



INWASCON

ISSN: 2710-5873 (Online)

CODEN: ITMNBH



## RESEARCH REVIEW

## WHEN A TOWER VANISHES AND REAPPEARS IN EVER-CHANGING CLOUDS: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON MOTHER NATURE, RESILIENCE, AND HOPE

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

## Article History:

Received 12 August 2025  
 Revised 22 September 2025  
 Accepted 28 October 2025  
 Available online 01 December 2025

## ABSTRACT

On 4 September 2025 a 7-minute sequence in Kuala Lumpur saw the Kuala Lumpur (KL) Tower slip behind fast moving cloud and reappear within minutes. This autoethnographic reflection uses the event to read mother nature's volatility through resilience and hope. Drawing on research on mother nature exposure, cultural and community accounts of resilience, and higher education models of hope, this paper synthesizes observation with scholarship. The insights of this reflection are: (1) perception is contingent; the tower never vanished, my view was occluded, suggesting that crises may be transient veils; (2) resilience is more than bouncing back; it is adaptive, relational, and culturally situated, cultivated by acceptance, community support, and situated practices; (3) hope is dynamic, coupling goals, agency, and pathways that can be recomposed under constraint. The implications are: educators can scaffold reflective encounters with nearby mother nature to support student well-being and perseverance; urban planners can pair mother nature based solutions with inclusive engagement to deepen social legitimacy and readiness for extremes; policymakers should design for redundancy and multiple response pathways. The vignette demonstrates how ordinary weather can serve as a laboratory for meaning making, connecting sky, city, and self. This note closes by arguing that noticing such moments is a teachable habit that strengthens both individual and urban resilience today, all due to the power of mother nature.

## KEYWORDS

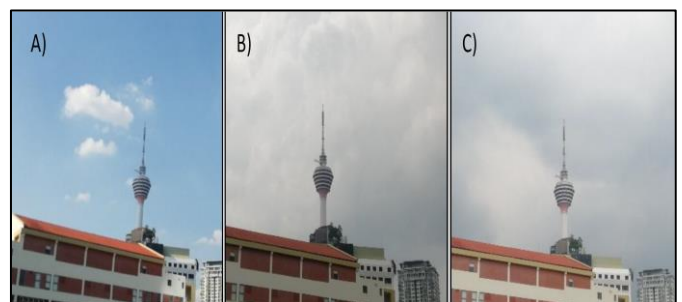
Kuala Lumpur Tower; nature exposure; psychological resilience; hope; urban resilience.

### 1. INTRODUCTION: A CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH THE CLOUDS

Late one afternoon in Kuala Lumpur (KL) I followed a familiar routine, parking at the Malaysian Basketball Association's car park while waiting for my daughter from school. From the upper levels the skyline opened like a stage set. The Maybank Tower. The Petronas Twin Towers, and the KL Tower (Figure 1). And the KL Tower that always anchors my gaze (Figure 2).

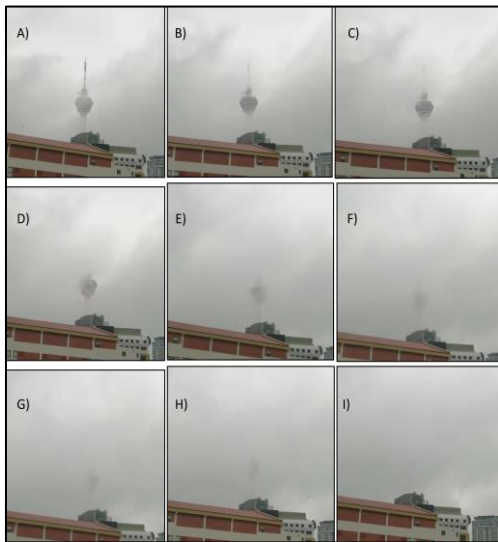


**Figure 1:** The three main landmarks in Kuala Lumpur, a) Maybank Tower, b) Kuala Lumpur Tower, and c) KLCC Petronas Twin Tower, on 16 June 2025. The author used his own handphone to take these photos without the use of any AI apps to fine-tuned or whatsoever to remain the authenticity of the photos.



