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Occupy

Hygiene · Control

衛生 · 管制



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President's Message

會長語

On behalf of The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA), I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Editorial Board and the Publication Committee, Board of Internal Affairs, for their vision and diligence in working on this issue of the HKIA Journal.

Defying the COVID-19 outbreak, our editors, writers and contributors have collaborated to make sure we successfully released this issue in 2020. Indeed, they even managed to find a silver lining in the prevailing global pandemic by making this issue a platform for the architectural profession and the public to explore architects' multiple interests in public hygiene and control.

By designing healthy, liveable buildings and urban spaces, architects have played a crucial role in laying the foundations of healthy cities. In this issue, our contributors put forward the great variety of architectures and city planning that have helped Hong Kong cope with the multi-faceted and ever-changing health-care needs of our community – ranging from the days of Hong Kong Fever and bubonic plague in the 19th century to the quarantine demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also examined the means needed to assess and provide what is needed to establish sustainable, healthy built environments and the demarcation and uses of public and private spaces for control of all manner of human activities beyond disease.

In this issue, we also pay tribute to Professor Tunney Lee, one of the founders of CUHK's architectural programme and an Honorary Fellow of the HKIA, who sadly left us earlier this year. His vision and devotion in nurturing many generations of architectural talent around the globe have helped make this world a better and more enjoyable place.

The HKIA recently partnered with other professional institutes to conduct a series of webinars titled 'Healthy Building Healthy City' that was well received by both the professions and the public. With the physical, mental and social well-being of the community and of the future generations in our hearts, the HKIA will continue its efforts to promote architectural excellence and fostering inclusive and sustainable healthy buildings and healthy cities.

Felix Li 李國興
FHKIA, Registered Architect, APEC Architect
President

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Hygiene • Control

衛生 • 管制

Thomas Chung 鍾宏亮 / Weijen Wang 王維仁

Editorial 編者言

Centred on the themes of hygiene and control, this issue engages architects and the public to reflect critically on two of the most important issues affecting Hong Kong this year and their implications for architectural design, professional practice and everyday life.

Hygiene, defined as 'conditions or practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing disease, especially through cleanliness', is an obvious theme given the impact arising from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Less apparent but no less significant is the connection to the continental European hygienist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries and its drive to apply scientific discoveries and implement technological innovations via urban experiments to improve sanitation and transform living quality. This quest for a healthful urban environment naturally led to the design of buildings and public spaces aimed at establishing a healthier city, including facilities devoted to public health such as hospitals and health-care related architecture and urban projects.

Whenever public hygiene involves an urban dimension, the issue of control with respect to different modes of spatial or social separation, segregation or effective measures to maintain 'clean, safe and normal' environment by the authorities almost always arises. The extent to which architecture and urban spaces have been co-opted to manage 'undesired' sites, subjects and happenings can be interrogated. While architects are accustomed to designing healthy and liveable spaces, current control measures restricting Hong Kongers' social activities and movement seem to indicate an increasing emphasis on ensuring health and normality through the regulation of the city's spaces. The nuances of emerging 'new normals' will certainly impact the practices of everyday life in the city, particularly in terms of architectural and urban spaces.

As cities around the globe struggled with Covid-19 through 2020, many people have recalled humanity's last truly global health crisis: the so-called Spanish flu of 1918. Then, a third of the world's population was infected and 50 million people died. While the total mortality of the current pandemic is not yet comparable, widespread infection in cities has occurred perhaps because of hyper-globalisation and its accompanying by unprecedented connectivity and mobility which helped the spread of the novel coronavirus.

With half the world effectively confined, all kinds of economic, social and cultural activities have been paralysed and return to any semblance of normality will be anything but immediate.

Hong Kong, despite being one of the most connected and dense cities in the world, has enjoyed a relatively low number of confirmed cases, with community outbreaks kept under control. The city's urban history, however, has been substantially defined by epidemics: from bubonic plague in the late 19th century, through the 1968 Hong Kong flu and 1997 avian flu, to the more recent SARS outbreak in 2003. But as a result, Hong Kong's epidemic preparedness has been built up over the years, extending from policy and institutional infrastructure to personal care practices. Wearing a mask, frequent hand-washing and keeping social distance are survival basics that Hong Kongers tend to comply with without huge fuss. Yet when Covid-19 first struck Hong Kong at the beginning of the year, fear still led to a frantic search for PPE (personal protective equipment), clearing shelves of daily essentials in supermarkets and continual shortages of hygiene products such as toilet paper and tissue.

By now Hong Kong, like other cities, continues to cope with social distancing, border restrictions, work and school disruptions, closures or strict opening hours in food, entertainment and other service-related sectors. These all-encompassing measures to combat Covid-19 will undoubtedly persist in some form until effective vaccines become available to the public, hopefully in the not-too-distant future.

Such large scale behavioural change caused by disease alters our understanding and priorities as to how we live, work and travel in our cities. Changes arising from Covid-19 won't be the first time a pandemic has become the catalyst for reimagining architectural and urban spaces and their design and planning. In the 1850s, Ildefons Cerdà famously invented his theory of 'urbanisation' with his plan for the expansion of Barcelona that include schemes for dealing with epidemics and planning for hygiene. Rampant insalubrity led to Baron Haussmann's renovation of Paris in the 19th century. In early colonial Hong Kong, bubonic plague triggered the clearance of squalid quarters; the demolition of insanitary properties in Taipingshan and the