Tentative Title

A Model for Harmonious Integration: Enhancing Place Making through Agricultural Urbanism in Bhutanese Settlements

Dhrubaraj Sharma, PhD Candidate, QUT, Australia

Bhutan is a small Buddhist nation in the Himalayas where age-old folk religion and agrarian have lived in harmony for centuries. Its traditional settlements are built around the strengths of local architecture, organically developed public spaces and agricultural practices. These religious and agricultural concepts find expressions in traditional settlements and help in making the special connection between communities and the places they share (placemaking). However, things began to change since the urbanization began at the beginning of the 21st century and today it is a rapidly urbanizing nation.

The World Bank (2015) reported that Bhutan’s rate of urbanization was the highest in South Asia. This trend is diluting the cultural strengths and of the age-old agrarian settlements that nurtured the special connection between the communities and the places. Rapid urbanization leading the loss of agricultural land, erosion of public spaces and loss of traditional food habits are some of the main challenges today as there are no strategies and to address them.

This study aims to develop a theoretical model to enhance placemaking in Bhutanese settlements by integrating urban design with the socio-cultural strengths of the agrarian settlements and contemporary urban farming concepts. To achieve this, it will analyse the public space and settlement patterns in selected areas. It will study the changes in food culture amongst the communities and study the feasibility of integrating modern urban agricultural practices into urban design strategies.

The model will guide future urban policy and settlement planning in Bhutan and contribute the Comprehensive National Development Plan (CNDP) for Bhutan 2030 and Bhutan Vision 2045 document. It will also help to realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 to make cities inclusive and sustainable and the aim of the QUT Design Lab to tackle the emerging challenges through design-led research.

Principal Supervisor: Dr Mirko Guaralda
Associate Supervisors: Dr Jane Turner, Aspro Severine Marere

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