**Figure 2:** Perfect views (A-C) of the KL Tower on a) a clear sky on 5.04PM on 22 August 2025, b) a cloudy sky on 3.49PM on 3 September 2025, and c) on a semi-cloudy sky on 3.45PM on 18 August 2025. The author used his own handphone to take these photos without the use of any AI apps to fine-tuned or whatsoever to remain the authenticity of the photos.

On 4 September 2025, between 4:56 p.m. and 5:03 p.m., that 421 meter tower slipped behind a moving bank of cloud (Figure 3) and then returned as if the city had taken a breath and exhaled (Figure 4). The KL Tower is an iconic telecommunications structure with a revolving restaurant, which made its sudden invisibility feel even more astonishing. In our equatorial climate the heat, humidity, and monsoon bursts are constant companions, and annual rainfall often exceeds 2000 mL. In recent years the pattern has grown more irregular as warmer seas fuel swings between very wet and very dry periods, bringing both floods and droughts. Perhaps that volatility is why a single cloud could erase concrete from view for a few minutes. I was fortunate to be present enough to notice and to lift my phone. The moment was brief, yet it lingers as a quiet lesson in how little we control and how much we can learn when the sky decides to speak.

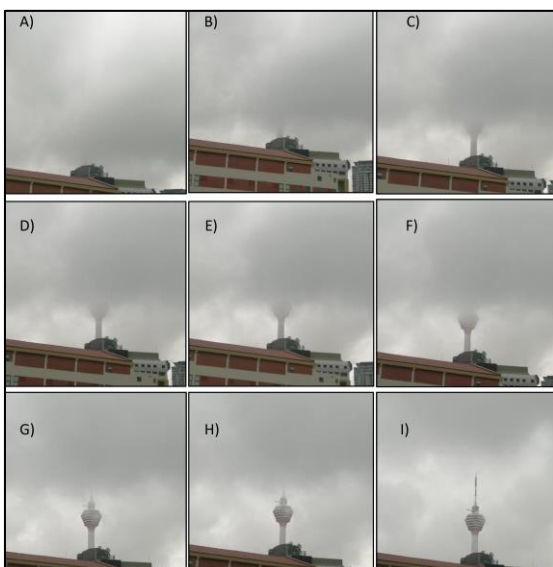


**Figure 3:** Disappearing of KL Tower, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4 September 2025.

Note: Nine consecutive frames (A–I) captured from the first floor of the Malaysian Basketball Association car park, Jalan Hang Jebat, between 4:56 and 4:58 p.m. (Asia/Kuala\_Lumpur). Images were taken handheld with a smartphone; no filters, edits, or AI-based enhancements were applied. Only panel arrangement, minimal cropping, and thin borders were added for clarity. The school roofline and adjacent buildings in the foreground serve as fixed spatial references throughout.

- A) KL Tower head and antenna clearly visible as low cloud encroaches from aloft.
- B) Upper antenna becomes indistinct; the observation deck begins to veil.
- C) Banding of the deck remains visible through thinning cloud.
- D) Deck largely obscured; silhouette weakens against the cloud field.
- E) Only a faint outline of the tower head is discernible above the roofline.
- F) Vertical smear of the tower’s position persists as contrast falls.
- G) Tower no longer distinguishable; cloud opacity increases over the scene.
- H) Residual diffuse mark where the tower had been visible moments earlier.
- I) Cloud layer appears uniform; the tower is completely hidden from view.

From Figure 3, this two minute sequence documents rapid atmospheric obscuration of a 421 meter landmark by low cloud under unsettled afternoon conditions. It is paired with Figure 3, which records the subsequent reappearance captured minutes later from the same vantage point.



**Figure 4:** Reappearance of KL Tower, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4 September 2025.

Note: Nine consecutive frames (A–I) taken from the first floor of the Malaysian Basketball Association (MABA) car park, Jalan Hang Jebat, between 5:01 and 5:03 p.m. (Asia/Kuala\_Lumpur), documenting the KL Tower (421 m) emerging from low cloud. Images were captured handheld with a smartphone; no filters, edits, or AI-based enhancements were applied. Only panel arrangement, light cropping, and thin borders were added for clarity. The school roofline and adjacent buildings in the foreground provide fixed spatial references; vantage point and framing match Figure 2.

