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Exploring on Transitional Living Spaces to Improve Quality of Life of Fishermen in Malaysia

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Abstract

Transitional living spaces are considered to be a short term accommodation arrangements that are designed to help individuals or families who are experiencing a period of transition or instability. Such living spaces are expected to lead them towards a more stable setting of living condition. However, the current architectural approach towards transitional living spaces or accommodations do not address properly to the needs of targeted user and are usually designed universally. Therefore, instead of improving the living quality of the users, due improper spatial quality of such spaces could even lead to lowering their standard of living. Hence, the aim of this research is to explore on the living condition of fishing communities in Malaysia and produce a design framework on designing transitional living spaces for them. This research is based on ethnography of qualitative methodology uses literature review. The results show a design framework on designing suitable transitional living spaces for fishermen in Malaysia. This framework will help to increase awareness on importance of transitional living spaces for fishermen which would contribute to improve quality of fishermen's livelihood. This produced framework could be used for transit living spaces for middle aged fishermen.

Keywords: Transitional Living Spaces, Quality of Life, Design Framework, Awareness

Introduction

Malaysian government is playing a vital role in helping communities of Malaysia to improve the standard of their lives. Especially, they have introduced schemes for fishing communities to subsidize petrol needed for fishing boats, housing of fishing communities and even monetary allowances to fishermen (Ali et al., 2017). Yet, fishing communities of Malaysia are considered as living a low social life compared to the typical Malaysian communities which is leading to poverty and poor living conditions (Rhoumah, 2016). With the rapid urbanization, the financial gap between these communities and the rest are getting more significant. However, regardless of incentives given to the fishing communities in building new homes or renovating the existing ones, there is no effort put in understanding the type of living spaces fishermen and their communities need especially while transiting at the jetty in between fishing rounds.

According to (Ghani et al., 2017) correlation analysis showed indicators of income, savings, housing, family surroundings and fishing equipment contributed to the enhancement of quality of life among fishermen. In addition, the layout of a fishing village is influenced by the culture of community living (Ofori et al., 2020). Furthermore, the limited knowledge of fishermen also makes them not motivated to improve the quality of their settlement environment (Widyo, 2019). Hence, to improve the living standard of fishing communities has become a challenge and an issue which might need to be address quickly.

The daily activities of fishermen varies from day to day. However in general fishermen spend most of their time on the seas and the housing arrangements made on land is considered more as a transiting point in between fishing rounds. According to the current situation on a typical fishing village in Malaysia, there are few demography types of fishermen and their families when it comes to housing. Housing for fishermen is being built at the coastal areas and in a close proximity to their jetties through government incentives. However, usually these houses are provided for fishermen with families. As a result, single fishermen based on a state other than their hometown, do not have proper arrangements made for this transitional period. The spaces utilized by them are mostly temporary shelters made on coastal areas, commonly right next to their jetties. Some of the basic necessities are done in poor hygiene and improperly.

The main challenge faced to the mentioned fishermen is that they cannot afford to rent a place nearby due to their financial status and also is not considered feasible on renting monthly from a typical apartment or so as they spend more than half of the month out on the sea. Secondly, as they do not have means of travelling such as cars or motorcycles and usually the coastal areas are not covered by public transportation, the only option for them is to be provided proper basic needs in a close walking distance. Also these housing to be designed and managed in consideration of their schedule of fishing.

A partial solution for this issue is to understand their activities while on land and government to include these types of housings into their subsidy list. However, since this type of housing will not be a complete solution for a permanent housing, it shall be considered as a transitional living space. Transitional living spaces are considered to be a short term accommodation arrangements that are designed to help individuals who are experiencing a period of transition or instability. Hence, the expectation would be that they will be able to find a more stable income eventually, and as a result they could manage the living expenses by themselves just like the rest of the communities.

Even though the housing of fishermen especially while transiting is considered a contributing factor for quality of life among fishermen (Ghani et al., 2019), no much research have been done to identify the transitional living space needed for fishermen and the design of such spaces are not being addressed architecturally. Since there are different preparations/activities done by fishermen on land, in between fishing rounds, these should be considered while designing a transitional living space for the space to function more efficiently. Therefore, this research will contribute to formulate a design framework on designing suitable transitional living spaces for fishermen in Malaysia. By producing such a

framework will help to increase awareness on importance of transitional living spaces for fishermen which would contribute to improve quality of fishermen’s livelihood.

