Abstract

To snuggle into the protective warmth of a “community” and to be nourished by its tolerance and understanding are deep longings shared by many people today especially in a highly modernised society like ours. However, what used to be a deep and demanding relationship among community members, has now been replaced by a “community” of isolated individuals tied together by circumscribed relationships and superficial role playing.

In the past many communities flourished in the setting which they had no say in the design of; that they were simply allocated, or rented, or bought. The alienating quality of much modern architecture is caused not just by the un-involvedness of the community in its creation, but a lot has do with how it is designed. These projects are mostly based on impoverished or irrelevant architectural theory, that states a hypothesis that is far removed from the lives of ordinary people.

In public housing especially, the most emphasis has been placed on dwelling units of the right size, cost and orientation, laid out to suit the large scale plant of a modern construction site. Less emphasis, or understanding has been lavished on life outside the dwelling unit, vis-a-vis communal spaces, where social interaction among community members are most likely to occur.

This dissertation seeks to analyse the construction of communal spaces in public housing, what are the underlying assumptions or theories behind its making and how they are promoted as instruments for community formation. The intention of the dissertation is also to highlight ways where architects can make positive contributions toward shaping a less alienating housing environment, (especially when it comes to the design of open spaces) to one that sparks rather than inhibit community formation.