- A) Uniform low cloud obscures the tower completely; only foreground buildings are visible.
- B) A faint vertical silhouette of the tower’s shaft appears above the roofline.
- C) The shaft strengthens in contrast while the tower head remains embedded in cloud.
- D) Cloud base lifts; the upper shaft becomes clearer against the grey sky.
- E) The lower portion of the tower head brightens within thinning cloud.
- F) Horizontal banding of the observation deck begins to resolve through the veil.
- G) The full deck becomes recognizable; the mast is still subdued by haze.
- H) Further clearing reveals the head profile and upper structures with improved contrast.
- I) The tower re-emerges fully; antenna and deck details are distinct as cloud thins and advects away.

This two-minute series complements Figure 2 by capturing the transition from full obscuration to complete visibility from the same fixed viewpoint, illustrating rapid changes in near-surface cloud opacity over central Kuala Lumpur.

## 2. THE INTERPLAY OF MOTHER NATURE AND HUMAN PERCEPTION

The experience reminded me how limited our control is. In films, directors may spend millions creating artificial clouds or hire actors to perform stunts on top of skyscrapers, yet mother nature accomplished a far more dramatic effect for free. While musing about whether Jackie Chan could convincingly perch atop the KL Tower in a film, the clouds quietly rolled in and drew a veil over the city. The idiom “every cloud has a silver lining” emerged from a 17th century poem by John Milton; it refers to the bright edges that appear when clouds are backlit (Kashani, 2025). The disappearance of the tower had its own silver lining: it made me appreciate the tower’s reappearance and the clarity of the sky once the clouds moved on. The tower’s vanishing acted as a mirror reflecting life’s unpredictability.

In our daily routines we often assume that landmarks – physical or metaphorical – are permanent. Watching the tower vanish for a few minutes reminded me that even large structures are subject to mother nature’s whims. The event also highlighted the difference between perception and reality. The tower never ceased to exist; it was my perspective that was obscured. That simple fact offers a lesson: when problems seem insurmountable, perhaps they are just temporarily hidden by clouds.

## 3. RESILIENCE AND THE LESSONS FROM EVER-CHANGING CLOUDS

As I reflected on the tower’s vanishing, it became a metaphor for life’s ups and downs. My academic journey has not been linear; I have faced discrimination, doubt and moments when my achievements seemed to disappear like the tower in the mist. Yet these difficulties eventually recede. Psychological resilience is the ability to react positively to difficulties and transform them into opportunities; it is a dynamic process of adaptation and regeneration (Yong and Hock, 2021; Yap and Leow, 2024). One of my favourite proverbs states that “the bamboo that bends is stronger than the oak that resists”. Bamboo’s flexibility allows it to withstand storms, whereas the rigid oak may break (Bambu Batu, 2020). This principle reminds me that perseverance and adaptability are more valuable than stubborn rigidity. When the tower disappeared I thought about how my career had required bending rather than breaking. My passion for research and mentorship has sustained me since 1998, and like the KL Tower, once the clouds lift the structure stands tall. The disappearing act taught me to value every moment, to seize opportunities when they arise, and to trust that the structure of my life’s work remains even when temporarily hidden from view.

## 4. MOTHER NATURE AND RESILIENCE

What that sky-play stirred in me echoes what many communities already know. Being with mother nature does not only soothe. It helps people metabolize stress and build a language of resilience they can carry into difficult days. Among Indigenous youth in urban Canada, mother nature emerges as a calming place that supports coping, identity, and hopeful meaning-making through lived metaphors and shared stories (Hatala et al., 2020). Small islands, often at the sharp edge of climate and economic exposure, have been turning to mother nature-based solutions that weave ecosystem services with cultural knowledge to strengthen resilience across environmental and social fronts (Hilmi et al., 2025). Watching the tower disappear and return gave me a simple, local metaphor for the same truth. The weather can unsettle you and then restore you. In that cycle there is a practice ground for resilience.