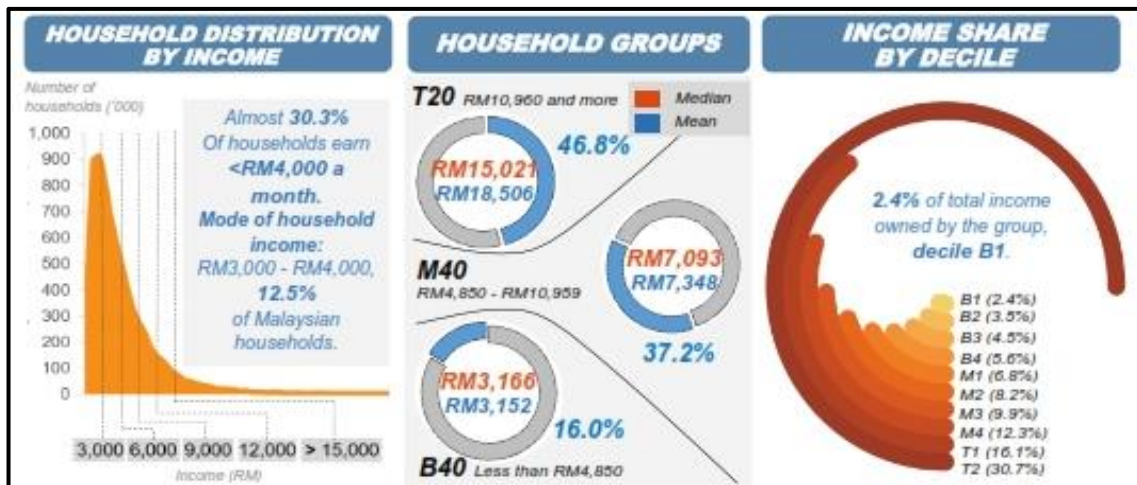


Figure 1. Average household income of Malaysia.

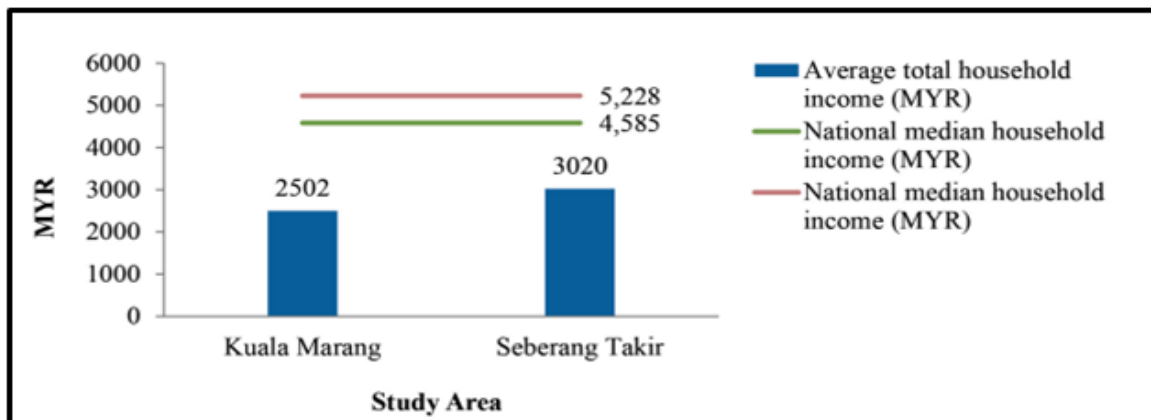


Figure 2. Average household income of 2 fishing communities in Malaysia.

Methodology

Literature review was conducted through searches in several databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Science Direct. The search was carried out using keywords and search terms such as transitional living spaces, quality of life, design framework, and awareness. Using these keywords, the search databases was carried out to identify relevant literature pertaining to the study.

Results and Discussion

Transit by definition means the process of moving, or the movement of goods or people from one place to another. In architecture, transitional or transit spaces mean an intermediate space between two spaces, activities, or even buildings. In addition, transit living spaces transitional living spaces refer to temporary housing arrangements that are designed to help individuals or families who are experiencing a period of transition or instability. These living spaces provide a safe, stable, and supportive environment for people who may be struggling to afford their own shelters. Since there are very few or no researches done on transit living spaces for fishermen, this literature review will try to summarize similar research findings which have examined on understanding transitional spaces/ transitional living spaces in different contexts such as schools, workplaces etc. The components used in these transitional spaces/ transitional living spaces could aid in identifying required components to design transit living spaces for fishermen.

