

DESIGN + BUILD

CAMP 2015

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The Gathering Place



'The Gathering Place' is a live design project that combines forest trekking, with sustainable design and collaboration with one of Borneo's most interesting tribes.

Bukit Gumantung, the highest hill in the northern region of Kudat, Sabah, is cloaked in about 350-400 hectares of primary rainforest-an island in a landscape of cultivation. It is the water catchment for a group of 10 villages of indigenous people of the Rungus tribe. These villages have been conserving this forest for generations and have fascinating stories to tell about the forests history. As the highest point of their landscape it became the resting place of forest spirits and ancestors. No one from these communities has ever hunted in this forest, in fact they rarely went there at all, preferring to leave the spirits undisturbed.

However, it has long been understood that this hill is where the rivers and water comes from. Bukit Gumantung overlooks the sea, and a unique microclimate is created as the warm air from the South China Sea rises quickly over the hill, meeting colder thermals and condensing. In a region that is the driest in Sabah, that makes this forest incredibly

important.

There are 2 secondary schools and about 5 primary schools surrounding the hill, the students and teachers regularly climb the hill to learn about the nature there. The 10 villages that hug the foot of the hill have formed a committee to look after the conservation of Bukit Gumantung. The village chief from each village is actively involved.

Above: Bukit Gumantung; credit: Mr. S.N. Sabala

Below: Kudat is at the northern tip of the island of Borneo



With the objective of protecting the forest, making it financially self-sustaining, and making sure that ethno-botanical knowledge is passed onto their children, the 10 communities surrounding Bukit Gumantung are trying to establish a small trekking camp on the top of the hill. They have raised a small budget of MYR 20,000 (about US 5,400) for construction materials and are sourcing hardwood timber from fallen forest trees. They have asked Arkitrek to help the project by recruiting a team to design and build the camp.

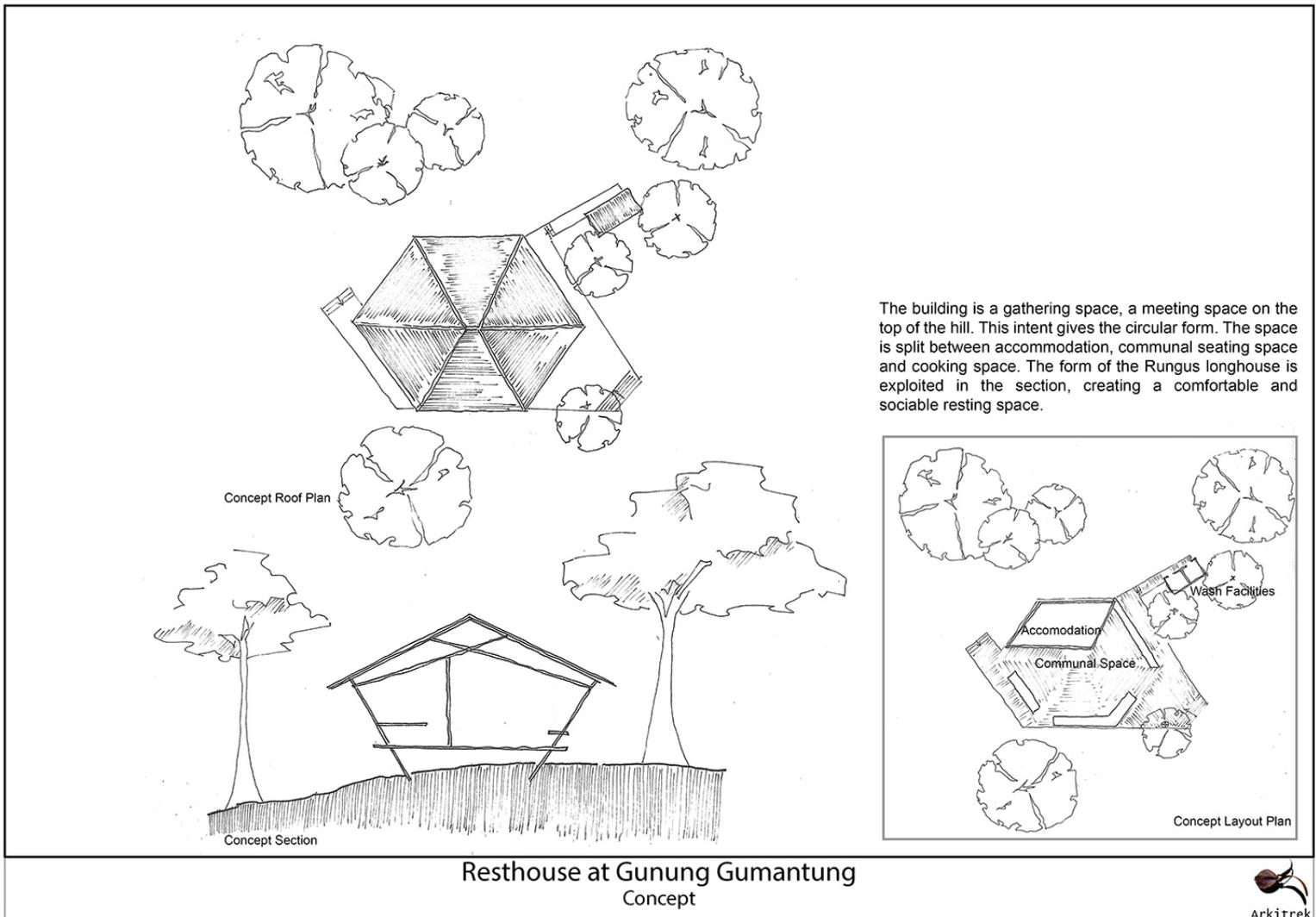
A circular building has been proposed as a driving concept. The circle is a gathering space and has a sense of collective security. In the local mythology, circles leave no corners for spirits to lurk. Symbolically, the circle sits at the centre of all the pathways leading to each of the 10 villages.

