

WUF9: Micro Homes And Communal Living Bring ‘Kampung Spirit’ Back To City Living

The New Urban Agenda and leaders at the World Urban Forum say that the future of city living is micro housing where 250-400 square feet and a place at the communal table. This is what is meant by the buzz-word ‘densification’. □ TN Editor

The trend for communal living and micro housing that is appearing in cities worldwide is not just for millennials or singles anymore.

Two full-scale prototypes of the 21st-century housing concept which opened to the public here today at the World Urban Forum (WUF9) Village drew the attention of families and retirees too.

“When we talk about communal living, we would have single occupancy in mind because families would not have much time to interact with

others, and we felt it would be more accepted by the younger generation.

“However, we did receive enquiries from older couples as well as they are open to the concept of creating a community,” Think City Sdn Bhd programme manager Joanne Mun told reporters at the installation on Medan Pasar here.

Opened to the public for the first time at 10am today, Mun said about 200 visitors had dropped by to see the micro housing installations.

“It is encouraging to see the interest shown by the public as we had received many positive feedback. We would like to see more people come over to give their input,” she said.

She added the shared-living concept proposed by the Kuala Lumpur City Council (DBKL) and Think City aims to bring back the “kampung spirit” to the city, where members of the community are always open to helping each other out.

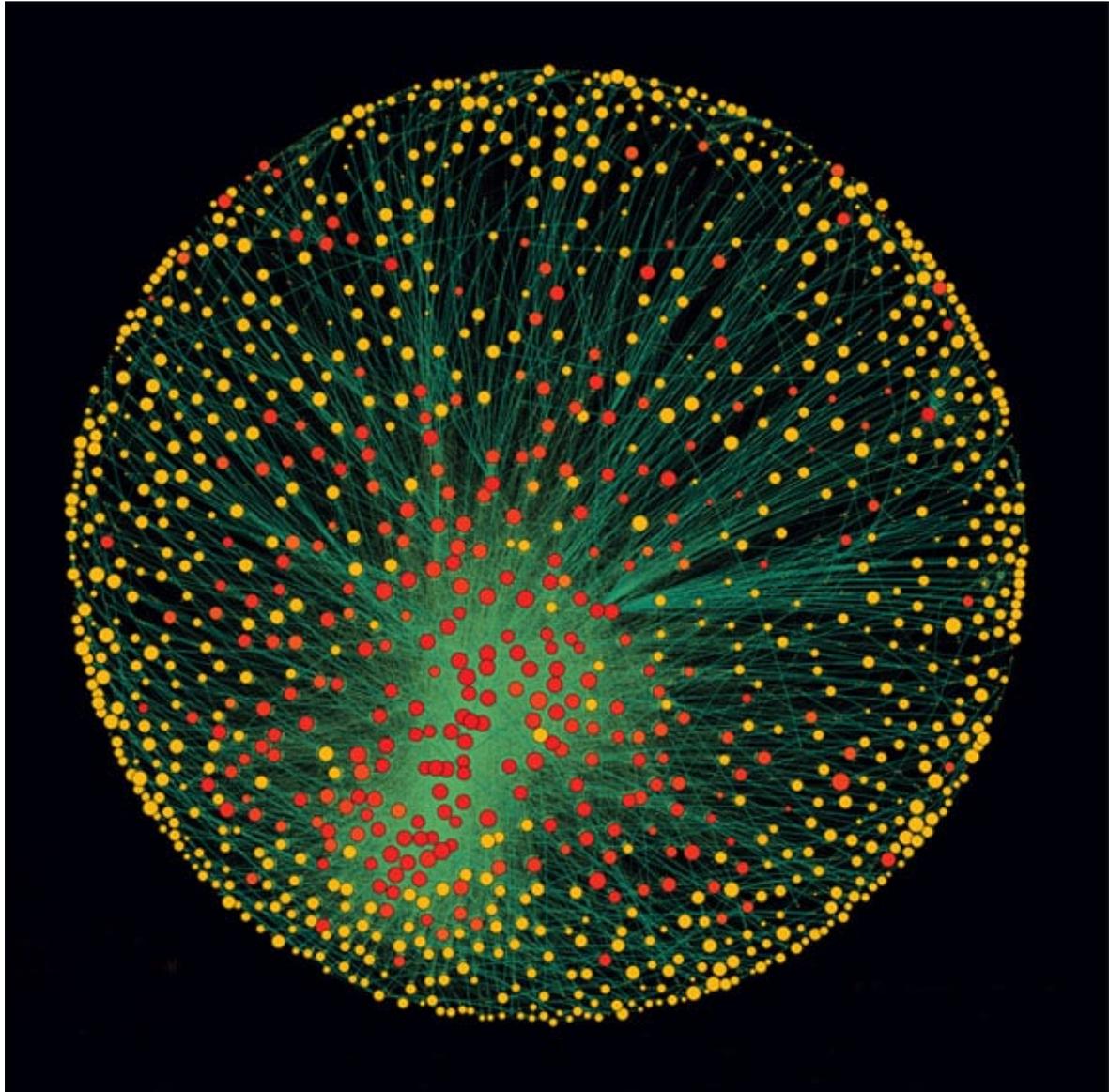
“City life is very fast-paced and people are usually too busy, which reflects less interaction between neighbours.

“Apart from creating a community, this concept is also to look into adaptive use of vacant buildings. In the last three years alone, we have seen many big corporations and small businesses moving out of the city, leaving many commercial spaces vacant,” she said.

