

Urban Reset

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The world has changed. It has been almost a year when the world that we knew stopped being the way it is and we know will never be the same again. As we slowly emerged from our quarantine, the once familiar city that we know of seems unrecognizable. The once crowded streets are empty, and shopping centers and malls are deserted. Children who run on school grounds are missing, and churches and places of worship are empty. Never in our minds have we thought that we will experience this, something as massive and life changing as that of the Spanish flu in 1918. The generations before us have already forgotten how it was when about a hundred years before, life stood still.

The transition from the status quo to the disruption is often uncomfortable and often met with resistance. As the world prepares for the emergence of the new order, this edition of *Muhon* focuses on the re-examination of what has been accepted and practiced. The disciplines of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and the rest of the Designed and Built Environment are in constant flux as new materials, processes, and paradigms are being pushed forward. This perpetual challenge of the present order has made the disciplines dynamic and agile. Foremost of which is the shift in pedagogy. The mode of delivering and measuring learning have always been the subject of introspection by many researchers. Santos' (2020) paper on *Examining the Value of Jury Critique for Architectural Design Studio Courses* reinforces the importance of external assessment in the performance of students. Often perceived as subjective and biased, assessment of Architectural design courses makes use of criteria and rubric that may be suspected to a system that heavily relies on the faculty member's preference and opinion. However, Santos asserts that the practice of jury critique helps the class develop a much wider perspective in design, which might be limited by the imposed standard of the faculty. The conversations that ensue from the interaction between the jury, faculty, and the students allow the processing of information that may not be available in usual classroom set-up assessment. This means that learning by the students extends beyond the lecture, studio, and consultation phases in the classroom as well as during the exchange of ideas in the critiquing phase.

As learning moves beyond the confines of the classroom, the incentive to transition to more hands-on method in teaching encourages students to simulate designs in three dimensions. Through this, the students get to know the

implications of their design, particularly in understanding the climatological context. In Chua's (2020) study, *Teaching Tropical Design Through Simulating Scale Models*, he emphasized the importance of using a three-dimensional model in demonstrating the effects of various sunshade devices to heat gain performance of their design. Beyond learning the concepts of Tropical Design, the spatial knowledge gained by the students in this exercise allows them to manipulate and iterate their design to improve the performance of their structure.

Going further away from the classroom, learning can take advantage of the ubiquitous technology that is pervasive in society, such as social media. Bimbao's (2020) *Landscape Image H.A.C.K. (Human Activity Captured Kernels)*, looks at Instagram as the source of information for those in the Designed and Built Environment. The quantity of potential information from the most popular social media application offers a possibility of harnessing this to keep designers abreast of the preference of the publics and users. The necessity of constantly being updated on the changing preference allows the designer to discern the requirements of the users, which sometimes may not be expressed succinctly, and they may not be fully aware of. The methodology used by the author grants students and professionals another mode of getting insights on the behavior of the users and how something as common as a social media post can be a rich source of learning.

One of the most common construction materials available and is being used in the Philippines is plywood. The popularity of this product as construction material may be attributed to its flexibility, durability, and low cost. However, as the industry and people become more conscious of the indoor environmental quality, studies were conducted to measure how much construction materials can affect the environmental performance. In an effort to initiate the setting up of baseline data on the emission of this construction material in the Philippines, Dia and Bo-ot (2020) made the *Study on Total Volatile Organic Compound Emission of Plywood: Finish, Age, and Environment*. The authors measured the various emissions of plywood with different finishes and compared their effects on the indoor environmental standards of other countries. The importance of having a standard for the Philippines makes it even more imperative since the country has its own climatic and weather contexts that affect the indoor environmental quality. Another material that is commonly used in many of the construction projects in the country is concrete. There have been several

investigations on the possible substitute in the composition of concrete as we realize the environmental impact of extracting resources for construction use. Manaloto's (2020) *Empirical Analysis of the Compressive Strengths of Composite Materials: The Case of Rice Straw and Cement* explores the possibility of using something that is considered as an agricultural waste into a viable construction material. By experimenting on the various combinations of proportion of rice straw and cement, the author found the value of using this material in concrete mix as lightweight concrete. This opens the possibility of using other widely available materials as construction material that could hopefully address the issues of availability, cost, performance, and environmental impact.

The common theme of this edition of Muhon is the introspection of what has been accepted and practiced. Many of those that have been established are being eroded, just as much as our belief in constancy and permanence is being challenged. The convenience and comfort of our contemporary society and technology have lulled us into a mindset of continuous growth and always moving forward. However, the reality of environmental and human-exacerbated disasters and the global health pandemic have forced us to step back and analyze how we live our lives and even appreciate the value of things we take for granted. Many of the conveniences such as mobility, public interaction, and contact with nature have gained more value as we learned of their importance when we cannot have them. We should take time to consider the things that we value in our cities and environments; how we can optimize urban efficiency, but not at the expense of gaining meaningful shared experiences, and how we can jumpstart and redesign our communities to learn from the past, appreciate the present, and are ready for the future.