

Term 2020-2021 PPK469/01/2017(034673)

INTERSECTION

MARCH ISSUE

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PAM
Sarawak Chapter



A SMALL SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Every second Thursday is a special day for me (us), especially in the late evening when our small editorial group completes yet another digital issue of our newsletter. There is a small but significant sense of achievement each time, almost as important as the ones related to our architectural work; another chapter filed away, another foster child set free into the world.

The 4 of us led by Hui Joo do a final proofread; SiYong is good with names and dates, PikShia the adverts and I check the grammar and phrasing, before sending it to Ivy who as the Chapter Chair releases it to the architecture fraternity early Friday morning.

We don't pretend that the contents in our newsletter are very high brow or even well-researched, we see it as a means of curating our local news and successes. Often it is not important to anyone other than the author and those close to her and us; the publishers, and I suspect those are the few who read the article. Nonetheless, it is an important act of recording and setting within the time-line of our community - like old Fujichrome photos of long ago birthday parties or graduations we need them as a point of reference to see how far we have come, to recall those who have left us and to cherish the ones still here and in good stead. And these references become more important as time passes, much like heritage buildings.

So, we will continue to curate and publish until such a time that we run out of money or articles or both. We have found that in recent months, many more readers have put up their hand to contribute a project, proposal or article. Hopefully they too share our sense of achievement to see their work in print as a small step in the sizeable task of curating their work.

Stay safe,

Min

March 2021

With invaluable support from

Chen Hui Joo, Leong Pik Shia and Chai Si Yong.



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear fellow members,

I would like to thank team INTERSECTION for giving me the honor to open a few words. This will be my last message as chair to PAMSC for INTERSECTION.

The term has gone by quite quickly and many things have transpired this term. I will take this opportunity to share some of these with you.

As we adjust to going on online for meetings and discussions, I am sure most of us miss the 'carefreeness' of gatherings or the impromptu meet up for coffee before Covid-19. I have.

This past 2 terms have been exceptionally different at PAMSC compare to the years before. We have hardly any physical gatherings or events.

There are silver linings and change maybe a good thing.

Going online meant that our community of architects can now meet virtually and our discourse at chapter level is now more diverse with members contributing from outside Kuching. I hope more members who are outside Kuching will participate.

INTERSECTION has evolved and we have gone digital. Our INTERSECTION team have outdone themselves. 8 NEWS, 6 FLASHES and 2 FAT ISSUES this term. We hope that more contributors will be forthcoming so we can curate as many of our members work as possible. Big or small, far and wide, please do share your work and your thoughts with us.

Our Practice and Government Liaison sub-committee have been very busy and I hope that many of you will be able to join this sub-committee as it is vital that our voice is heard. In particular now, when we have the opportunity to help steer the direction on how we would like to practice in Sarawak. It has always been a work in progress and like everything else, we hope you will join us and help make a difference.

PAM Council has approved our proposal for a new premise in February 2021. Pusat Binaan Sdn. Bhd., a subsidiary of PAM is in the process of purchasing the property on behalf of PAM for PAMSC use. We will announce the location once the purchase is finalized. As a teaser, we will keep you all in suspense until the next INTERSECTION!

We hope that the acquisition exercise can be accomplish by the first half of 2021 and we can have our house warming by end of 2021. It is hope that PAMSC will be able to function better with a bigger space in a more conducive environment. Our recent survey online to obtain feedback was done and we will take those feedbacks into considerations.

As you well know, we have also launched our first Design Idea Competition with HSL-Next Phase Sdn. Bhd. Ar. Chai Si Yong our competition convener has informed me that we have 111 registered at the closed of registration on the 15th March 2021. What a fantastic start!

I do hope that many of our PAMSC members participated. I am looking forward to judging with our jury panel comprising of YBhg. Datuk Ar. Ezumi Harzani, Ar. Lilian Tay, Ar. Mike Boon and Mr. Yu Ji of Next Phase Sdn. Bhd. We hope that this will be a catalyst for Sarawak at both private and government sector; to consider design competition as a viable alternate procurement of architectural design services.

Do enjoy this issue of INTERSECTION. A lot of 'heart' has been put into this and I am sure it's felt.

And last but not least, I would like to thank you all for giving me the privilege to serve as your chairperson for this term.

