

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION IN MALAYSIA

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**Institute of
Landscape
Architects
Malaysia**
(ILAM)

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS MALAYSIA (ILAM)

Established in 1981, ILAM is the professional body overseeing the landscape architecture profession in Malaysia.

ILAM plays a significant role in the nation's landscape development in line with the National Landscape Policy.

We operate under the Malaysian Professional Centre (BIM) and is on par with other professional bodies such as the Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP), the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM), and the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM). With government support, ILAM remains committed to supporting national landscape policies through the implementation of programs and activities across Malaysia.

FACTS & FIGURES:

- 6 Local Universities offering Landscape Architecture Degree Programs
- Total of 1406 Members:
 - 571 Corporate Members
 - 778 Graduate Members
 - 57 Associate Members
- 135 registered consultancy firms
- 178 members working in government agencies



THE 2050 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AGENDA

A BLUEPRINT FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS CONCEIVED IN 2020

CURRENT ISSUES

With massive urbanisation and increase in the world population projected for the next 30 years, it is believed that there will be greater pollution, and we will experience an increase in climate change phenomena, escalating food security issues and a lack of space. Studies show the world population will increase to 9.7 billion from the current 7.5 billion, whilst the projected Malaysian population will reach 44 million by 2050, with more than 90% living in urban areas and cities.

Realising the issues and needs that we may face in the future, landscape architects can play a vital role in the country's development, with innovative planning and design providing better and more inspirational living environments for all.

OUR VISION FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS

In combatting the increased issues looming on the horizon, the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) is taking a proactive and bold step, to pave the direction for our professional practice, and to play a more influential role in national development.

Landscape Architecture Agenda 2050 (LAA2050) is a 30 years agenda, comprising our vision and 10 Strategic Focus Areas (SFA) required to drive the landscape architecture professional forwards. The initiative framework is in a developmental process until 2020, when it will be implemented in full force, leading to 2050.



VISION

Landscape as a base for wellbeing and inspired living, through innovative technology and sustainable values.



VALUE

Landscape architects need to be key players in planning and designing the built environment and take a more influential role to lead and inspire design solutions that will shape our future, for a better living environment for all.



SFA01 VISIBILITY

Landscape architects should be more vocal and engaging in political debate, collaborate and cooperate with related organisations in order to be relevant, influence decision makers and think big.



SFA02 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Landscape architects should safeguard and incorporate effective resource management in each design approach, primarily the fragile environmental components of water, air, food, waste, and natural and sensitive ecosystems, via conservation, preservation and/or rehabilitation efforts.



SFA03 EXPERIENCES & NEEDS

Landscape architectural design should emphasise on user experience, such as inclusion of local social and cultural values, community engagement and participation in the design process, promote local identity and image, and cater to the needs of the less fortunate via universal design.



SFA04 CONDUCTIVE LIVING

Over-population has caused a deterioration in the quality of life, hence, promoting conducive and inspiring living environments should be a key priority for landscape architects. Key strategies include creating more public spaces in urban areas, enhancing blue-green infrastructures (natural and semi-natural landscape elements), promoting food security via urban farming, combatting climate change through design, and promoting thermal comfort in every spatial design.



SFA05 SECURITY & SAFETY

Natural and human threats have escalated in the past decade and landscape architects should play a vital role in designing landscape spaces and places which respond to natural disaster phenomena. These include emergency preparedness, preventing crime via the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach, which focuses on preventing vandalism and non-state violence.



SFA06 ECONOMIC RETURN

Any form of future project should take sustainable economic value into consideration so as to ensure lifelong durability, generate economic returns for local businesses, cultivate positive socio-economic impact, promote green tourism and benefit the stakeholders at large.



SFA07 HUMAN CAPITAL ENHANCEMENT

The landscape architecture industry should focus on the development of leadership, increased productivity, promoting creativity, originality and skills, encouraging ethical competition, promote diversification and adaptability to changes and become an influential and versatile trend setter. To achieve this and to be significantly visible, the number of landscape architects should be increased.



SFA08 BEST PRACTICE

The practising landscape architecture firms should increase productivity through an organised structure which promotes high efficiency, enhanced best practice standards and quality control in delivering the services.



SFA09 EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Education and research fields should venture into the discovery of new ideas and philosophies, setting future directions, bridging academia and industry, promoting pragmatic solutions, and increasing involvement in international markets.



SFA10 TECHNOLOGY AND SYSTEM

Promote the landscape architecture industry Big Data (which incorporates the large volume of data – both structured and unstructured) and The IoT (the Internet of Things is the in-ter-networking of physical devices, vehicles, buildings, and other items, embedded with electronics, software, sensors, actuators, and network connectivity which enables these objects to collect and exchange data), application of augmented reality, tools and cutting edge technology in design.

