

Interactive Space for Backpackers

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Introduction

One of the criteria to make the accommodation favourable to the backpackers, as founded by researchers, is the quality of the interactive spaces provided. Murphy and Pearce (1995) described backpackers as 'young and budget tourists' who are looking for inexpensive accommodation but offers an opportunity for social interaction with locals and outsiders. Murphy (2001) has conducted a study on the nature of interaction among backpackers and found out that sharing information on destination is the motivation for them to interact during their stay. An appropriate space needs to be provided to ensure the retreat design favourable to the backpackers. As founded by Dourish (2001), there are three main attributes of interactive space which are participative, task accomplishing and practical action. Rahaman and Tan (2009) had also identified additional characteristics of interactive space which are desired context, new experience, embodied learning, visual identity, interface and shared experience. The presence of one of these attributes will help promoting interaction in the space designed. Among other criteria that are favourable for the backpackers as listed by Murphy (2001) for an accommodation are economical, 'real' experiences environment, good atmosphere and services and provide social activities.

Background

The final project for Year 1 Architectural Studio course required the students to explore and apply spatial arrangement concepts for a small residential building harmonizing with the site conditions and functions of the spaces. A retreat for backpackers is selected to be designed to infuse an additional factor

to be included in the design beside sites influences. The site for the retreat is located at the foothill of Mount Kinabalu, the landmark of Sabah. With the flora and fauna and added by the majestic form of the mountain, the site provides various influences to be considered and incorporated in conducting the designing task.

Project Brief

A retreat or an accommodation is going to be built at the foothill of Mount Kinabalu for the use of a small group of backpackers as a transit before and after climbing the mountain or exploring the scenic town, Kundasang. The retreat will provide a common space intended for the backpackers to interact and 3 bedrooms with bathrooms. To support this, a simple kitchen with a dining facility and an office for the manager and caretakers to operate the retreat. Located in a rugged and beautiful site in Kundasang, the students need to consider the environmental issues and the social aspects of the needs of backpackers in developing the design.

Design Process

The process of designing the backpackers retreat started with a precedent study investigating the needs of backpackers in their accommodation while travelling. The information is gathered from the literature and analysis is performed by the students to reveal preferences of the backpackers. This practice allows the student to start thinking of the space programming.

The next stage of the process is to explore and experience the site where the retreat is proposed. During this stage site inventory is made and analysis is performed to discover

the advantages and disadvantages of the site and most importantly the potentials that the site can offer. The potentials are normally hidden in the site. The student needs to explore and experience the site to uncover the potentials. These potentials are to be incorporated in the design and most of the time they will make each design differs from one another. Concepts are often derived from the potentials.

With the information gathered, the designing of the retreat started with the concept which often generated from the potential of the sites. The main objective is to provide suitable interactive spaces for the backpackers as it is the priority requirement as mentioned by Murphy and Pearce(1995) and Murphy (2001). The amalgamation of the two aspects of considerations is able to produce a good strategy in designing.

In the process of designing the spaces and forms, students are required to exhibit their understanding on the design elements and principles. The programming of the spaces, space quality, circulation, fenestration and form should be able to reflect the concept and intention of the design.

Interlocking Social Space

(Nurul Husna Izzati binti Mahad)

Common spaces such as caf' and living area in the retreat were considered main spaces that can promote interaction among the users. In the scheme designed by Husna, the concept of interlocking between the two spaces are applied to indicate that the spaces can be used for interacting purposes but at the same time maintaining its own space quality.

The living area is more cosy and the caf' is more suitable for active communication. The staircase is placed in the interlocking space and becomes the core to the retreat linking one space to the other. The two spaces which are differ from each other provide an alternative for the backpackers to choose for interacting. The two spaces set different quality of space where the caf' provide more open or participative communication. On the other hand, the living space provides more intimate or closer communication. The facade of the caf' is open to the outside creating an active interaction between the inside and the outside environment . The living area, however, are more serene and most of the facade are facing to the forest offer by the site creating a sense of closeness to the nature (Figure 1 & 2). The project by Husna has managed to incorporate the environmental element and the social factors of backpackers creating an interactive space that possess some of the attributes described by Rahaman and Tan(2009).



Figure 1: Interlocking Social Space



Figure 2: Final Model by Husna

Centralized Social Space

(Mohd Sharizal)

The idea of centralizing the space programming and creating the main space as a focal point of the design has inspired Sharizal in developing the design. Sharizal sees that the site offers a 360 degree of breath-taking view from the building situated. By placing the main space which is the interactive space in the middle of the building opened to the outside create an interface between the interior and the outside environment offering new experiences to be enjoyed while having conversation in the space. The location of the interactive space is very open and inviting for every backpackers staying in the retreat. The space has been designed to offer new experience especially in interacting with the nature but at the same time provide an openness for the guest to the enjoy the space while sharing their experiences (Figure 3). Considerations of the quality of interactive space mentioned by Rahaman and Tan(2009) and environmental potentials have been well integrated in the design.

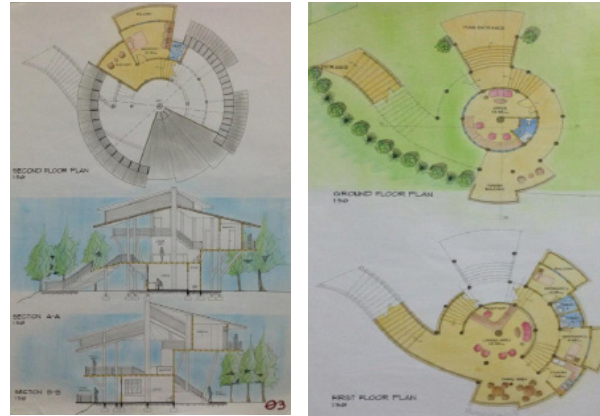


Figure 3: Centralized Social Space

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