook of the building and enhances its specialities. This idealistic concept ensures the structure to have the right to be within its naturalist surrounding.



In conclusion, all the wonderful experiences and memories I had during this trip is very valuable. It not only was an eye opener, but it's a step for me to improve myself in so many aspects whether in daily life or in my whole life time. Hands down this trip has made me realise that white is not always white, or in other words not all what we see is what it seems, and that we have to view things in different perspectives to see a clearer picture and to find its true nature. This is how we can develop as an individual and as an architecture student as a whole.

Written by : **Meera Satheesh -0317062-**

Individual Reflective Essay

Humans are part of nature that none of us can deny. Not only human actually, every single component in the nature itself is included also. But it's a fact that humans affect pretty much on changes in nature. The worst, for example is how humans demolish a forest for residential area or recreational park. But things go different way if people maintain the original shape of the nature itself, like what happened in Taman Negara. By building stairs and recreational areas like Canopy Walk, Tahan Hide and maintaining the Orang Asli village, the government also can get tourism income while the national park itself is still well maintained.

As a student, this nature issues have quite a great concern for me. And all those activities we had back in Taman Negara; each has its own lesson for me. Night Jungle Walk for example, has raised our team work and awareness during the dark, our caring towards team members as the jungle condition during the night may be dangerous to any of us. Also, during the first night, it was also the time when we get to know our team members better as we stayed as a team for the next activities. The guide explained a lot to us, about the animals and plants inside the jungle, also how they live to survive in the jungle itself, how they camouflage, hunting and protecting themselves for their living. If applied in real life, I realized that the way people live nowadays have no much difference as how the animals live in the jungle. We need to survive through this society because not all people are trustworthy yet not all people are as bad as we thought. These are why we should protect ourselves and be selective on how to make a good friend and avoid an enemy.

As an architecture student specifically, the Night Jungle Walk activity taught me to appreciate nature how it is. Since we are building on nature, we need to appreciate and take care of it more. If nature is ruined, then there's no point of such a great architecture. From my point of view, the best architecture is the one which capture the beauty of nature and without ruining it. From the next activity, which was Jungle Trekking, we learn more about the nature and its surroundings, especially those we didn't get to see during the darks. A lot of fascinating creatures capture my eyes. Even they were just a little group of insects; their teamwork was something we humans should learn from. Not only animals, plants also did the same. The larger and stronger tree became support for the smaller plants. The nature itself provides a combination of air and humidity for the animals and plants to be able to live long, of course without humans' interference. Through the trip, I reflected to myself whether I did enough to the nature as architecture student or not. Whether I ever considering the sustainability and the impacts on the nature itself.

As for my goals and achievements in my studies, after this trip I get to gain some confidence at least and also how to overcome my fear, especially during the Canopy Walk activity. At first I thought it was just a short distance, but then I realized that there were still a long way to go and there was no way back. If I apply it in my real life, it is almost the same as how I am doing in my life. I tend not to take risk and play safe. But through the activity, I knew that I have to overcome that fear and start taking risk. The same goes with my projects during my year as an architecture student. I know that I have to explore more to get a nice design and won't be able to do so if I stuck in playing safe.

Last but not least, the visit to Orang Asli Village and water-activity. Through their primitive life, the aborigine people showed us that we still can survive as long as we know how to solve problems and make use of everything around us. I consider it the same as being creative. Yes, we need to be creative in designing and keep exploring everything surrounding us.

The conclusion is, we should really appreciate the nature and know that there are a lot of things to learn if we pay attention to it.

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