The background features a series of overlapping, wavy, ribbon-like shapes in various shades of green, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors range from a light, muted green to a darker, more saturated green, with the darker tones appearing in the shadows of the waves.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

01_REGULATING THE PROFESSION



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES 01_REGULATING THE PROFESSION

THE LACK OF REGULATION

- Landscape architecture in Malaysia does not have legal, comprehensive, field-specific regulations that define and protect its scope, standards, and responsibilities.
- This absence of regulation limits the our formal recognition and can create challenges in establishing consistent quality control, ethics & competency standards for landscape architects.
- This is despite the fact that local authorities require formal authority submissions to be undertaken by ILAM Corporate Members and ILAM registered Landscape Architecture firms and to bear full liability.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES **01_REGULATING THE PROFESSION**

THE LACK OF REGULATION

- The submission process differs across different local authorities, leading to delays & inefficiencies.
- Inconsistent requirements can complicate approvals, compromise time and resources, and impact project timeline and quality of works.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

01_REGULATING THE PROFESSION

ENCROACHMENT BY OTHER PROFISSIONS

- Without clear regulations, a landscape architect's scope is often encroached upon by other disciplines such as civil engineering, architecture, arboriculture and urban planning.
- A dilution of the profession's contribution
- Causes overlapping responsibilities, limiting the industry's growth and hindering specialized expertise.
- A well-defined regulatory & legal framework will better protect the profession and establish a clear scope that differentiates landscape architecture from other fields.
- We are working towards that



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

02_NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

MLAA 2023 Project Of the Year
Gamuda Gardens
Rawang, Selangor
Landscape Architect: Walrus Design
Image Source: Gamuda Website



Precast Culvert Drain Installation in Malaysia
Image Source: SVC Tian Fung Trading Sdn Bhd Website

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES **02_NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS**

PREFERENCE FOR **CONVENTIONAL ENGINEERING**

- Tendency for authorities to still favour conventional engineered approaches over nature-based solutions
- Rapid discharge vs sponge cities
- Culvert systems, grassed swales & detention ponds over rain gardens, green infrastructure, and ecosystem restoration.
- Nature-based solutions: experimental or unproven, hence
- Resistance to innovative designs that harness ecological processes for environmental benefits.



Fort Cornwallis Historic Moat Phytoremediation Works
George Town World Heritage Site
Landscape Architect: Permata Green
Image Courtesy: Perunding YAA

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

02_NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

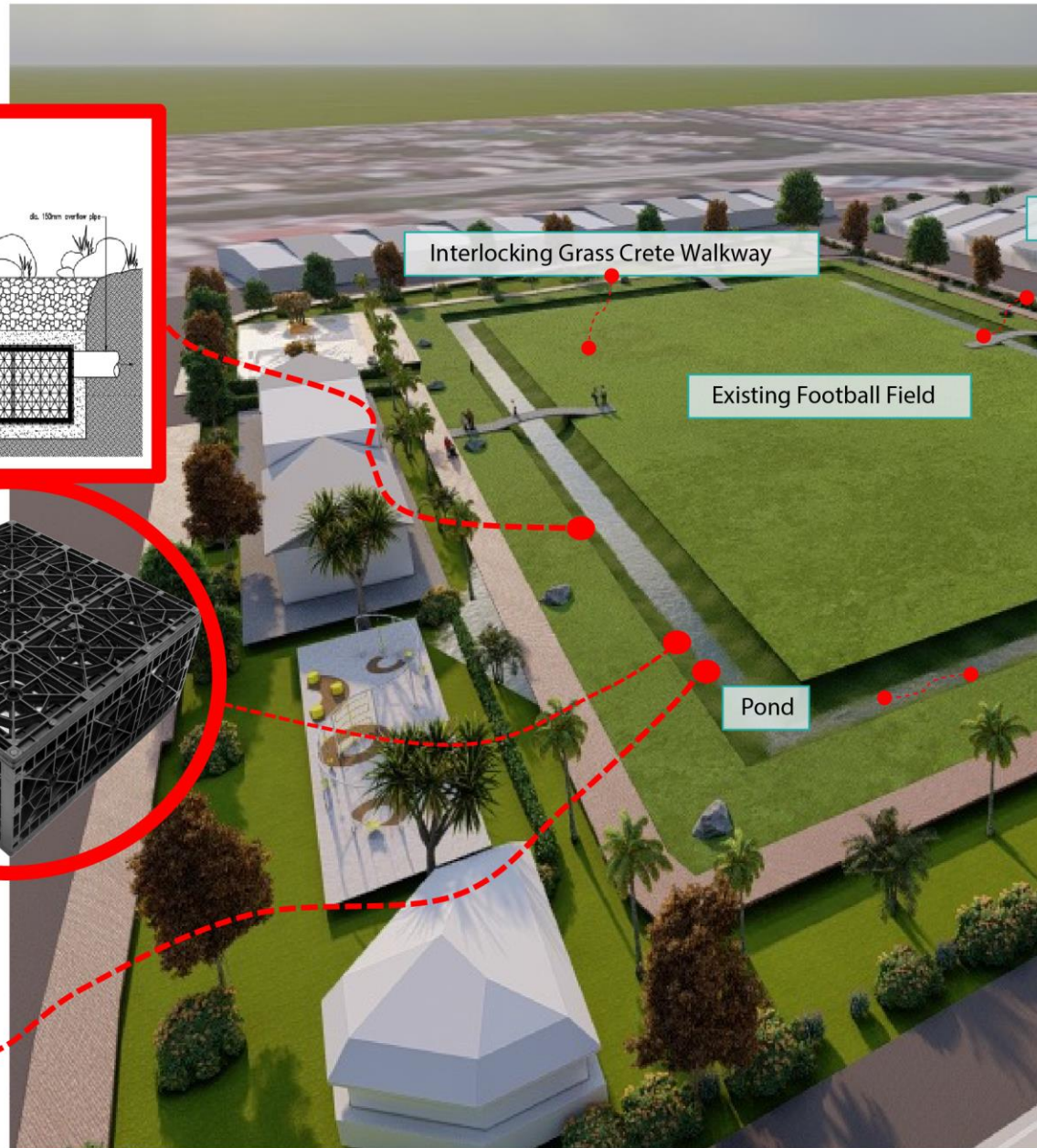
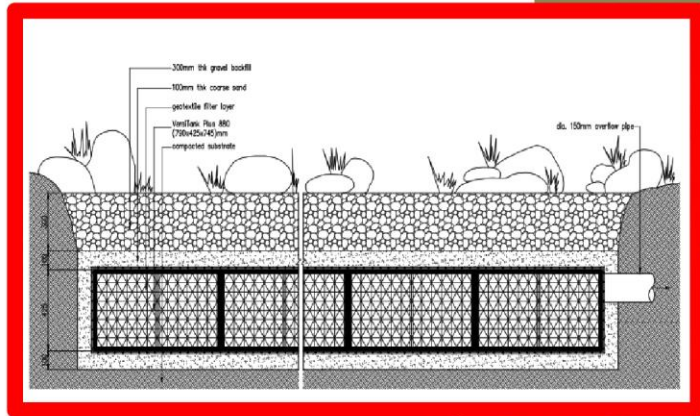
THE AFTERMATH: IMPACT ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

