Welcome to the ‘Architecture Uganda’ issue for this year’s second quarter. It has been an adventure for the team that put this together – amidst this new normal we have had to inevitably experience. For weeks, the USA Media Team worked diligently to this end. I hope you find it worth your time. We bring to you experiences lived, stories told and lessons learned by several categories of people in the profession. Featured in this issue also is an architectural project that continues the series of celebrated architecture in Uganda accompanied by the student chapter.

The COVID-19 pandemic has struck the architectural profession pretty hard both in practice and education. It has uncovered the unnoticed forces that shape the built environment and established itself as a new force in the line of work. The design community is an irreplaceable one that we can take advantage of as a profession for our clients and the community.

Universities and tertiary institutions still face the uncertainty over the recommencement of normal end of year activities including final reviews and thesis exhibitions. Their future is now indoubtably remote teaching and learning as urged by the Ministry of Education. However, the point at hand is how we can still get meaningful architectural education within the schools that have limited power to shift the ‘goalposts’ for students to carry out their work without reducing the expected output. With the new delivery models and technology recommended, physical studio space remains essential for architectural education.

It is important that we comply with government guidelines and to keep in mind that safety is essential. We do not have to wait for life to get back to normal but rather embrace the ‘new normal’ or even create our own.

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Editor

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On the cover
Yamasen Japanese Restaurant (Photograph by Timothy Latim)

On the back
Yamasen Japanese Restaurant (Photograph by Timothy Latim)

Yamasen Japanese Restaurant  (Photograph by Timothy Latim)
Greetings dear Colleagues!

Interesting times that we live in today as the world is trying to grapple with the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 from the corona virus. We have seen some countries, majorly in the first world hit the most by this virus. A lot of information has come through in an effort to explain why some countries are having fewer deaths from this virus than others and again, contrary to the expectations of many, why Africa has been the least hit by the same. As such, we have seen many theories arising from different medical personnel across the world, including the fact that the virus spreads easily in cold conditions as compared to the hotter places, that Africans do not travel as much and therefore the spread was not as fast as it is elsewhere in the world, that the strain of the virus keeps diminishing in its fatality the more it spreads, and so many other explanations. One thing is for sure, during the last 4 months the pandemic has greatly affected our operations to the extent that a number of nations, including our very own Uganda, went into lockdown thus affecting the various economies negatively. During this time as well, there have been conversations springing forth about the future with the corona virus, and bringing it closer to us, its effect on the architecture of tomorrow.

Arch. Jacinta Kabarungi
President, Uganda Society of Architects

Architecture is very unique as whenever a problem is identified, that specific problem is addressed with a design solution. This includes but is not limited to, for example, when there is a demand for housing, the architect will design for housing, if entertainment is the requirement, then we have the hospitality/leisure sector being catered for, right down to health and institutional requirements. The common denominator in addressing all these requirements is the aspect of the social nature of man and as a designer, one will always have to make provision for the public spaces which are shared spaces by all the visitors to each of the facilities within the various sectors outlined above.

As aforementioned, human beings by nature are social beings and interact with each other on a daily basis. Life is basically what it is, based on relationships with our family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances and strangers in all avenues of life that we find ourselves in. As such, isolation is considered inhumane and is undesirable especially when not a personal choice. No wonder prisons, which are isolation facilities for perfectly healthy people, are specific to crime offenders and are their places of habitation for as long as one is found guilty of a crime. This reason alone, I wonder that the worst criminals are always isolated further away from those considered less dangerous. But either way, within our own homes the worst punishment one can ever give a child is to isolate them for a time as this is known to have adverse effects on the child.

So what is our role as architects in this regard? Are we ready for change? Can we be the drivers of that change? Do we even need change? One in support of change may argue that we need it in our design principles and standards and even the regulations at a policy level, thus affecting the type of change that would be required as a solution to the ongoing corona virus pandemic. One against change could argue that our future should not be one that limits or imprisons man and subjects him to a life of no interaction with fellow man, or limited interaction with fellow man, for this goes against everything that defines man. To one it is the faith that our interaction is more important and cannot be done away with while to another, isolation might seem a much better option. It all comes down to every one’s personal opinion but is food for thought in determining how we shape our future.

I am a firm believer that in all things, however negative they might seem, there is always something good that awaits its manifestation only if those who are positive minded show up and go for it. The case of Uganda regarding the corona virus is one for which we need to grab the opportunities that it has presented to us. Uganda has for the longest time faced the problem of slums and needy areas that are known to be sources of most of the outbreaks of epidemics in the city and towns due to the extremely poor sanitary conditions therein including poor ventilation, poor sanitation and overcrowding amongst others. Isn’t the COVID-19 pandemic an opportunity to make a valid case to revisit the existing laws in place and ensure that we, the architects, actively participate in ensuring that all housing in Uganda is healthy, safe and affordable for every person living in Uganda? Likewise, isn’t this the time for us as architects to join our colleagues in the medical profession to make a case for the quality of healthcare within the country? The hospitals and health centers around the country badly need to be refurbished as they are in a dilapidated state and besides, the country needs even more of these to serve the ever growing population. And lastly, the border entry and exit points require health facilities to accommodate the amount of traffic at each point. This glaring inadequacy has been brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic and is the reason why the 20th Council of the Uganda Society of Architects decided to address the border point crisis by focusing on the Malaba border post, a heavily trafficked point at the Uganda-Kenya border, by the provision of a set up movable hospital, the EpiTent, an innovation by our own graduate architect, Grace Nakibala. And indeed I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you who gave towards this cause, it is our hope that others will build onto what we started in Malaba and carry it through to all the border points as a short term measure awaiting the construction of permanent facilities.

