Functional Dimension of Spillover Activities towards the Liveliness of Sungai Besi Market, Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

The paper explores the functional dimension of spillover activities towards liveliness of Sungai Besi Market. Marketplaces are known as one of the catalysts for urban regeneration as people and activities give live to the setting. However, nowadays, market places are being relocated out of the city, causing a loophole of nodes in the urban form. This research investigates functionality dimension of spillover activities originated from the market place towards its surrounding. Unobtrusive observation, photographing and interview are the techniques adopted. The findings shall identify types of spillover activities that happen around the market places and its influences towards the city liveliness.

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Keywords: Marketplace; activities; spillover activities; liveliness

1. Introduction

Historically, most cities grew from trade activities either on its waterfront or along its route. The trade and market places traditionally being the important node in the city where various activities blooms and

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supports each other as such in the Greek Agora where political, commercial and recreational activities become the backbone to the city’s vibrancy. The traditional market places with activities spillovers to its compound, roofed by the sky, marked by the surrounding building facades radiates to the surrounding streets are more than a setting for commercial activities. The outward quality of a market place and nature as a public building with less formal environment invites all level of inhabitants to share a flexible and robust ground for activities such as mingling, dining, recreational, and seeing and being seen in the setting where the sense of place could be felt. However, nowadays market places are being relocated on the city outskirt due to the heavy traffic it has created and shopping malls with inverted activities that happen in the controlled environment of the indoor are more favorable as compared to the traditional market place. The relocation of the market place carried away with it the once lively nodes filled with spillover activities, hence creating a loophole in the city form. New development with upright ambiance could not cultivate the activities to occur naturally, but a more sterile and controlled activities seemed to grow. This poses the threat of a mismatch of culture and environment, where in the long run, some distinctive identity might be lost. According to Morrone (2006), cultural practices can be defined to three categories: home-based, going out and identity building. Visiting a marketplace is in the category of going out category where people would do as outdoor activity. Gehl (2004) stated that outdoor activities in public spaces can be divided into three categories, each of which places very different demands on the physical environment: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities. It is in human nature to adopt and adapt in any environment that are given to them. Public spaces are often used by people to fulfil their need for outdoor activities. In the context of Sungai Besi Market, it has become a place for people in the community go to for their outdoor activities. The site itself is a cultural significant site where it existed and provides the community with commercial and mingling space since the early existence of Sungai Besi Town. According to Gehl and Litt (2004) life or lifelessness of public spaces depends very much on the quality of the spaces and whether they are welcoming to likely users, to walk, stay, sit or otherwise enjoy the spaces. In the context of a marketplace, the surrounding public spaces present in the form of pedestrian walkway, vehicular roads, alleyways and pocket spaces are mostly occupied by traders, buyers and the community for activities of merchandise display, workspace, street cafes, and even as recreational activities. These situations are known as spillover activities whereby the demand for activities are beyond the space provided.

1.1. Statement of the problem

This paper aims to investigate types of activities that occurs in and around the compound of a market place and does the activities influences the liveliness of the city. Despite of a given compound of the market place, increase in population and demand of community creates overflow of people and need of a larger space to conduct outdoor activities. Research has been done to suggest the relationship of people and activities (Gehl, 2004), placemaking (PPS, 1997) and Whyte (abstracted from PPS, 2013) quoted “What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people”. However, the studies on spillover activities in the context of Malaysian market place are still lacking. Current Shopping complexes formally designed and commercially oriented obstruct activities to over spill to the surrounding areas. This takes away people from the streets into the malls, decreasing the watchful eyes on the streets and opening the opportunity for crime to happen.

1.2. Research questions

This research question centers upon:
- What are the types of activities that occur in the compound of the marketplace in the town?
• Does the spill over activities in this marketplace influence the liveliness of its surrounding area?

1.3. Objective of research

• To identify the type of activities that occur in and around the marketplace in the town.
• To identify how the spill over activities and people in the marketplace influence the liveliness of the town.