Mun said the two micro houses on display, shortlisted from six design applications, were selected based on 10 different criteria.

“The design had gone through a fair process and was reviewed by a panel. Some of the criteria that was looked into include affordability, buildability, efficiency, layout, and to be able to address two key points — ability to be installed and uninstalled, as well as a standalone pavilion exhibition.

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Flashback: The Capitalist Network That Runs The World

This 2011 study examined connections between 43,000 transnational corporations and its conclusion is that a relatively small group of companies control just about everything. This is where the seat of Technocratic strategy can be found. □ TN Editor

As protests against financial power sweep the world this week, science may have confirmed the protesters' worst fears. An analysis of the relationships between 43,000 transnational corporations has identified a

relatively small group of companies, mainly banks, with disproportionate power over the global economy.

The study's assumptions have attracted some criticism, but complex systems analysts contacted by New Scientist say it is a unique effort to untangle control in the global economy. Pushing the analysis further, they say, could help to identify ways of making global capitalism more stable.

The idea that a few bankers control a large chunk of the global economy might not seem like news to New York's Occupy Wall Street movement and protesters elsewhere (see photo). But the study, by a trio of complex systems theorists at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, is the first to go beyond ideology to empirically identify such a network of power. It combines the mathematics long used to model natural systems with comprehensive corporate data to map ownership among the world's transnational corporations (TNCs).

"Reality is so complex, we must move away from dogma, whether it's conspiracy theories or free-market," says James Glattfelder. "Our analysis is reality-based."

Previous studies have found that a few TNCs own large chunks of the world's economy, but they included only a limited number of companies and omitted indirect ownerships, so could not say how this affected the global economy - whether it made it more or less stable, for instance.

The Zurich team can. From Orbis 2007, a database listing 37 million companies and investors worldwide, they pulled out all 43,060 TNCs and the share ownerships linking them. Then they constructed a model of which companies controlled others through shareholding networks, coupled with each company's operating revenues, to map the structure of economic power.

The work, to be published in PLoS One, revealed a core of 1318 companies with interlocking ownerships (see image). Each of the 1318 had ties to two or more other companies, and on average they were connected to 20. What's more, although they represented 20 per cent of global operating revenues, the 1318 appeared to collectively own

through their shares the majority of the world's large blue chip and manufacturing firms - the "real" economy - representing a further 60 per cent of global revenues.

When the team further untangled the web of ownership, it found much of it tracked back to a "super-entity" of 147 even more tightly knit companies - all of their ownership was held by other members of the super-entity - that controlled 40 per cent of the total wealth in the network. "In effect, less than 1 per cent of the companies were able to control 40 per cent of the entire network," says Glattfelder. Most were financial institutions. The top 20 included Barclays Bank, JPMorgan Chase & Co, and The Goldman Sachs Group.

John Driffill of the University of London, a macroeconomics expert, says the value of the analysis is not just to see if a small number of people controls the global economy, but rather its insights into economic stability.

Concentration of power is not good or bad in itself, says the Zurich team, but the core's tight interconnections could be. As the world learned in 2008, such networks are unstable. "If one [company] suffers distress," says Glattfelder, "this propagates."

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Sharif: Managed Cities Are Key To Driving Sustainable Development

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, a Muslim Technocrat, is now the head of UN-Habitat and is chairwoman of the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur. As such, she is now in charge of the UN's New Urban Agenda that was produced at Habitat-III. □ TN Editor

The head of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) said on Wednesday that a week-long conference on sustainable urban development that kicked off Wednesday in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, will open a “global conversation about our cities and human settlements.”

“With its genuine openness and inclusive nature, the World Urban Forum (WUF9) is unique on the United Nations conference circuit,” said Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat in her remarks to the opening of the Forum, which runs through Saturday, 13

January.

“It is a chance for stakeholders from all over the world - from ministers, local government and urban planners, to civil society groups, the private sector, academia and the media - to contribute to the global conversation about our cities and human settlements,” she added.

Ms. Sharif called WUF9 a platform where people from all walks of life share their experience of finding homes, jobs and lives in urban spaces around the world and a chance for some of the world’s most marginalized to highlight their experiences in being denied some of the advantages cities pose.

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For current and future partners, the UN-Habitat chief saw the Forum as an opportunity to showcase the innovative ideas and solutions to challenges being confronted in urban and rural human settlements - and to learn from experts in the field.

Ms. Sharif maintained that WUF9 is “the ideal platform to debate the contribution that positive urban development makes to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 11, and the New Urban Agenda,” which was adopted in 2016 by the UN conference known as Habitat III.

Recent debates and studies have indeed acknowledged that sustainable urbanization is an essential tool for addressing the global challenges of poverty, exclusion, conflict and climate change.

“The New Urban Agenda comes at a critical moment, when for the first time in history over half of the world’s population is residing in cities,” she said, which, if planned and managed well, can be “the main tool for sustainable development and a solution to many of the challenges our planet is facing today.”

WUF9 is the first major milestone after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, which lays out the vision for future cities based on the science of urban development providing tools in crucial areas.

Barely three weeks into her tenure as the UN-Habitat chief, Ms. Sharif said it is “an honour and a privilege” that the Forum, which is held every two years in different parts of the world, was being hosted in her native Malaysia, saying “Kuala Lumpur will have the chance to showcase some of its own urban innovations.”

She concluded her statement with the assertion that she looked forward to joining “the global conversation on promoting socially, economically and environmentally sustainable cities for all.”

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