However, the circle is not a very economic use of

space. The building can only be around 40m², and needs to be a sleeping place for 20 people, so the circular concept needs to be questioned, analysed and tested. During the day, the space will be used for bushcraft activities. There should also be a fire pit, for the site is quite high and gets cold at night. There will be a small toilet and water tank fed by rainwater harvesting. The design will be replicated as the project expands.

In this 10-week live design project, participants will learn about sustainable design in the rainforest environment, about sourcing sustainable materials and about designing for rural communities.

Below: The concept as discussed with the Committee of Bukit Gumantung



Rungus

The Rungus tribe is based in the Kudat region, at the north of Sabah. They have a rich culture and are famous for their warm hospitality that generally involves sharing rice wine with guests.

Rungus villages are based in longhouses, where each family lives in a room, on a street that is an internal corridor. On the opposite side of the street is a collective area for relaxing, holding discussions, and doing work, such as weaving. This communal lifestyle was initiated for defensive reasons, but has shaped a complex language system. Rungus people have 5 different dialects and each has 3 levels of difficulty. In the most basic language, that is learnt as children, there are over 200 words for chicken. The 2nd language is the poetic language and is used to entertain or to discuss more

sensitive subjects. The 3rd language a ritual language used by the shamen (babolizan) in ceremonies.



Traditionally Rungus communities were animist and these traditions still influence their lives. The babolizan are always women and are revered in the community. They look after the spiritual domain of village life, including all of the important ceremonies. The men look after the physical world domain, leading the Native law courts, which still has influence today under Sabah's state system.

Above: This old lady makes intricate bead work that the Rungus culture is famous for.

Left: The Kudat Peninsula with the approximate location of Bukit Gumantung highlighted in green.

Below: A Rungus longhouse, now adapted as a tourist accommodation.



Programme Details

Set in the enchanting rainforests and exotic coral islands of Borneo, the Arkitrek Camp is an exciting new look at architectural education that builds on years of experience of hands-on learning. Participants are immersed in diverse tropical environments and asked to design and build beautiful, practical and sustainable buildings.

An Arkitrek Live Design programme aims to:

- Better align architects with the construction industry.
- Promote positive environmental and social impacts through the resource intensive process of procuring a building.

The Programme

Arkitrek is a peer-led learning experience, not a master-class, and all design proposals will be generated by the group. Qualified architects and engineers will facilitate, guiding the team through the entire building procurement process from generation of design concepts, through construction planning to the build itself.

The team will take responsibility for meeting the requirements of the client, other stakeholders and building users. Day to day management of the team will be led by experienced designers / builders. These leaders will assume responsibility for managing health & safety risks and will keep the team on track during the demanding programme.

Induction Week

Week 1 will be off-site and include welcome, team-building, tours, architectural studies and training sessions in locally relevant construction techniques, and environmental and social considerations for working in Sabah.

Planning & Preparation

Weeks 2 and 3 will involve further training, brief writing, client consultations, surveying and both group and individual design workshops. Each participant will be expected to prepare and deliver at least one training module in an area where they



Arkitrek

have skill and experience. This stage will culminate with construction sequencing and logistical planning for the build.

Build

The heart of the program and where you see your designs become reality. You will be up against a very tight deadline and will work hard every day. You will learn to depend on your team mates and the skilled local craftsmen who are working alongside you. During the time spent on site, the accommodation will be in dormitories that are fairly basic. The toilets and showers may be different from what you're used to, and the food will be local cooking; lots of rice and noodles dishes. Halfway through the build there will be a long weekend to go and explore the nearby beaches, which are some of the most beautiful beaches in Sabah.



Exhibition

After completion of the build the group will return to the Arkitrek office in Kota Kinabalu where there will be as-built drawings to finish, photos to edit and reports to prepare. Every arkitrekker will be asked reflect on the process, making the experience relevant to the rest of their career. The final event of the Arkitrek design + build program is the public exhibition for which each arkitrekker will contribute a piece of work. The exhibition opening will be a great celebration of all or your achievements.