There are different definition of transitional spaces mentioned by different authors. For example Monsur (2013) defined transitional spaces as any space which connects indoor and outdoor spaces (Chun et al., 2004). categorizes transit spaces into 3 main locations and functions. 1. Transitional space within the building such as lobbies, 2. Covered space connected to the building or in between buildings such as balconies or corridors, 3. Open transitional spaces which is completely detached from building such as pavilions and bus stops. Mostly transitional spaces are considered as a open or enclosed spaces connecting indoor and outdoor or one space to the other.

Unlike transitional spaces, transitional living spaces are defined as a temporary living condition which connects two permanent living conditions. Most commonly college hostels, rehab centers and homeless shelters are classified as transitional living spaces.

Literature reviews are based on 2 main deductive which were extracted from the research objectives. Deductive are:

- **D1- Influence of transitional spaces**
- **D2- Transitional living space design**

Influence of Transitional Spaces

As mentioned by Brown and Lippincott (2003), recently a lot of learning process is done out of the classroom. For this reason, (Amit kumar, 2015; Dole et al., 2016; Wilson & Cotgrave, 2016) mentioned that, it is important to create informal learning spaces which could be also a transitional space. At the same time, under the topic 'transitional Spaces in Higher Education as efficient Informal Academic Learning Space' (Ramu et al., 2018) explained on increased demand for exploring the transitional spaces as informal academic learning space, such as (1) transition between two destinations: internal corridors and entrance lobbies; (2) transitions between exterior and interior: courtyard and external corridors; and (3) transitions between natural and buildings: gazebo and square are utilized in order administering their self-directed learning activities. Even though above mentioned authors focused on college/university students, there are authors who emphasized on younger kids who also could be related to this in school context. As an expansion to Ramu et al.'s research, (Monsur, 2013) wrote under 'Transitional Space and Preschool Children's Play & Learning Behavior in Childcare Environment' that the value of indoor – outdoor transitions of space and where

classrooms meet the outdoors are crucial areas, which demand designers intervention. However, all these articles only focused on transitional spaces for schools and how they influence children in learning process.

Additionally, (Monsur, 2013) examined particular elements of architecture that are responsible for motivating play/learning behavior among children in a child care/preschool setting. Hence, these researches concluded that transitional spaces could play a vital role in motivating students. The findings for this research was expected to demonstrate the value of transitional space for influencing certain play and learning behavior among children of age 3-5 years only.

Furthermore, (Widyo, 2019) did a research to identify and analyze the cultural characteristics of the community in the fishing village, as a basis for efforts to arrange open space settlements. He mentioned that having open spaces in fishermen settlements help to improve their quality of environment hence improving standard of life overall. Yet, this research paper did not demonstrate transitional living spaces for fishermen specifically.

Finally, (Chun et al., 2004) said that transitional spaces could be used as simple as just promoting active businesses. (Prihatmanti & Taib, 2017) explains Chun by mentioning that transitional space is not directly occupied by any major activities in the building, however it has a large implication to occupants experience and building energy consumption. This research mainly studied on how transit spaces contribute for thermal comfort.

The design of transitional living spaces such as hostels could influence users positively or negatively. Some students in hostels are exposed to extreme stress and they are adapting strategies to cope with it (McMordie, 2021). Additionally, the stress and other factors within hostels negatively impacts student's academic performance (Hasan & Fatima, 2018). However these researches highlights on hostels within universities and not in public settings.

Transitional Living Space Design

A living space must have the means of basic necessities such as resting areas, toilets, cooking facilities, storage, living areas etc. However, when it comes to transitional living spaces, the function of the space might defer. As a result, the components of such spaces will differ accordingly. For instance, youth drug rehabilitation centers will consist of therapy rooms, communal spaces and clinics (Goyena & Fallis, 2019). The target user, duration of stay and the usage of the space perhaps could be some factor affecting the function of the space. When it comes to such transitional living spaces for fishermen, there are very few or no researches done to identify the components or characteristics of such spaces. Especially for a target group considered as a low income group, it is crucial to identify the spaces they require in order to improve their quality of live. Hence, this deductive will look into components needed to create a model transitional living space for fishermen.

Marpaung and Silaban (2018) identified in their research the structure of settlement and the relationship between the space structures with the spatial pattern in Belawan Medan Fishermen Village. They mentioned that similar spatial pattern is found between one unplanned settlement and another unplanned settlement. In addition the paper highlights advantages of highlighting spatial patterns as follows: (i) make it easier to determine the land-use policies and utility changes and transport systems; (ii) identifying key points for future

development; (iii) to implement the effective plan for regional development through integrated support systems.