In conclusion I will say that the ongoing pandemic, if anything, has added to our cause to see the situation in our nation changing by having the architects’ voice being heard at the national and international levels and being heeded to by our government and the general public as well. We need to reclaim our position as the head of the consultant team and most especially as problem solvers in our communities and country at large. We need to take the necessary steps in ensuring this to its desired end of government and the public acknowledging that relevance in society for a better future in our country and world at large. Some of you have been reached out to, and more of you will be reached out to in this noble cause as we seek to restore our place in society.

For God and my Country!
As part of the nation-wide efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, and in line with our mandate as Architects to provide safe and healthy habitable spaces, USA undertook the initiative to provide a “quick build” temporary structure, specially designed to meet the requirements of handling epidemics and pandemics of the nature of COVID-19. This unique structure is known as the EpiTent, an innovation by one of our Graduate Architects, Ms. Grace Nakibaala.

This decision was reached following the reports from the Ministry of Health that indicated that while the virus had been largely contained within Uganda, threats remained at the borders where there are limited facilities to be used either as isolation or screening centres. As such Malaba which is known to be a high traffic area between Uganda and Kenya was selected as USA’s point of focus.

The Epitent, set up on a prepared concrete slab, has the following unique features:

1. A lean ventilation system
2. Up to 95% heat reduction within its walls unlike ordinary tents that are known to contain a lot of heat. The tent is easy to clean with detergents that are considered ideal for sanitising medical facilities and combating the spread of epidemics. Although the detergents are normally corrosive with ordinary tents, they have no such impact on the EpiTent.
3. The EpiTent has a solar panel clump system to support the insertion of a solar panel for solar lighting seeing as in many places, accessibility to electricity tends to be difficult. However, in the event that electricity is available, provisions are available for its entry, distribution and usage.
4. The tent also has PVC flooring making it easy to clean and maintain and always having a neat appearance.

It has worktops, hangers for placement of drips and rods to contain curtain separators. Its window openings are nicely meshed to let in adequate light and fresh air. They allow for visual continuity without making the patient feel confined. The mesh controls entry of bugs, insects and dust.

The EpiTent is a product of Resilient Africa Network (RAN) and is manufactured by Luwero Industries. On Friday 12th June 2020, it was handed over by the USA President, Arch Jacinta Kabarungi to the Tororo District Health Officer represented by Dr. Apollo O. Epuwatt and the Malaba Port Health in charge (Ministry of Health), Dr. Major Denis Turyagyenda. Also present were representatives from the Uganda Medical Association. We are glad to have been able to contribute to the saving of lives during the pandemic and deeply appreciate our members who made this possible. We also appreciate the Architects Registration for the generous contribution made towards the realization of this project. We specially appreciate Arch Peter Mivule, Arch Abdu Wahab Nyanzi and Arch Denis Kiberu (Ministry of Health), who actively worked to ensure that USA realizes a successful project and commissioning of the EpiTent. It is our prayer that other Professional Associations will also plug into the efforts to curbing the spread of the disease at the Border points.

By Mrs. Caroline Candice Watelo
Executive Secretary, Uganda Society of Architects
Dr. Major Denis Turyagyenda, Dr. Apollo O. Epukwatt opening one of the windows of the epitent.

Arch. Catherine Muyinda, and Arch. Jacinta Kabungu
We encourage households to ensure proper cross ventilation of dwellings, by opening up windows, vents and any blocked aeration pathways within dwellings.

Maintain proper drainage and sanitation in and out of the home surroundings by ensuring the drainage/sanitation areas are properly cleaned regularly.

Plan the seating and sleeping arrangements within homes to allow for social distancing.

In public spaces like markets and hospitals, maintain all WHO guidelines and ensure that these premises adhere to proper ventilation and sanitation of their spaces. All drainage channels should be cleaned regularly and solid waste disposed of on a daily basis.

For areas/communities which do not have access to National water and sewerage corporation running water, we advise the use of DIY methods like tippy taps or pedal taps connected to enclosed water containers.
months ago, the world saw a new enemy. An invisible enemy that affects all humanity, irrespective of race, religion, or economic status. The Coronavirus spread across the globe leading to the lockdown of activity in attempts to curtail the infection rates.

As a country the government took various steps to safeguard the population, our cities gradually transitioned into lockdown, with restrictions on movement, business, and operations. As the lockdowns were lifted partially, some normalcy is returning, but our way of life will never be the same. The call for Social distancing has affected the designs for architecture and engineering practice.

As the lockdown of activity in attempts to curtail the infection rates.

The reception desk for example is no longer just a sign in spot but is littered with temperature guns and sanitisers. The surfaces for touch such as door handles, lift buttons, are contact points that present risks for transmission of the virus. These call for innovative operating mechanisms that limit contact.

Workstation design now calls for the appropriate spacing of at least 2m to provide for social distancing. The boardroom and meeting rooms have to be reconfigured for less density. There have been cases where meetings are moved outdoors, such as the parliamentary sessions. Also, traffic flow and movement of pedestrians should be audited and controlled to mitigate cross-traffic and contact.

Occupancy numbers is another area of focus. In supermarkets or restrooms, for example, we are beginning to see control of numbers of users, sometimes by a security guard or by a digital card counter. Signage is cropping up to advise and warn the public.

So, the architects and engineers need to adopt their design solutions to the “new normal”. Architects are also being called on to provide specific health sector solutions such as design for hospital and quarantine facilities.

The way professionals work is also being redefined. Working hours have changed to beat the government curfews so that the staff get back home in time. Because transport costs are almost twice in value, some firms are scheduling staff hours in shifts where half of the work is done from home.

Most of the meetings are transitioning to online platforms like zoom and GoToMeeting. Professionals, therefore, need to take on the steep learning curve and adopt or learn these technologies that can aid remote working. Office culture has been disrupted. The days of bustling over a desk drawing plans, in a studio, is long gone, in favour of hours at home with a computer instead.