Adieu,
Ivy



Ar. Ivy Jong
PAMSC Chairman
2020-2021

THOUGHTS ON SPACE AND THE PANDEMIC

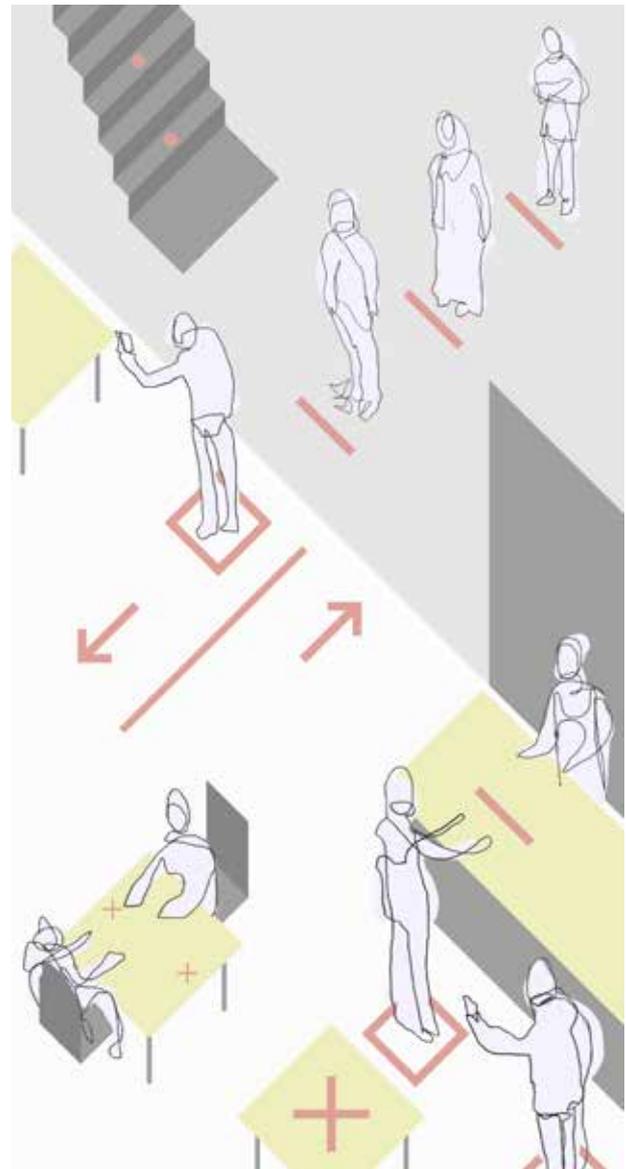
Written by: *Atta Idrawani bin Zaini*
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In the beginning of the pandemic, there was one internet meme circulating around the social media that says, 'Until now, the best vaccine against Covid-19 is made by architects.' Of course, architects have no literal capability nor the capacity to create the so-called 'best vaccine' against COVID-19 or anything in that nature. The wishful remark is just referring to our homes, which were indeed made by architects. The rhetoric does not only imply that people would be much safer when they were at home, but it also hints the importance of architecture and the idea of a personal space. In a much larger context, this 'new normal' may have just redefined how we look at and reconnect with our space. Architects could be inspired simply by observing how people are exploiting or behaving around their space in the mid-pandemic era.

Personal Space and Primitive Elements

Architecture 101. One of Francis DK Ching architectural fundamental books 'Architecture: Form, Space and Order' tells us that architectural spaces may evolve from primitive elements of a dimensionless point, into a one-dimensional line, then into a two-dimensional plane and finally into a three-dimensional volume. Architects use these elements religiously to orchestrate orderly architectural spaces. We see these elements around us every day, a water fountain in the middle of a park could be a point, the walkway could be perceived as a line, a blank wall where one is staring at right now is a plane and the room where one occupies could be perceived as a volume or space. It may not be as direct, but the point is (no pun intended), in the mid-pandemic, our spaces are naively ordered by these basic, primitive elements.