In addition, in Homelessness prevention for former foster youth: Utilization of transitional housing programs, Brown and Wilderson (2010) mentioned that comparisons reveal that youth in the population-specific programs have less acute initial presentations than foster care alumni in homelessness intervention programs. They also highlight that the characteristics of spaces might be influenced by the past experiences and personal preferences. In expand to this, in the paper 'Thermal comfort in transitional spaces—basic concepts: literature review and trial measurement' (Chun et al., 2004) mentions that one of the factors influences spaces is the employment status. The situation differs if the target user is employed full-time, part-time or even unemployed.

Furthermore, Chun et al (2004) expands that thermal comfort plays an important role for the quality of space and that it can vary depending on the amount and duration of users. They also theorized that the since the typical behavior is more casual in transitional spaces compared to offices, schools etc, the activity done in transitional spaces have a major influence in thermal comfort.

Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) proposed that 1. Physical space, 2. Shared space, 3. Social space, 4. Legal space are the 4 main categories of spaces in homeless shelters. The details are as follow:

- Physical space: Communal in form (normally larger than normal dwelling).
- Shared space: (living, eating and/or food preparation).
- Social space Staff: Supervision on premises / Limited (or no) private space (i. e. from which others can be excluded).
- Legal space: Temporary occupancy No tenancy or occupancy agreement. / Exclusion (eviction) without court action.

To explain further, Li et al (2022) in 'Effects of the Visual Character of Transitional Spaces on Human Stress Recovery in a Virtual Reality Environment' developed a theory that with the increasing stress rate due to urbanization, it is important to address this issue in buildings. And then they hypothesized that curved and linear environments affect human stress recovery differently in transitional spaces. Even though this research mentioned the influence of shape towards human stress recovery, it focuses on stress recovery in 4 scenarios only.

Li et al (2022) further identified some spaces which were defined as transitional spaces in other researches:

- Foyer balcony porch
- Plaza / Semi open café' / entrance canopy
- Platform / urban plaza
- Urban corridor / covered street / pedestrian passage

One of the most important characteristics as I consider is mentioned by Maliki et al (2015) in his research on 'Recalling the Transitional Space: City home and Kampung home'. He mentioned about the importance of privacy on transitional spaces in housing. Issues regarding privacy frequently appeared in the participants' narratives. In city apartments, strangers could walk right up to one's door and windows, reducing the privacy of the dwellers. On the other hand, the need for greater security and privacy has led to the creation of modern house designs which give adequate privacy but at the same time giving the sense of 'caging' the dwellers indoors and blocking any informal interaction with neighbours. Therefore according