However, a challenge is being faced where it is critical to inspect construction sites or engage with a client over a concept that is difficult to explain on a screen. The Society and ministry have responded with standard operating procedures that guide on safety requirements for construction sites.

The biggest question though is the financial sustainability of the business. Some architects have lost their jobs or construction projects have stalled or outright been cancelled. Students might lose a year with the dead year possibility and graduates on the hunt for jobs will have fewer opportunities. Yes, there has been a surprising spike in residential housing activity for some but broadly across the construction sector, the institutional developers are slowing down their activity. This climate raises some real concerns of how a start-up and a mid-level institutional developers are slowing down their activity.

The professionals need to re-invent their approach to client acquisition, lean operations, business planning and seek alternative income streams. The professionals need to re-invent their approach to client acquisition, lean operations, business planning, and seek alternative income streams. It is important to find the new opportunities that COVID-19 is opening up while truncating off the routine approaches that leave you prone to collapse. We don’t yet know when this will end, or if a cure will be found. So need to find ways to live with this present reality.
The 100th of lockdown for the graduate architect

There is a wisecrack on social media of how the calendar year 2020 is suddenly a five-month year comprised of January, February, March, Lockdown, and December. Buying into this witticism would also side-splittingly mean today is the 100th of lockdown 2020, but what pearls of wisdom has the Graduate Architect adopted due to the COVID-19 reality.

The wall facade
A life flavoured often by dependence on salary, hardly any time to take on part-time work to make ends meet, home late often due to overtime and suddenly the home-work, work-home routine is broken. Now we must make an analysis of our living requirements against our career choices and yet saving is a jest. The lack of alternatives then amplifies what a friend you have in money. Your mind won’t lay to rest the idea of whether your diverse remuneration requirements for saving and growth can be met.

In another court, someone “Ewaka” has had the last 2 years planned to break the intimacy of the words graduate and architect and finally voice something at an annual general meeting. But now with this “Tonsemberera” paradigm, if only the visit to the secretariat came sooner because now all the communications propose tentative dates. Perhaps embarking on further studies is another idea, wait, universities closed.

Another visit to your frontal lobe reveals the tragedy that internship is stalled and this eats into your last quarter.

One of those mornings when every day is every day and you can’t tell apart the different days of the week. You take time to reflect on your individual contribution to the world as the pandemic exposes the failures of architectural intervention, especially for the urban poor. Perhaps now is a great time to make a proposal towards housing design innovations for highly populated areas like Soweto slum or maybe product design for better sanitation and cross ventilation or even something as wild as a self-cleaning doorknob.

Two weeks go by and it’s clear that kind of thing is not for you, it’s always been money before problems, drafting before design, CAD before sketching in a work where business is bigger than consultancy. So, you agree to let the architectural students dream and hopefully touch your reflection before the word graduate meets architect.

The involuntary flatteries
It is complimentary that the world is already echoing the predominance of the internet to millennials. So, not going to an office simply amplifies the relevance of online communications, operations, and technology. No physical presence was an easy goal in executing design tasks working at home, until one of your tasks was a site visit, then “How to use BIM” became a common curiosity on your browser, well, unless you were willing to sleep on site.

After the first 14 days, you think of finishing up your passion projects, improving or developing a skill, and maybe taking on the whole sketching expression of architecture. You have a lot of time on your hands, the opportunities are infinite, it’s all due to the countless days in this month, it’s all the time you have never had.

A future painted
The effect of the COVID-19 paradigm eventually highlights the need to get back to imagination, creation of ideas, and innovations that value the quality of life. And so, the graduate architect now advocates for a place where problem-solving takes centre stage over business.

A future without internet is a hoax, the employer who thought not to value the contribution of the internet and networking systems of operations has the opportunity to transform their office with these young explorative minds. As Johann Friedrich von Schiller once said, “The joke loses everything when the joker laughs himself”, every office will now maintain an updated website, the 4th revolution is inevitable.
Adapting to Online Learning in the Face of a Global Pandemic

By Tadeo Nedala, Students’ representative - Uganda Society of Architects & Brenda Kirabo, MArch student - Uganda Martyrs University

A s schools have been closed as a precaution to control the spread of COVID-19, students have suddenly been thrust into a world of online learning. This swift transition has presented students of architecture, at many institutions in Uganda with technological challenges. The transition has also presented an opportunity of learning and adapting to the global trend of virtual education. While architecture students have grown accustomed to the benefits from the studio culture, there is a challenge and an inquiry into how students are adapting to online education.

In the architectural design studio, students learn to design through peer-to-peer and peer-to-instructor discourse. Individual work and interaction of students in the same space with the absence of the instructor is a part of learning that encourages dialogue and thus rich in feedback. In studio, students make drawings and 3D models to test hypotheses. Through reviews, design proposals are reviewed and feedback is used to improve design work, propose alternatives and explore their consequences. So, the studio is a social environment where students communicate, critique, and respond to criticism of their ideas. However, this learning experience has now been flipped as peer-to-peer and peer-to-instructor discourse is conducted in separate physical locations but the same virtual space. The boundaries of this space, while undefined, are only recognised when having review sessions with tutors because there is a set time and topic of discussion.

The unexpected challenge is how to cope with the issues of virtual learning. In the process of learning, there are various pop-up questions of “will the network be stable?”, “will my voice be heard?”, “will the electricity be on?” These are questions that necessitate prior planning and organisation to be poised for classes. Virtual learning enunciates isolation, which leaves some students doubtful of meeting their course’s learning objectives without the support system born of studio culture. Although there is uncertainty, there have been efforts to remain proactive. Other than the Google-native study program of Google Classroom, students in different schools of architecture have had to be up-to-date with platforms such as Zoom and Skype. These platforms are being used to facilitate effective participation in class assignments through computer-aided discourse. In an effort to adjust to e-learning, students are having inter-class and inter-university learning through setting up “WhatsApp”, “Facebook”, “Slack”, and “Telegram” platforms to encourage discourse. Furthermore, advice from lecturers is encouraging reference to online tutorials to help improve sketching, CAD skills and illustration. This has been helpful in improving the quality of student work towards design communication. As students find their feet within the virtual environment, there is still a need for a space in which one can focus and commit to participating in classes.

