

**SEMINAR ON 'BUILDING INDUSTRY: AFTER RECESSION'  
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**TITLED: THE NEED FOR A MORE ETHICAL DESIGN BY  
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A. What are the residues of the last recession in particular the building industry and to Architecture?

- left over and uncompleted projects;
- scores of 'cheated' hopeful owners – absconded developers;
- unhappy and discontented house owners;  
with the quality of workmanship and finishes of their houses;
- too many low-cost housing and shophouses, emphasis being an  
'cheap' and 'nasty' – quality is not any importance.
- There were also other scams – not related to the building  
industry.

B. Ethical design?

- Ethical? What does it mean?
- Define ethical: "having to do with morals or ethics" and  
"ethics being the science of morals; the principles of morality;  
the rules of conduct and behaviour"

C. In the building industry the *key players* are:

- Developer;
- Professionals;
- Contractors;
- The Local Authorities;

1. Developer – the 'money man' – financier  
-not directly involved in the actual construction but is  
instrumental in setting Good or bad, high or low?

Do not need nor have a code of ethics – only business code –  
being max. profit.

2. Professionals – Architects) Have code ethics and liabilities and  
Engineers) responsibilities for their designs  
Quantity Surveyors) No liabilities attached to  
Project Managers) their profession

- a) Architects and Engineers are bound by Code of Ethics for responsibility of their work.
  - b) Quantity Surveyors do not have such responsibilities etc. attached e.g. if final tendered price is more than estimates provided – just too bad there is no redress for the suffered party.
  - c) Project Manager also does not have any such responsibilities. He is the ‘pusher’; he pushes the project to get it on rail and on time. Should anything goes wrong – again like the Quantity Surveyor – no responsibilities and redress for the suffered party. As for responsibilities he also ‘pushes’ all blames to the Architect, if not him the Engineer or even the Quantity Surveyor.
3. Contractors – most important link in the building industry. Yet the weakest.
- i) No code of ethics;
  - ii) No government control or registration;
  - iii) No recognized qualification for registration;
  - iv) Anyone can be a contractor;
  - v) Very often no skill, no training and no financial substance;
  - vi) No code of professional conduct;
  - vii) Only governed by the Common Law;

#### 4. The Local Authorities

- Government servants in the public service must play their role towards development in a more constructive manner. They have a code of ethics which is bound to the “Rukunegara”
- How are their actions construed as non-ethical by:-
  - A) non-helpful to developers;
  - B) not expedient in vetting plans;
  - C) having too many cumbersome rules and bye-laws;
  - D) not well organized in their systems;
  - E) not being direct about their requirements;

These will delay projects and pushes up the holding cost of the development. This cost will be passed on to the house buyers, or if not the quality will be lowered in order to maintain competitiveness.

- D. In view of item C above, can there really be the utopian concept of an ethical design? All parties are different and divergent, all having different objectives and aspirations.

Before ethical values could permeate into the Malaysian building industry, the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Public Works must bring all parties in the construction industry into line.

- i) There must be controls and checks on Developers. They must have the means – financially and technically to qualify for developers’ status.
- ii) There must be better control and registration of Contractors.
  - a) There must be more support given to the MBA (Master Builder Association) to control, check and register contractors. They must have some basic technical skills to qualify as a Master Builder.
  - b) Government to provide more technical training for the building industry e.g. carpenters, concretors, bricklayers, plumbers, electrician etc. and also to license only those who are qualified and properly examined regularly.
- iii) Approving authorities. The Ministry of Local Government and Housing must employ more qualified personnel into administration.
  - 1) Currently most local councils do not have the luxury of an architect to check plans submitted by architects. Most are being done by Engineers. This must be corrected.
  - 2) Technicians must be more experienced, competent and well versed to make difficult decisions, and decisions made must be backed by sensibilities and not ‘according to rules’ that are sometimes too outdated.

## Conclusion

### Code of Ethics/Quality and Pride

Malaysians must make quality and take pride in what we are; what we have; what we are capable of; what is rightly ours to protect; and what we should not squander away in carelessness. And everyone in the building industry must collectively, as a learned group of people

- educate the public;
- demonstrate to the people by our deeds;
- set good examples; and
- to support our national aspiration towards what quality and pride means. In support of:-

### **What we are:**

The architect must lead the building industry towards quality of environment for our Malaysians, towards quality built-environment for our citizens to ensure the future is protected for our children and their children; and that Malaysia which embraces so many diversified groups will become a basis for wealthy and enriched nation.

### **What we have:**

The Architect must lead to enlighten other professional groups, the people in authority and the public of the wealth of our natural environment, our rich cultural heritage within our built environment, our natural resources and the need to preserve them for our future.

### **What we are capable of;**

We need to package and market our skills to the end-user that a “Made in Malaysia” product must be better for use in Malaysia than an imported product which has not taken cultural environmental, climatic and local skills into considerations. After all the “Made in Malaysia” Proton cars would not have been a success storey if our Government had not supported it.

### **What is rightly ours to protect:**

Our civilization is but only a very fragile veneer that can be easily erased or scratched off. Architecture is not simply a question of building four walls and a roof over your head. It goes deeper than that. It involves:

Preserving culture;  
Knowing history;  
Understanding climate;  
Choice of building materials;  
Appreciate our environment; and  
Valuing the human-element.

These are the values that architects must protect for the Malaysian way of life.

### **What we should not squander away in carelessness:**

In too many developments the first thing done is to layout the plan in a ‘grid-fashion’ and than the consultants will ‘platform’ the slopes. On site the trees are fell; the top-soil is bulldozed and in together with the poor quality earth, removed; the slopes cut and valleys filled in; natural water-course diverted; etc; these are part of our natural heritage, our environment, our source of life, being destroyed. Progress & Development must go on, but in the process harmony must be maintained and architects must be in the forefront to crusade the cause of ethical design for Malaysians.

After recession Malaysia needs Progress & Development, but Progress & Development must be done at a price, which do not mean destroying our environment whereby the quality of life deteriorates. If that is the price Malaysians must pay for Progress & Development something is wrong. As

Architects, we must respect what nature has provided, to complement and to treasure. Architects after all create built environment for humans; and the keywords are 'human' and 'environment'. Without both, there can be no architecture.

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