- Loss of potential for more sustainable and climate-resilient designs that can help mitigate floods, improve urban cooling, restore biodiversity, and enhance community well-being.
- Landscape architects are restricted or lose out on doing their part in contributing to a healthier and more resilient urban environment.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES 02_NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

THE WAY FORWARD: ADVOCACY & EDUCATION

- To raise awareness among decision-makers about the long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits of nature-based solutions.
- By increasing understanding and acceptance of these solutions, Malaysia can align its development with sustainable global practices and enhance landscape architecture's contributions to urban and environmental resilience.
- A gradual paradigm shift in authorities' mindset, namely the Department of Irrigation & Drainage.



**Penang Nature-Based Climate Adaptation Programme
Parit Mox Upstream Retention Pond & Infiltration Wells, Sungai Keluang, Penang
Department of Drainage & Irrigation, Malaysia**

The background features a series of overlapping, wavy, three-dimensional green shapes that create a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from a light, muted green to a darker, more saturated green, with soft shadows and highlights that give the shapes a fluid, organic appearance. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on geometric forms and color gradients.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

03_FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES 03_FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS

THE INCREASING PRESENCE OF FOREIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS OPERATING IN MALAYSIA

- A tendency for select clients to favour the engagement of foreign landscape architects, namely in the conceptual and design development stage
- A half full or half empty glass?
Depending on who you ask
- Reduced opportunities for local practitioners to lead or shape large-scale projects.
- Competition for local firms and limited roles in high-profile development.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES 03_FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS

THE INCREASING PRESENCE OF FOREIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS OPERATING IN MALAYSIA: CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY?

- Again, depends on who you ask
- A symbiotic working opportunity
- Exchange of knowledge
- Mutual kinship, camaraderie, trust

**“Sharing the Local Knowledge”
Permata Green (Malaysia) &
PLA (Thailand)**



**FRUITS OF THE HARVEST:
CELEBRATING THE COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT**

**AILA 2024
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AWARDS
NATIONAL AWARDS
INTERNATIONAL CATEGORY**

**TUN RAZAK EXCHANGE CITY PARK
KUALA LUMPUR**

OCULUS & PENTAGO



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES **03_FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS**

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER WAY ROUND?

- While foreign professionals are frequently sought-after and engaged in Malaysia;
- Malaysian landscape architects have limited mutual opportunities to work on projects abroad
- Limitation of exposure to diverse methodologies and global standards and best practices.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

03_FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS

THE WAY FORWARD: PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Increased collaboration, partnerships & knowledge exchange with landscape architecture bodies in other countries can help create more balanced opportunities.
- Encouraging cross-border work could elevate the profession's standing in Malaysia and expand the country's influence in the field of landscape architecture globally.