The home/personal space has had to be adjusted to support modelling, drawing, and video calls. While the university studio was a space that accommodated many students, it now exists as a virtual room with the ground work of having in an individual work space at home. The challenge has been to adjust one’s room to enable them to be comfortable with video calls, conducting research, and conceptualising design proposals. Students are setting up environments that are dedicated to learning. Although the home has a lot of space dedicated to living, and resting, there has been a trial and error process of determining an environment that lends oneself greater productivity and the least distractions while working. The design process has also provided a sort of DIY (Do It Yourself) project for people to redesign certain spaces into study environments. More so, the dedicated space has had to have a high-speed internet connection to prevent choppy Zoom call sessions.

A new location for a physical studio
The home/personal space has had to be adjusted to support modelling, drawing, and video calls. While the university studio was a space that accommodated many students, it now exists as a virtual room with the ground work of having in an individual work space at home. The challenge has been to adjust one’s room to enable them to be comfortable with video calls, conducting research, and conceptualising design proposals. Students are setting up environments that are dedicated to learning. Although the home has a lot of space dedicated to living, and resting, there has been a trial and error process of determining an environment that lends oneself greater productivity and the least distractions while working. The design process has also provided a sort of DIY (Do It Yourself) project for people to redesign certain spaces into study environments. More so, the dedicated space has had to have a high-speed internet connection to prevent choppy Zoom call sessions.

As has been the case in the university studio, active participation and keen follow-up has been taken into online learning. Virtual peer-to-peer discussions continue to prove helpful amongst students to complete assignments. This entails review of written documents, design work, and following up with class schedules. Key aspects that are influential in adjusting to online learning have included establishment of a functional workspace at home, utilising drawing recursos, actively participating in online class assignments through computer-aided discourse. The home/office/workspace at home has been instrumental in adjusting to online learning. Virtual peer-to-peer discussions continue to prove helpful amongst students to complete assignments. This entails review of written documents, design work, and following up with class schedules. Key aspects that are influential in adjusting to online learning have included establishment of a functional workspace at home, utilising drawing recursos, actively participating in online class assignments through computer-aided discourse. Although there is uncertainty, there have been efforts to remain proactive. Other than the Google-native study program of Google Classroom, students in different schools of architecture have had to be up-to-date with platforms such as Zoom and Skype. These platforms are being used to facilitate effective participation in class assignments through computer-aided discourse. In an effort to adjust to e-learning, students are having inter-class and inter-university learning through setting up “WhatsApp”, “Facebook”, “Slack”, and “Telegram” platforms to encourage discourse. Furthermore, advice from lecturers is encouraging reference to online tutorials to help improve sketching, CAD skills and illustration. This has been helpful in improving the quality of student work towards design communication. As students find their feet within the virtual environment, there is still a need for a space in which one can focus and commit to participating in classes.

There are lessons to learn from to how students are adjusting to online learning during the restriction on opening universities. However, in the case of another lockdown(s), how prepared would we be to learning outside the university studio? What initiatives can be put in place to accommodate such an occurrence? What’s more, if universities are reopened, will architecture learning continue as it did before or it will incorporate lessons learned from the virtual space?
Context
Kampala, the Capital City of Uganda, is currently under lockdown. The Uganda government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by first introducing the 14-day quarantine at the international airport, and then eventually shutting down all borders. A 21-day lockdown was introduced soon after, which has since been extended by another 14 days, to May 26, 2020. After this date we anticipate a gradual lifting of the lockdown.

Nakasero Market, the oldest and most vibrant market in the center of Kampala, has stayed open during the lockdown, adapting to new guidelines and social distancing. By exploring the current conditions in the market, we documented the innovative ways in which they have continued to operate as a safe public space.

Interaction
Students from Washington University in St Louis (WASHU) and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) worked collaboratively, exchanging observations and understandings of the site. One set of students knew Kampala well, while the other had never visited. The stall is comprised of 3 major essentials: wooden crates, a tarpaulin, and an umbrella. Over time, this marketplace binding the vendors, their merchandise, and the buyers; a shared constructed identity that one would describe as seemingly chaotic and very flexible. By exploring the current conditions in the market, we documented the innovative ways in which they have continued to operate as a safe public space.

Group 1 Methodology
By Doreen Adengo & Jonathan Stittleman

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Students Working Remotely
COVID-19 global pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the world. Cities and regions all over the world have been forced to adopt a new normal. Subsequently, this year’s Kampala Global Urbanism workshop was run virtually. Students from Uganda Martyrs University in collaboration with Washington University St. Louis had an opportunity to explore their role as designers in a post-COVID era. The daunting task was to rethink space associations and to envision design that supports resilience of fresh food Markets operating under new distancing guidelines. Focus for the workshop was geared towards analyzing intangible conditions within Nakasero Market in relation to how they have adapted to the government guidelines on the pandemic.

The joint collaboration between students from Uganda Martyrs University and Washington University in St Louis aimed to analyze existing site conditions, then with the help of virtual platforms observe, exchange, and share potential approaches. At the end of an intense two-week deliberation, the submissions from eight groups all geared to propose long-term strategies to guide Nakasero market operations.

Phase 1: Site Analysis
Nakasero Market during the Lockdown

Phase 1: Site Analysis
We identified that the market stalls make up the market’s morphology. The stalls contribute to the informality and the fluidity within the market compound. They are the life of the marketplace binding the vendors, their merchandise, and the buyers; a shared constructed identity that one would describe as seemingly chaotic and very flexible. Our approach looked at deconstructing the stall and analyzing each individual component and how it contributes to the functioning of the stall as a whole. We went further to identify the plasticity of stall assemblages throughout the day either as individual units or as combined elements to see how vendors interact with them.