Every place that we go right now might have some markings on the floor, bordering a different territory that one can only enter after the ritual performance of scanning the QR code and take their body temperature. Innocent lines on the floor establish a divide between personal spaces. A systemic trust is established, as one may not cross the marking on the floor unless is granted access, that it seems traitorous to invade others' personal space by simply crossing the line without permission. Spaces are deliberately and spontaneously ordered through the primitive elements of points, lines and planes as evident through the various types and designs of physical distancing markings on the floors, tables, chairs and even some walls. This you can see at schools, ATMs, public benches, shops, mosques – you name it!



The markings have become a universal scar of the pandemic. It created visual contaminations to otherwise an enduring space. Like in wartime, the mid-pandemic era brings about a weaker appetite for aesthetics. Much like scars, most of the residues from this will likely stay for a long time even after the pandemic is over. Would this appetite be restored after that? Can architectural functionalities and aesthetics be equally pursued without evoking disorder in either one, during or after the pandemic? Architects need to think about this.

The Meaning of Space

In encouraging physical distancing, a large portion of our space are now reserved for this purpose. As much as the people seem to be benefiting from this space surplus, there is an issue of spatial obsolescence. For instance, as organizations taking steps to encourage or instruct their workers to work from home, the notion of one's need to maintain a physical presence in the office may no longer be relevant to some. Apart from the virus, the crisis has also brought about a technological boom of virtual presence technology, which makes real-time video communications becoming more efficient and accessible. The expression 'working from home' is no longer reserved for a specific sector but is universally applicable to all. Our conventional wisdom on how the working environment should be of cubicles in a brick-and-mortar setting are being challenged with 'now everyone can work from home' reality. The obsolescence of physical working space is about to happen as everyone has just got the taste of that liberty, which before were exclusive to only a handful of people. In this regard, space is losing its meaning.

On the other hand, the pandemic has also extended the idea of space scarcity almost to an extreme end. Spaces are becoming even more precious as they can no longer sustain itself with the number of occupants are halved from their intended capacity. To put it into context, a cinema auditorium with 300 people occupancy can only have around 150 people or less. Prices for commercial services might be increased to compensate for the loss, as theoretically, break-even point could only be achieved by charging people twice or more the actual amount. What can only be filling this vacuum is money. In this case, space is becoming more meaningful.

Architecture and Crisis Resilience

Through the public service mantras played repeatedly on the television and social media, we are told to stay at home, practice social distancing, and recently to avoid the '3Cs'. All these advices hinge on the same theme – our space. The space is given a deeper meaning that was previously overlooked. Elements of points, lines, and planes have indirectly emancipated personal spaces. People are becoming more vigilant to their surroundings and starting to reclaim their personal space just by trusting these primitive elements. But these elements, more often than not, are visual pollutions that need some 'cleaning up'. Architects ought to pay attention to this too.

Where the meaning of space is the matter of when it is profitable, it should also be looked from the angle when it is not. During the pandemic, the meaning of space may be twisted. A 'profitable' space in the current state, may not be as profitable in the future and vice-versa. A 'useless' space which was sacrificed for enforcing physical distancing, may not be as wasteful

in the future. Architects are free to speculate what would, should and could be done to our space during the pandemic with careful attention, as the design during the pandemic may not be as sustainable after it is over. Architecture is as unpredictable as the pandemic gets.

The pandemic is also a showcase of mankind resilience in handling crisis through managing architectural space. As the vaccines have only just recently arrived, mankind all this while were able to survive the pandemic at the expense of spatial comfort and luxury. No one can tell for sure what the future entails. Would this new normal be permanent? How radical would architectural solutions be after this? Architects from all around the world are trying to prepare the answer. A 'post-pandemic architecture', would be considering the extent of the spatial and urban design can accommodate similar or worse scenarios. This is not the first time a crisis has changed how architecture and spaces were designed. This is, in fact, one of the ways how architectural ideas evolved. Even our traditional on-stilts architecture was a direct response to be adaptive to danger and floods – an element of resiliency. There will be a time when this crisis will create an architecture that is adaptive to the new normal.

To start, architects ought to gravitate themselves as closest as possible to the reality. Maybe the line markings on the floor are itself already enough. Maybe the points on the escalator steps are already an architecture. After all, Louis Kahn has once said, 'Architecture is the thoughtful making of spaces.', and being thoughtful may be as simple as drawing a line on the floor.

END



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Currently teaches architecture and is still learning about it too. Interested in architectural representations and media. An amateur filmmaker. A self-diagnosed multipotentialite.