



It is with a heavy heart that the Department of Geography announces the passing of A/P Pow Choon Piew, who left us peacefully on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 after living with cancer for three years with fortitude and dignity. At this moment, our thoughts and prayers are with his family as they weather this difficult period. Pow – as he was affectionately known – shared a strong bond and affinity with our Department. He not only spent his entire career since 2007 here, but also completed his undergraduate and Master’s degrees (1996-2002) at NUS Geography. Holding a PhD from UCLA, Pow was an urban geographer interested in topics such as gated communities, eco-cities and urban infrastructures, particularly in the context of China. His work has been pivotal in reorienting Urban Studies away from its predominant Anglo-American focus, specifically by using Asia as an analytical optic for rethinking and retheorising the critical interface between globalisation and urban transformations. Pow wrote a wide range of thought-provoking and influential publications on these topics, including his highly regarded 2009 book, *Gated Communities in China: Class, Privilege and the Moral Politics of the Good Life*. During his time at NUS, he also made immense contributions to both the Department and the wider Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences by serving on various committees. Pow was notably concerned with, and enthusiastic about, matters to do with curriculum development and the welfare of undergraduate students. This led him to assume the role of Chair of Undergraduate Studies in Geography from 2013-2018 as well as the position of Assistant Dean (Undergraduate Studies) between 2018 and 2020. His urban expertise also saw him being regularly consulted by a number of Singaporean ministries and statutory boards, including the HDB, MND and MOE.

Beyond his formal academic work, Pow was extremely well-liked by his colleagues and students. People who have worked with Pow describe him as a collegial, warm and generous team-player, as well as possessing a wonderful dry sense of humour. He was always ready to offer help and advice, especially to younger colleagues. His student-centric pedagogical approaches and genuine care for the young minds under his charge have touched and changed the lives of many. He was also a nurturing mentor in the eyes of his graduate students, many of whom have flourished under his careful and patient supervision. Indeed, as the news of Pow’s demise began to emerge, countless tributes have poured in on various social media platforms. As former and current students mourn the loss of their much beloved educator, they have also documented the fond memories that they once shared with Pow. One entry, for instance, reaffirmed Pow’s ever-encouraging attitude towards the Honours students he supervised: “When I was muddled, you gave me clarity. When I was lost, you provided me direction. When I was unsure, you empowered me to make the best decision by giving me confidence....You standing up for me and believing in me in spite of not being the most stellar student showed me what an educator truly is about.” Another post recounted how the *Cities in Transition* module taught by Pow “was one of the most engaging, worldview-shifting modules [he] has ever taken.” These messages are a strong testament that even though Pow is no longer physically with us, his positive legacies will continue to live on by inspiring generations of geographers to come.

In the short term, and in line with his strict instructions on this matter, there will be no immediate commemoration of Pow’s passing. However, the Department fully intends to hold an event in the coming months to not only draw comfort in solidarity but, more importantly, to honour and celebrate Pow’s amazing life and career. As an exemplary role model for his students, friends and colleagues, Pow will always have a ‘place’ in our heart. He has shown us the importance of compassionate and committed Geography research and teaching, and we will constantly strive to uphold these values in memory of this exceptional individual.