A commentary by Elizabeth Nabagereka
Taking part in the workshop was an opportunity to venture outside my comfort zone and work with a diverse group of students from different contexts/ background. It was an opportunity to learn and observe how peers approach design tasks differently. Working remotely presented a set of challenges with the main being distinctive time zones. Therefore, allocating time to work, meet and compile work was tough. However, we eventually found a way around it. Another opportunity was interpreting or analyzing the site virtually, unable to visit the market physically or talk to the vendors directly. In hindsight, however, this helped us view the market through a different lens (literally). A two-week time frame was tight, considering we had to work around the clock to deliver an agreeable team submission. This workshop was a test of our thinking and drawing ability, and as a group we grew to rely on each other’s strengths to produce meaningful work.
Phase 2: Project proposal

Towards the design phase, we dissected the market, concluding on 3 currently existing prototype stalls. We identified that 69% of the vendors are female; concluding the actor as the ‘Abakyala b’omukatale’- which loosely translated means ‘women of the market’. By following them throughout the day we see how they interface with different stall elements and how they reconfigure them either to fit their location or to respond to the conditions at the time they work.

Reworking

The proposal looks at complimenting the existing market structure while resolving problems that include limited space, air circulation and social distancing. We start by proposing a grid network system that is defined by poles. These can be used to demarcate space, accommodate enhanced storage, support a water canopy system and can also be turned into a private room when needed. In this way, the design echoes the flexibility of the traditional stalls while encompassing a new form.

We identified that 69% of the vendors are female; concluding the actor as the ‘Abakyala b’omukatale’- which loosely translated means ‘women of the market’

We identified the scarcity of water taps/points for the vendor in the market thus the design also looked at the specifics of rain water harvesting from the roof tarpaulin into a barrel that can be used by the vendor to meet the cleanliness requirements under the official Standard Operation Procedures.

Lastly, in order to keep up with social distancing rules working shifts were established to lower foot traffic around the market. Vendors were relocated from their usual locations. We proposed a movable and flexible crate that could be used for storage, display and rest.
GROUP 4 METHODOLOGY

Jin Qi, Chen Dunyang, Marilyn Rebecca Aber

A commentary by Marilyn Rebecca Aber

The workshop presented me with the opportunity to collaborate while working remotely. We worked in groups, each having at least one student from Uganda Martyrs University and students from Washington University in St. Louis. The experience prompted the need for efficiency especially due to the two-week time frame.

On some days, productivity was hampered by unstable Internet connectivity and electricity blackouts; this however did not halt team progress. We made the most of what was available.

Working with a team of students who had not been to the site before was enlightening, because through this collaboration we learned new things about Nakasero together. It was astounding; the level questions asked, the amount of information gathered, and the overall interpretation of the site despite our inability to visit the market physically.

Phase 1: Site Analysis

We defined Nakasero market as vibrant; a conclusion reached not only because of the market’s location but also the pedestrian and vehicular traffic in and around the market. We sought to decipher what made the market space lively, both before and during the pandemic, which lead us to analyse general movement patterns.

The element, movement, explores the access and accessibility of both people and goods towards and within Nakasero market and how these have changed amidst the pandemic—illustrating what, who and how the market is accessed at different times of the day.

We concluded the analysis by creating two categories:

I. Human powered movement
II. Mechanical movement

Phase 2: Project proposal.

Here, we directed our focus inside the market, studying the flexibility (range of motion) inside the market. This approach was inspired by the definition of flexibility in regards to the human body; the ability of the muscles to bring a limb (the market space users) through its full range (the market space) of motion. Electing the porter as the main actor, we were able to understand how porters move through the market, what aids them, and if they experienced any challenges/restrictions.

We therefore proposed to:

I. Expand the market vertically.

This strategy proposes a vertical expansion, with the use of staircases, addressing some of the challenges related to flexibility by de-congesting the ground level of the market. The staircases serve as an elevation tool and sitting platforms for the porters, giving them a place rest while having an overview of the market, so that they could easily identify potential customers. Also catered for in the design are the disabled. The inclusion of ramps next to the staircases and the general spatial layout of the market would aid universal/barrier free access for all market users.

II. Re-design the individual market stalls.

We designed a 2 x 2 metre module for a market stall that will ensure that people can buy fresh produce without making direct physical contact. The design consists of two 2x1 stalls organised in 2 metre square grids that are 4m apart on either side; following the town council’s social distancing protocols.

Each 2x1 metre stall is separated by the wooden crate, limiting the contact between vendors. A single stall has two counters: the orders and display and the pickup counter, reducing physical contact between vendor and customer to zero. Also included is the holding area, which doubles as a disinfection area for goods that have been dropped off to be picked up by the porters.
Cycling into the Future

By Elizabeth Njeri
Chairperson of the Architecture Students Association
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

Try as I might, I certainly cannot run away from Covid-19. Be it in my online studies, day to day conversations, or in matters related to that which I have come to adore design. You know how it is with the songs you dislike, that somehow you know all the lyrics but you can’t seem to get a hang of the lyrics to the song you like, well, the phrase ‘new normal’ is it for me. It is by now a cliché but I can’t stop myself from overusing it. This new normal has led to less congested cities, cleaner roads, air, not to mention people well nonmotorized transport is most definitely the way to go.

Public transport coupled up with nonmotorized transport is most definitely the way to go. Vehicle dominated cities should not be encouraged as it is not space-efficient for the city, and the negative environmental impact is staggering high as compared to pedestrian dominated cities. Moreover, it is healthier to walk or cycle than to sit in a car alone and drive a distance that is reasonably within walking range. More people walking means a reduction of cars on the road hence reducing traffic and therefore making it much safer to be on the streets as a pedestrian.

