Synopsis

The study examines the relationships among personal, social and environmental variables to better understand the nature of the interaction between individuals and the designed environment. People are influenced by the building and other physical settings they occupy. An understanding of these issues is important to architectural practice and the formulation of public policy. People and the built environment interaction involve the behavioural, psychological and physiological characteristics. A behavioural analysis considers how people use and alter their physical surroundings and how configurations modify behaviour. A psychological analysis describes the interaction between perception and space. This includes people’s assessments, preferences, and abilities to describe space as well as the effect of space and motivation and feelings of well-being. A physiological analysis considers the direct and indirect impact of buildings and building systems (i.e. lighting, thermal, acoustics, etc.) on the physical health of individuals and groups.

The objective of this dissertation is to discover the social significance of public spaces in HDB precincts, specifically the relationship between community spirit and the built environment.

The precinct concept of planning has been the basic planning tool adopted by HDB when designing for community spirit. In the first part of the dissertation, I shall carry out a case study of a HDB precinct to find out about the social significance of the spaces in those precincts. This is helpful because factors might work differently in different context. More specifically, it relates theory to application. For the purpose of study, the precinct is divided according to
hierarchy of spaces — common corridor, lift lobby, void deck\(^2\) and external landscape. This will be done through interviews with residents and on site observation.

I shall then look at the human structuration process of his environment. This is important because the social significance of man's environment is derived from the perception of his environment. Site item and linkage items are two tools by which man derive knowledge of his environment. It is a sequential experience in which most of the visual input are absorbed step-by-step. This process is selective and is influenced by an individual's motivation and expectation. By combining it with principles of abstraction and symbolisation, man tends to identify relationships and put meaning to it as they carry about their daily activities.

The next part looks at the various personal, social and physical factors of an environment and the potential relationship that they are capable of generating. This will be related back to the case studies presented in the earlier part of the dissertation. The purpose is to understand why people behave a certain way in a certain environment.

The next part are proposals for planning for community spirit in HDB in the future. It discusses how planners may plan for the future.

Finally, to summarise and propose any ideas learnt from this discussion that may be useful to planners.

\(^2\) Void deck refers to the free ground floor space of HDB flats. See Section 5.3.3 for explanation.