1.4. Importance of study

The paper is important as it leads to the knowledge of the suitability of spill over activities, types and setting that contribute to liveliness of the city and sustainability.

1.5. Methodology

Literature review: Several researches that were done previously by other researcher are being used to study the elements needed to be collected during the observation. Based on the literature review, the key data during the research is to note the availability of public spaces around the marketplace, activities conducted in and around the area and most importantly to identify the spill over activities that resulted due to demand of activities versus the provided space. Case study and observation: Case study selected is the Sungai Besi Market since it one of the early infrastructure that existed in Sungai Besi Town. The setting of the marketplace in the town is represented in the form of photographs and sketches where the activities will be marked and then categorised. Random interview: The interview is conducted randomly by choosing random vendors and visitors of the marketplace. Several questions are being asked focusing on their opinions of the spill over activities surrounding the marketplace.

2. Literature review

2.1. Marketplace

Marketplaces are known in different names which include public markets, municipal markets, farmers’ markets, street markets, flea markets, craft markets, and swap meets. Among the functions performed are sales, promoting tourism, encouraging business formation, socializing and integrating and enlivening places. Settings include the public right-of-way, indoors in a variety of buildings, outdoors in parks, parking lots, or covered sheds, and elements of these integrated into market districts. Regardless of their name, organization, or location, one thing is eminently clear: marketplaces promote multiple uses in social, political, and economic (Frenzen, Davis, 1990). Michaud (2004) mentioned that, market places are sites, with social, economic, cultural, political, and other referents, where buyers and sellers meet for the purpose of exchange. It could also become the stimulator that contributes towards the development of a city. Morales (2011) mentioned that, marketplaces are locations where vendors gather periodically to sell merchandise, indoors or out, have been central to historical, political, economic, and social revolution in the United States and remain central to the political, economic, and social prospects for people and places across the nation. Marketplace is a tool to integrate activities, people and spaces. Historically, they encourage acceptance of the stranger and immigrants into society (Simmelk, 1950 as cited by Morales, 2011). By having a market in the community, it provides people with an opportunity to be in a public space. Markets are liminal places where social rules, or expectation are suspended or replaced in favour of a variety of experiences, and noneconomic agendas are promoted. It is a place where people have their
freedom on choosing what to do and where it would be done. In a marketplace, various scenes can be seen. A mother walking with kids and their father looking up to stocks up their grocery are where it has become their necessity to shop. Having several choices in and outside of the market gives them more time to spend time together. There are also people who go to the market to meet up with their friends, gather and start to socialize among them. Some would pick up a space to stand or sit, talking to each other while having some drinks bought from the market. This is where the marketplace works as a social space. Marketplace is not just a tool for a family oriented people to buy groceries, but it is meant for different group of people to mingle and see each other. In this environment, expectations, relationships and roles are negotiated and recreated (Morales, 2011). In conclusion, market places are more than just a setting for commercial activities, but also play an important role in food systems, place making, and community economic development. A city without a market place might function, but it lacks the platform where layers of the community could gather and socialize where tangible and intangible culture could be felt in its sense of place.