Albert Einstein mentioned that in every difficulty lies opportunity and that is the cue we as designers should take to re-design our cities bit by bit. If they could not build Rome in three days then we should expect to take far longer than that to make this change a reality. Small changes from the creation of sidewalks where there were none, and wide sidewalks for that matter, so that more and more people are encouraged to walk along the streets of our cities instead of being forced to use cars or any other motorized means of transport. Just to shed light as to why walking and cycling are the preferred methods of transit where shorter distances are being covered, in Nairobi alone over $1 Billion is lost in productivity every single year due to traffic jams. There are so many ways a country can utilize $1 Billion and I am certain that throwing it to the wind is not one of them. Public transport coupled up with nonmotorized transport is most definitely the way to go.

Re-designing of cities would ensure that pedestrian walkways are wider and more interactive, cyclists are provided their own lane and that both these lanes are inaccessible to the notorious matatu drivers. This will go hand in hand with the provision of pedestrian controlled traffic lights instead of the preferred automated ones that have a bias towards vehicles. These traffic lights have been proven to significantly reduce the number of accidents that increasingly occur at pedestrian crossings. Adaptive traffic lights that give priority to pedestrians is a solution that is on the pipeline to becoming a reality. With such innovations in the technology arena, the implementation of nonmotorized transport will be simplified and efficient enough for nations even in the third world like ours to adopt.

To dwell on the health aspect of pedestrian dominated cities, the mental health of a population could greatly be improved by simply walking to and from work instead of driving. The endorphins and serotonin that improve your mood are released when you exercise, through walking or cycling. Depression, anxiety, among other mental health conditions can easily be addressed and as a nation, we can get a step closer to eliminating them altogether. The physical benefits are also undeniable. Being physically fit is part of many people’s goals but whether they achieve it or not is for another day. Physiological benefits of walking and cycling have been long drummed into our sub-conscious, yet here I am beating the drum once again. Obesity, heart-related diseases, stroke, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes just to mention but a few could just about be reduced to half by exercising daily.

Public health is a broad term that can be used to allude to the well-being of citizens of a particular country and all that goes into ensuring its sustenance. Design is a major stakeholder in ensuring the advancement of public health. All designers are called upon to step up and add public health as one of the many things that they consider when coming up with a wholesome design fit to be actualized and hopefully stand the test of time. After all, one of our rudimentary desires as human beings is to be remembered, striving to be remembered for the good we helped achieve can certainly not be too much to ask for.

Re-designing of cities would ensure that pedestrian walkways are wider and more interactive...

Cycling in a city
Architecture education in the age of COVID-19

By Shani Victor Mutero
Chairperson of the Architecture Students Association, University of Nairobi

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about change in every part of society more drastically than anything we have experienced in our lifetime. Embracing this change should be the impetus for a long overdue diversification in the way teaching is carried out. We now find ourselves in a position where it is becoming increasingly necessary to adapt to this new reality. As Thomas Friedman, a columnist for The New York Times said of online learning back in 2012, “Big breakthroughs happen when what is suddenly possible, meets what is desperately needed.”

With that said, it is important to acknowledge that despite all practical preparations that may be taken through online learning platforms, one of the biggest challenges facing students of Architecture is the lack of a physical studio environment. The lack of interaction and physical presence undeniably eats into the drive to create and produce. A recent survey conducted by Archdaily.com revealed that one of the main challenges of having to work from home is the lack of informal interaction between peers. This just goes to show how social we are as human beings.

The fact that we are facing an unprecedented situation however, means that we have to find ways of adjusting by implementing e-learning strategies. These tools may not be 100% effective, but they will undoubtedly get the show on the road.

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

The University of Nairobi has responded to this current crisis by tapping into its existing investment in the ODeL campus (Open, Distance and e-Learning Campus) which was launched in 2017. It is anchored by a structure that gives it the mandate to sensitize and build the Institution’s capacity for online learning. During this period, teaching staff have been trained to write study materials and produce videos of their lectures which are available in the LMS (Learning Management System).

It is noteworthy that the rolling out of this initiative has not gone unimpeded. The case of students living in far-flung areas that lack internet connectivity and electricity have been recurring themes. The Administration is currently and actively trying to tackle this issue through asynchronous learning tools such as Google classroom and Moodle LMS.

Asynchronous learning is a general term used to describe forms of education and learning that do not occur in the same place or at the same time. It uses resources that facilitate information sharing outside the constraints of time and place among a network of students. This considerable move plays to the advantage of students through its flexibility, affordability and freedom to set an appropriate learning pace.

DISCORD

ASA-UoN back in January launched a student-friendly, free and online resource through a proprietary freeware called DISCORD. This is a digital platform that specializes in text, image, screen-sharing and audio communication between users in a chat channel. This has enabled students to access design resources and software classes with step by step guidance from readily available team leaders who are students as well.

DISCORD gains its pre-eminence from the presence of chat channels which can be compartmentalized according to need. Key design software such as Revit and ArchiCAD each have their own channels, where the team-leaders engage students and come up with answers to frequently asked questions in order to achieve envisioned design outcomes. There further exists channels for books and memes for respite purposes. Another inherent advantage of this platform is that the record of discussions held and answers shared are accessible even years down the line as they are stored in thread form, within its server. This is proof that the move to online learning has given us the opportunity to redefine the learning experience and that Great teaching, can happen through any medium.

School departments across the region should strive to keep open lines of communication with their students knowing that this is a very uncertain and anxious time for a lot of people. Now, more than ever, learning institutions should regularly check in with their students, take feedback and make adjustments to their various solutions to online learning. Where there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.
As the world is undergoing a global pandemic caused by Coronavirus, almost everything in our daily lives took and adapted to new norms and realities. Its impact went far from just being a global health crisis to affecting almost every industry in the world. It taught people to see things under a whole new angle. Architecture industry as one of the impactful industries in the world, it has also been affected even though the intensity differs from one country to another depending on different factors mainly the level of development. As a profession that deals with day to day lives of people, architecture has been affected in such a way that the architects have started to rethink the priorities and aspects of design as their works touch directly the human lives and for a lifetime. Apart from that, architects around the world have set up ways to help in the fight against the pandemic by providing innovative designs to help mitigate the problem.