Resilience is more than springing back like a coiled spring. It is a way of being in the world that balances persistence with change, and it is ethical, relational, and contextual rather than only individual grit (Bunnell, 2019). In low-income communities in India, resilience is sustained through acceptance of what cannot be controlled, hope for what can change, and networks of mutual care that make endurance a shared project rather than a solitary burden (Raghavan et al., 2022). I recognize that pattern in my own academic life. There were seasons when my work seemed to “disappear” behind clouds of doubt or discrimination, only to reappear when support, patience, and the next small step arrived. That rhythm is less about heroic toughness and more about being held in community, learning to bend without breaking, and adjusting course when the wind changes.

## 5. MOTHER NATURE, MENTAL HEALTH AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Standing in the carpark, eyes on the sky, I felt an unexpected calm. Research on mother nature exposure suggests that natural environments reduce stress, lower heart rate and blood pressure and decrease cortisol levels (Calogiuri and Chroni, 2014). These spaces also offer opportunities for social interaction, physical activity and reflective thought (Calogiuri and Chroni, 2014).

My brief connection with the sky and clouds offered a form of spontaneous meditation. In the Islamic tradition of FIKR, observing mother nature can deepen spiritual understanding (Yap et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g, 2024h, 2025). This observation reinforced my appreciation for the interconnectedness of the environment and mental health. It is not only grand vistas like rainforests or ocean beaches that confer benefits; even small encounters with weather can prompt reflection and renewal. The moment also reminded me of the importance of slowing down. In an urban environment dominated by deadlines and screens, an encounter with the sky is a reminder that we are part of something larger. By acknowledging the emotional impact of mother nature, I hope to encourage my students to integrate environmental awareness into their academic and personal lives.

## 6. HOPE AND ITS DYNAMICS

Hope is not a static trait you either have or do not have. It is dynamic and time-sensitive. Palliative care patients describe hope as a moving horizon tied to past gains, present meaning, and future possibilities, and as something that can be re-composed when losses accumulate (Olsman et al., 2015). In higher education, hope is foundational for student well-being. It shows up as goal-directed thinking, a sense of agency, and the capacity to find alternative pathways when obstacles appear, all of which are tightly coupled with resilience in real academic lives (Berry et al., 2024). When the tower reappeared, I felt that small but unmistakable lift. Not a naive optimism. Rather a practiced hope that admits uncertainty and still acts.

Urban resilience is not only a technical problem. It is also social and narrative. Work in the global south shows how resilience strategies must engage local stories, power relations, and material realities. This means integrating different kinds of knowledge and inviting communities into the work rather than applying one model everywhere (Borie et al., 2019). Design and policy flow from the same insight. In disaster-prone settings, infrastructure and services need multiple response pathways so that communities can maintain core functions and recover quickly. Planning for redundancy, rapid reconfiguration, and equitable access is central to a resilient civic fabric (Buceta, 2023). My brief observation does not solve these challenges. It reminds me to teach, mentor, and plan with humility, to listen first, and to design for both the visible tower and the moment it disappears from sight.

The transient disappearance of the KL Tower taught me that change is inevitable and often beyond human control. Malaysia's climate, shaped by monsoon winds and influenced by rising sea surface temperatures, is becoming more unpredictable (Rutter, 2012). Society must adapt to extreme weather events, just as we adapt to personal setbacks. When the tower reappeared, gleaming against a clearing sky, I felt a surge of hope.

Hope and positivity are cornerstones of a lively life, especially in times of uncertainty. The clouds served as a reminder that adversity is temporary. From a broader perspective, communities must be prepared for environmental challenges by investing in sustainable practices, resilient infrastructure and education. On a personal level, we need to cultivate the flexibility of bamboo, the optimism of the silver lining and the resilience to face storms. The power of mother nature can humble, inspire and educate us. My 7 minute observation was a gift, a call to appreciate fleeting moments and to carry the lessons of adaptability and hope into the future.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARK: A PERSONAL CODA

That afternoon taught me to pay attention to fleeting scenes and to collect them as teachers. I want my students to notice their own “vanishing towers,” to pause and read the weather of their lives without panic, and to name the supports that let their work reappear. Hope becomes practical when it is shared, when it is grounded in mother nature and community, and when it is renewed through small acts of care. This is the power of mother nature. Mother nature offers us this curriculum every day if we are willing to look up. Aiyoo, Bangkit Kita Semua!

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