2.2. Activity and spillover activity

The 2009 UNESCO framework for cultural statistics (FCS) defines cultural participation as including cultural practices that may involve consumption as well as activities that are undertaken within the community, reflecting the quality of life, traditions and beliefs. Marketplace is one of the places where all of these elements involve and evolve. Social dimension of culture is defined as the cultural skills and values, inherited from the community’s previous generation and undergoing adaptation and extension by current members of the community that influence how people express themselves in relation to others and how they engage in social interaction. Cultural practices can be defined according to three categories asmentioned by Morrone (2006) includes home-based, going out and identity building. Gehl and Litt (2004) mentioned that the life or lifelessness of public spaces depends very much on the quality of the spaces and whether they are welcoming to likely users, to walk, stay, sit or otherwise enjoy the spaces. Outdoor activities in public spaces can be divided into three categories, each which places very different demands on the physical environment. Those three types are necessary activities, optional activities and social activities. All of these activities can occur in public spaces whereby different types of people can exist in a same space or area with different types of intentions. When a given space can no longer contain its activities, the activities originated from the given space tend to spill on its surrounding. The tables and chairs set up on the pedestrian walkways of the cafes, work space and displaying of merchandise on the five foot walkways with people browsing it are some of the activities that spill over due to limitation of spaces versus the demand. Spills over activities are unique in the sense that it extends out from the more private and formal part of a building into the more public and less formal setting of the city’s street. Less formality setting invites a more natural, less restricted behaviour, leisure, social and recreational activities to take place in the city.

2.3. Spillover activities vs. building form and function

The quality of outdoor spaces in urban areas plays a fundamental role in quality of life within cities. Likewise, the condition of human comfort in outdoor spaces is vital to be considered during the design of outdoor spaces as it is affected by a wide range of parameters. Hence, creating comfortable environments conditions is deemed to be as one of the substantial criteria during the design of outdoor spaces. Buildings and public spaces that make up the city are settings for human activities. The interior part of the building has its own function and purposes, often restricted by formality. The outdoor vicinity of the buildings
ranges from five foot walkway, pedestrian walkway, the streets, squares and parks are less restricted in formality hence invites temporary and dynamic activities to occur.

The outdoor environment is an important social, public place. Many recreational activities - restaurants and cafes of considerable commercial value - are taking advantage of the outdoor environment. Although the weather is a limiting factor for several outdoor activities, the weather is a natural resource of enormous economic significance from a recreational and touristic perspective. Parameters of significance to the subjective assessment and satisfaction of the outdoor environment, includes thermal comfort, context (design, function), environmental interaction (lighting, acoustics, air quality), and psychological parameters (expectations, experience, time of exposure, perceived control, environmental stimulation as mentioned by Nikolopoulou & Steemers (2003) Spagnolo and de Dear (2003) and Thorsson, Lindqvist and Lindqvist (2004). (Spagnolo & de Dear (2003) from Tsuyoshi Honjo (2009) Gehl Architects (2004) mentioned that observation was done prior to create activities in outdoor spaces in order to improve and maximise its usage towards better healthy living community of Melbourne City. With the increase in inner city living, many laneways have the additional function of providing user- friendly and safe entries to many residences. Increasing residential occupation of, and specialised retail activity within, the little streets, lanes and arcades introduce activities that are mutually enriching inside and out. The laneways therefore support sustainable inner city development by allowing retention of heritage streetscapes to coincide with increased residential density and better use of space. The liveliness of the city lies not only in the building structure but is greatly influenced by the people and activities. Hence, the more a city acquire positive activities to happen, the livelier the city is and socially, culturally as well as economically.

3. Findings

3.1. Sungai Besi market place, Kuala Lumpur

Sungai Besi is a town in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur State with a historic tin mining community having most of the heavy industrial facilities such as tin factory and tin industries. This community is developed from a village before where in 1998, when Malaysia was the host of Commonwealth Games, Sungai Besi town being a neighbour to the development of Bukit Jalil National Sports Complex where the event was held faced with a significant impact form government initiative to fix and restore the infrastructure. A light rail transit system was constructed to connect from Kuala Lumpur city to the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil, and one of the transit stations is in Sungai Besi. Furthermore, in 2011, with the completion of the Terminal Bersepadu Selatan in the neighbouring Bandar Tasik Selatan, Sungai Besi town becomes a noticeable old town area at the fringe of the city. The market place is as the same age as the community itself where it existed when the community existed. It has been a site for the community to increase their economy, to attain their materialistic and social needs. The infrastructure and facilities at the market has been fixed and restored to change of the time and the needs by the community.
3.2. Activities in Sungai Besi Market Place, Kuala Lumpur

Fig. 1. (a) Location of Sungai Besi Town (b) Location of marketplace in Sungai Besi town taken from Google Map; (c) the exterior of Sungai Besi Market building.