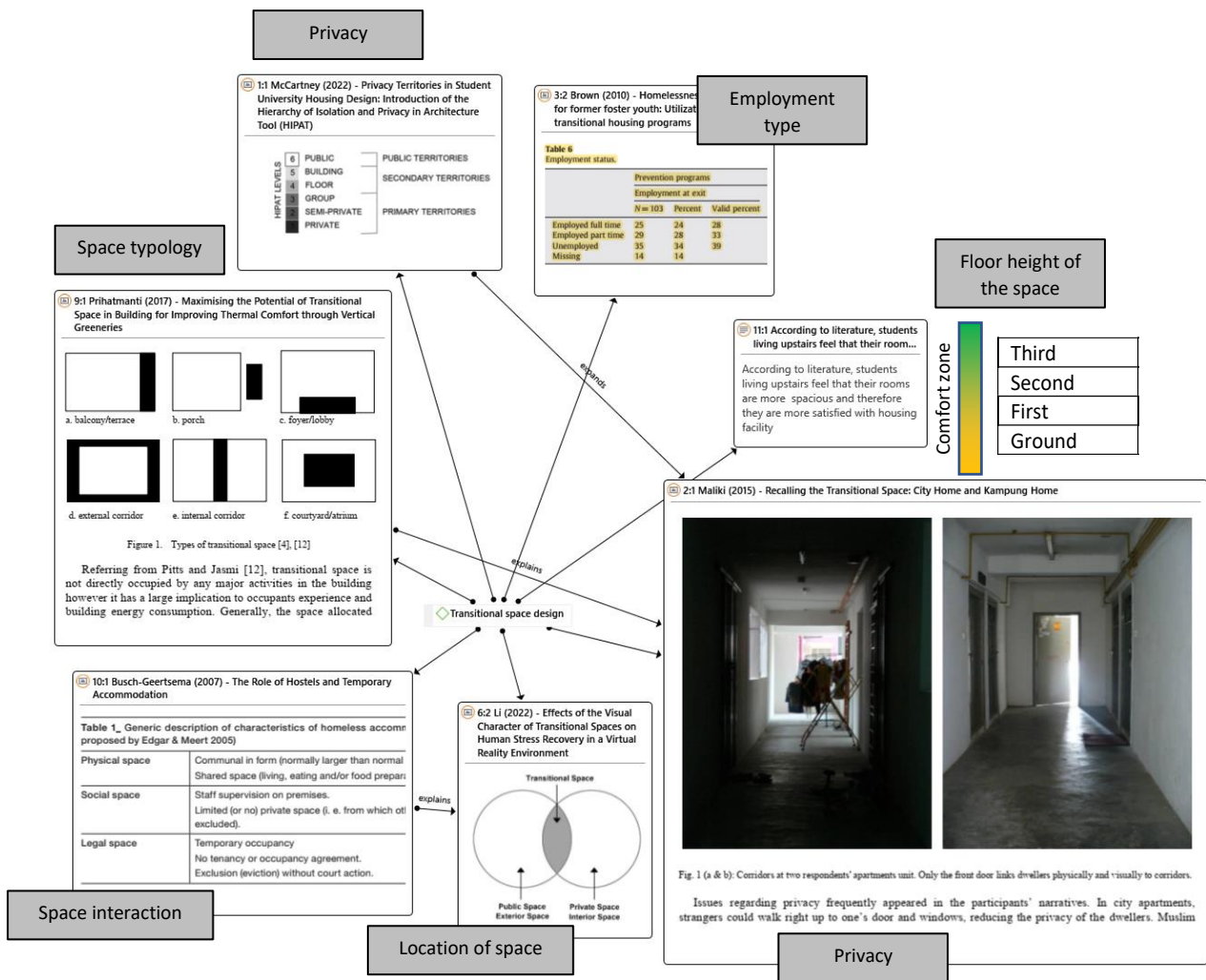


Figure 2. Theoretical framework for D2

Conceptual Framework

As transitional spaces can influence the user to a high extent, it is also directly linked to how the space is designed. Considering the current housing situation of fishermen in Malaysia, it is understood that it does not have consideration in accommodating the demography of single fishermen or fishermen away from their families, it is important to have a deep research and understanding on fishermen livelihood in order to produce a successful design framework. The design consideration of transitional living spaces for fishermen could be privacy, thermal comfort, employment type, typology of space, open spaces, height and location. Other factors which might need to be considered are daily activities, leisure activities, interests, type of interaction within them, preparation works done for the next fishing round, duration of stay etc.