As most places around the world faced lockdowns, schools closed doors and tried to conform to new ways of virtual learning. In Rwanda, it has not been a success as a way of resuming formal classes for architecture and non-architecture schools. From the start of the lockdown in March, educational institutions together with the government tried to tackle the issues associated with the transition by investing more energy in virtual learning, but due to some students living in remote areas where in some cases they don’t even have access to adequate infrastructures like electricity and internet coverage, it has been a challenge. In addition, as architecture education specifically requires more physical interaction and some physical studio works, it made it more difficult for architecture students.

For that, some telecom companies in Rwanda offered their support by allowing students to access E-learning platforms for free. Even though that didn’t mitigate the issue, it at least raised the number of students who have access to essential tools for their day to day learning. Now everybody is waiting for schools to resume in September.

On the side of architecture practice in Rwanda, impacts are also alerting. Like most other industries, architects are facing different measures associated with the pandemic like reduction in the number of firm’s workers, salary trims, hardships adapting to the new modality of working from home, and others like reduction in the number of clients. And since the architecture practice carries with it some special exigence like the need to work together for sharing ideas, that brought some additional challenges to it specifically. For instance, some junior architects are now facing a problem of having to develop more design proposals for their supervisors, which eased the process. Also, many projects are now pending due to financial issues requiring some physical involvement of both the architect and client views. My observation during that lecture was that, there is a need to create a platform for clients to interact with us and include them in the design process. This will help understand their needs, cripple negative ideas that make them think that the cost and need for our services aren’t necessary. It will also instill in them a sense of confidence in the practice appreciate the value we put in, and make them part of the design choices, with an end goal of having them own up the design. This will result in a competitive age over other industries in the service sector.

Architecture is an opportunity for us to design something and express ideas that are simple as a scribble when these ideas cross one’s mind. We can later express these ideas across numerous ways. A week ago, while attending an online master class given by Frank Gehry, several things got me excited. About the involvement of both the architect and client views. My observation during that lecture was that, there is a need to create a platform for clients to interact with us and include them in the design process. This will help understand their needs, cripple negative ideas that make them think that the cost and need for our services aren’t necessary. It will also instill in them a sense of confidence in the practice appreciate the value we put in, and make them part of the design choices, with an end goal of having them own up the design. This will result in a competitive age over other industries in the service sector.

As I got inspired, I discovered Somethings which the tutors might never mention. Like, we tend to concentrate on software advancements to help us express our complex ideas. No wonder the tutor’s thoughts and art of expression are completely engraved in every piece of work, which is not a bad thing. We ought to be willing to learn from our tutors and be responsive to their guidance. How incredible would it be if more attentions is put on the project brief and user consideration of our portfolio projects?

Often our ideal expressions are lost along the way because we have crammed from our lecture notes, but this should not be the case. Our lecture notes should not block our minds but rather act as a springboard to inspire more creative architectural designs.

Architectural innovation beyond the lecture notes

Architects are practicing architects as well are all coping with the impacts of COVID-19 in different ways as it not only affected architecture as an industry but also individual lives. But despite those differences, there are some commonly learnt lessons and those are the most important factors that will lead to the future development of the industry in Rwanda and globally as a whole.

Our lecture notes should not block our mind but rather act as a springboard to inspire more creative architectural designs.
Yamasan Japanese Restaurant

A commercial building was built for a Japanese restaurant, a cafe and small shops sharing a concept that enhances local values of food and materials. It is located in a residential area of a suburban town in Kampala, Uganda. We designed the building with a big thatched roof that complements the gently sloping land at right angles to the contour lines keeping 5 existing trees. The slope was too gradual for people to recognize, so we tried to take advantage of this character through our design. At its lowest point, it is a two-story building, while in the middle, the basement sinks into the landscape. The ground floor, under the level of 4m plus a parking level, is made out of concrete and steel, and 1st floor is made out of timber, eucalyptus. Eucalyptus is normally used only for roof trusses and scaffolding because it tends to shrink, twist and crack. By improving the drying and lumbering process, we have managed to turn them into a sturdy enough material to be used for the main roof structure. To maximize local laborers’ techniques, 16 frames were erected without heavy construction equipment. This permeable roof design allows for an open space where people come together and seek comfortable refuge from the strong sunlight.

DATA
Location: Kampala Uganda
Use: Commercial (Japanese Restaurant, Cafe, Shop etc.)
Completion: 2018
Site area: 3,371 m²
Total floor area: 785 m²
Architect: Ikko Kobayashi + Fumi Kashimura / TERRAIN architects
Shinnosuke Yamashita Albert Wasswa
Local architects: Patricia Kayongo Rutiba / Dream Architects
Contractor: Cots Cots Ltd (separately ordering)
Structure Design: Mitsuhiro Kanada / Tokyo University of the Arts
Yoshinori Suzuki, Hinako Igarashi / TECTONICA. INC
Photo: Timothy Latim
STUDENT CHAPTER

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Architecture Students’ Association - East Africa: The Road so far

ASA-EA stands for Architecture Students Association – East Africa. It is an association that brings together students of architecture from all institutions in the East African region. The association focuses on social, educational, and professional relations among its members – without forgetting to have a positive impact on our communities.

The beginning

As a young architecture student in the first year, it was my dream to have student interactions beyond the country borders within the East African region. This would have remained a dream if the students in Uganda were divided. Thanks to my fellow student leaders, the departments, and the Uganda Society of Architects that have been very supportive to realise the aspiration.

