MANGROVE WETLANDS
Can it be considered as suitable for expanding housing areas?

by

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ABSTRACT

Mangrove houses - structures that are made from DEAD mangrove woods. Will it be better to build structures with LIVING mangrove trees as our habitat? Mangroves support numerous types of life forms, such as crabs, shellfish, bivalves, shrimps, fishes, migratory birds, insects, different species of trees etc. Is it possible for us human to live WITHIN mangrove forests as other animals do, or to bring mangroves into our daily living environment? Mangrove forests are a valuable but threatened resource. They are often considered as “useless” and “wastelands” in terms of their direct economical value, which results in complete demolition of the mangrove swamps in order to provide land for expansion of urban housing.

The term “mangroves” has different meanings and values to different people. Fisheries biologist prefers to limit cutting because the trees support the fisheries nearby while foresters are concerned with the sustainable harvest of valuable trees. The agriculturist or developer views mangroves as potential new land to be converted into rice field, coconut plantation, fishpond or building site. Even the artisanal fishermen, who appreciate the true value of this resource, are in many places over exploiting and degrading it due to population pressure and the absence of controls on access. What do they mean to us, as architects?

Despite the fact that many developments are now being built next to mangroves so as to benefit from the pleasant natural environment, by fencing up the mangrove swamps or leaving a buffer zone in between the two, it is too “superficial”. This dissertation aims at looking into possible ways of integrating mangroves into our living space, be it as living spaces, shopping centers or places for recreation, and how we can bring this natural resource into our daily lives.

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