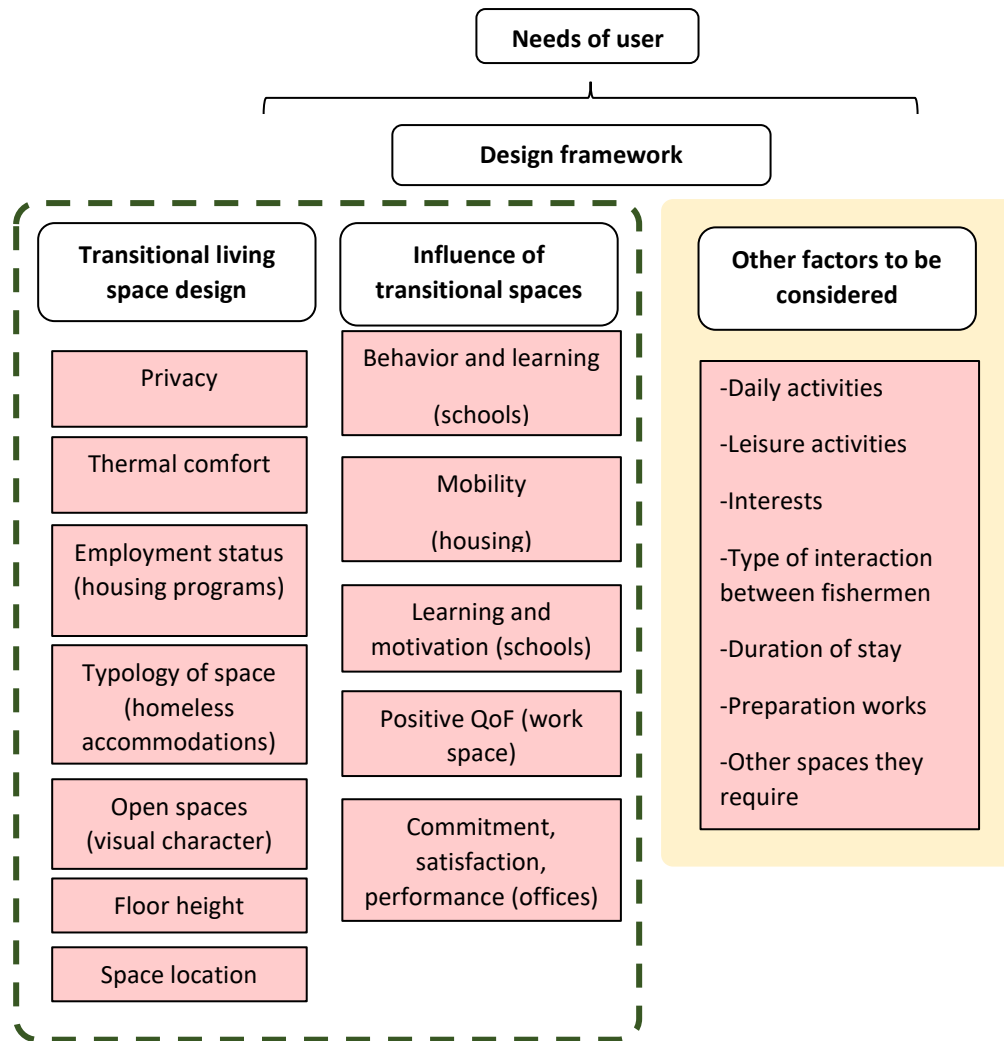


Figure 3. Conceptual framework

Conclusion

This research will help to understand what transitional living spaces are and help to implement it in context of fishermen communities by producing a spatially relevant design framework. In a long term, this will contribute in improving livelihoods of fishermen and help them in sustaining. Spatial characteristics, user experience and environmental features required for fishermen will be identified at the end of this research. By the aid of present studies on transitional spaces and transitional living spaces in different contexts such as schools, universities, houses and offices, the model of transitional living spaces for fishermen will help in sustaining their livelihoods and become a contribution for an increased living standard. Furthermore, this research will produce a design framework for transitional living and this does not include implementation process such as funding and securing land.

By introducing such a model through a design framework, will support the government's mission in improving standard of Malaysians. Moreover, overall this framework will attract single younger generation who are not ready to start a family, to choose fishing as a carrier since it could be added as a new incentive from government towards fishermen.

Contribution and Benefits of Research

The findings of this research will have potential on contributing to a number of stakeholders in Malaysia by expanding the possibilities of designing transitional living spaces for fishermen. This includes improving quality of life of fishing communities, enhancing economic cycle, tourism sector expansion and creating integrated communities.

Fishing Communities

- New model of living situation to improve quality of life.
- Sense of belonging by being an important part of community.

Authorities (Fishing and Tourism Sector)

- Cleanliness of coastal area and proper planning can contribute to improvement of both fishing and tourism sector.
- Helps in self sustainability of fishing communities and could ease the incentives given by the government in a long run.

Public Communities

- Break the social gap and be part of each other's development.
- Create cultural sustainability as fishing was and is an important part of Malaysia's identity
- Well planned coastal areas could be utilized in a more practical manner like more recreational activities.
- Coastal areas could become more approachable with improved cleanliness.

Fishing Sector

- Attracts youth into choosing this sector.
- Helps in creating more resilient fishing communities.
- Increase number of younger fishermen, and as a result more strength and new technologies could be invested.

Limitation of Research

Current Condition

Currently fishermen in Malaysia transit near the jetty and accommodate their needs by building their own temporary shelters at the coastal areas. Their education standard, living situation and being used to the current setting might effect their perception towards the need of an intervention of proper spaces and their lifestyle. Furthermore, 100% of fishermen in Malaysia are men and majority are middle aged. Therefore, this research might not be suitable for a fishing community with females or with youths.

Articles

Articles and publications emphasizing on transit living spaces for specifically fishermen is very limited. Many articles are based on other target groups and typologies such as kids in school settings, homeless people in temporary shelters etc.

Future Recommendation

Future research can explore more on the living situation in other states and expand this research to create a better spatial planning for more diverse groups of fishermen depending

on fishermen's daily activities and their needs. By doing so could also help accommodate personal preferences of fishermen belonging to different states, cultures, and demography.

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