The first step towards the ASA-EA occurred during the USA symposium and EAIA AGM in July 2019. Discussions were held with some architecture student leaders from Kenya led by Ms. Stella Ageya from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). In concert with Arch. Florence Nyole by Ms. Stella Ageya from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), the first council meeting of ASA-EA was held in Uganda.

In January 2020, we had our first official meeting that was hosted by ASA – Kenya at the University of Nairobi (UoN), mobilized by Elizabeth Hireri (Chairperson ASA-KUAT). The meeting was facilitated by the team at UoN led by Victor Mutero, Chairperson ASA UoN. It was a remarkable time during our stay in Juja. We were hosted by the ASA-KUAT leadership that gave us an experience beyond our expectations. They devoted their time not only to our comfort but also for our enjoyment. I barely slept for the days we were there—making the most of my time. We cannot wait to reciprocate.

This meeting set a number of things in place among which is an ASA-EA caravan aimed at providing an adventurous experience for students and lecturers while documenting vernacular architecture as well as creating an awareness of urban design challenges. This has however been affected by the pandemic and conceivably we shall come up with something soon. ASA EA appreciates the support from USA, AAK, and RIA through their representatives; thanks to the East African Institute of Architects (EAIA) as well as creating an organized liaison with the Uganda Society of Architects.

The meeting that was hosted by ASA-UG at the University of Nairobi (UoN), mobilized by Elizabeth Njeri (Chairperson ASA-JKUAT). The other team members included: Jjunju Derrick (UEA), Peter Mwesigwa (UEA), Esther Barlose (UEA), Innocent Adwoing (MUK), Tugume Marvin (MUK), Musazizi James (MUK), Blumba Emmanuel Ezellel (MUK), Naasolo Pauline (MUK), Elizabeth Nabagereka (UMU), Kukundakwe Fiona (KYU).

Moving forward

The association is strengthening virtual ties through online platforms as a strategy of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas the pandemic has affected some of the earlier planned group-events such as sketch charities, sports gala, quiz sessions and dinners, the association continues to network through virtual platforms. E-communication has also encouraged interuniversity discourse that indicates progress in networking.

ASA-UG is thankful to the Uganda Society of Architects, and schools of architecture through their representatives for their support in the student-organized events.
My Architecture School Expedition!

By Monicah Ahairwebyona
BArch, Student at Kyambogo University

Architecture has always been the dream!

Several applied for the course and you are among the few who were chosen! There is obviously a modest difference at the entry point, as matriculants candidates with flowery grades and discernible ambitions apply for the scarcity available places. Thank God for being among the few who were successfully admitted. Under the heavy weight of sympathy, you watch as the others beguilingly take on courses that were their second, third, and those that had never been a choice at all– you feel lucky, empowered; actually, on top of the world – in a way.

The world is a battleground where no one is exempted from tattered pieces of their resolve and resort to preparing yourself for what promises to be a battle – by mentally strengthening your will, and by making sure you have the perfect drawing set, sketchbook, architectural pens, set squares, you name it (of course you have asked these storytellers what you need). Again, you think you are in a special way prepared to do what is to come.

Sometimes, as a future architect, you are truly thinking, do you really have the skills to do what you are about to do? Did someone once say you will be doing what you will be doing for the rest of your life? Sometimes, you discover that the course you have chosen is very difficult, really hard, and almost menacing promise that they make to you that they are equally in a heavy course up by the tight schedule. They reminded you of something other than being genuinely held by the thought of failure to achieve the aim–for perfection. My experience as an architecture student has been one of high and lows, learning and unlearning, perseverance, doubting and believing, but most importantly understanding how big a deal it is to take one step at a time; standing the elephant design portfolio in small chunks. And above all, appreciation of our heritage and life as a whole because the lives we live and unless you understand what is around you the people and their surroundings then good architecture will only be like one famous poet once said – but a dream within a dream.

After the dull and short talks about the course, the real thing was just a hit of water and you are fully into your first season (which you later on learn was supposed to be called a lecture). The first few minutes in class are pretty disturbing – it is a mixture of excitement and confusion. The confusion is still if he had just brightened your expiration, or something strange was happening; because getting was any other to what you expected. Your mind fails to concentrate on one particular thing totally, you think what you would be doing in a drawing class if you had always been technical drawing; but this is the unabridged package that required you to apply all (sketching) mathematics and physics structural analysis and design, geography (physical environment), literature (history of architecture). You are scanned by a strong glare of this hard reality; to prepare you for this course.

You prepared yourself for this course. The interesting combination in high school would fully prepare you for what you are about to do. The other days, you would work on your presentation. YOU CAN FINALLY SLEEP! The beauty of the results, but then there is the dread of the results, but then there is the emptiness of losing a close friend all over again.

You persevere and focus, but also because you understand what is around you (the people and their lives we live) and unless you understand what is around you the people and their surroundings then good architecture will only be like one famous poet once said – but a dream within a dream.

This doesn’t last long before you either dive into corrections or the next project just to see how far you can go. It does not get easier; you only learn how things are done and you continue on the road. The saddest thing has always been watching your friends drop off the road to pursue other courses and the ones who are left behind. It is emotionally painful to a point of becoming a scrooge when it comes to making friends. (What if they also drop out and you have to deal with the emptiness of losing a close friend all over again? But it is not about perfection, but rather the patience to go through the process and willingness to learn. This way, you actually doing these projects becomes possible versus being paralyzed by the thought of failure to achieve the aim–for perfection. My experience as an architecture student has been one of high and lows, learning and unlearning, perseverance, doubting and believing, but most importantly understanding how big a deal it is to take one step at a time; standing the elephant design portfolio in small chunks. And above all, appreciation of our heritage and life as a whole because the lives we live and unless you understand what is around you the people and their surroundings then good architecture will only be like one famous poet once said – but a dream within a dream.