Fig. 2. Layout plan of the market place

Fig. 3. (a) Vegetable section inside the market; (b) Atrium area inside the market; (c) Spices area inside the market
The main activity occurs at the market is the economic base where it supplies different type of vendors selling varieties of goods for the community. The market place is a two-storey building where on the ground floor of the market, several types of goods are being sold. Most of the items sold are raw materials such as meat, fish, vegetables, herbs and spices where vendors are given space to set up their items to be sold. The interior space of the market is divided into different section based on items they are selling; vegetable section, fruits section, meat section, etc. These sections are created by the vendor themselves to make it easier for the visitors of the market to get their needs. Their positions are known by the regular visitors as they maintain their sections position. There is also a line of food stalls being set up in the market atrium. It is being arranged in one line to reduce space consumption as each food stall needs a big space to set up tables and sitting for their diners. These food stalls increase the number of visitors since there are food stalls selling special delicacies such as nasi lemak, laksa penang and more. Visitors not only come to the market for groceries, but also to get their favourite meals. There are also visitors that let their partner do the shopping while they wait at the food stall to enjoy their meals while reading the newspaper. In both ground and first floor level of the market, the inside perimeter of the market is surrounded by rows of shops. These shops are either own or rent by the vendors who wanted a bigger and space for them themselves rather than only taking a small space in the sections. These shops normally sell dry goods such as spices and snacks. Some even set up their own office such as driving license office, tailor shop and more. These shops provide more facilities and varieties to the community attracting more different group of people, with different needs to visit the market.

3.3. Outdoor spillover activities on the vicinity of Sungai Besi Market

Surrounding the market is the circulation such as vehicular roads, parking lots and pedestrian walkways provided by the local authority for the community access. The public space in the form of streets and walkways around the perimeter of the market are being used by the people for both economic on non- economic base activities. The economic base activities take places in the parking spaces, pedestrian walkways and vehicular street. Some takes up a huge portion of the road and pedestrian walkways to set up tables and chairs to sell food. Some even built canopies along the road for shelter while conducting their business. Pedestrian pavements are being use by vendors. The non-economic base activity also occurs on the vicinity of the market place from its perimeter towards the fronting buildings and alleyways. People goes to the market either alone, with their spouse or with their families. Some spouse, while waiting for the wives doing the groceries, they would mingle with their acquaintance outside the market, such as at the parking spaces, pedestrian walkways and stalls set up by the vendors. Some prefers to gossip while some prefers to just being in the community setting while maintaining their privacy – Seeing and being seen. It is their leisure time, and they would fill it by having a conversation and some while lighting up their cigarette.

Fig 4. (a) Location of food stalls along the streets and pedestrian walkways; (b) Photograph of the tables and chairs for dining along the streets; (c) Canopies are being set up on the pedestrian walkways
Table 1. Types of Spill over activities and its location

| Types                        | Activities                                                                 | Location |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Economic based activities    | Food stall - selling fast food such as burgers, rojak, etc.                  | ✓ ✓      |
|                              | Restaurant - selling hot meals such as bihun sup, mee goring, etc.           | ✓ ✓ ✓    |
|                              | Tents - selling fruits and clothes.                                          |          |
| Non Economic based activities| Salesman – walking around carrying goods, asking people to buy               | ✓ ✓      |
|                              | Meet up - meet friend or someone in public space nearby the market.         | ✓ ✓ ✓    |
|                              | Dining - bringing family or friends to dine for breakfast, lunch or dinner. | ✓ ✓ ✓    |
|                              | Mingling - group of man and/or woman standing and chatting on the pedestrian walkways; vendors sitting in a group discussing or just hanging around while waiting for their customer. | ✓ ✓ ✓ |

Random interview were conducted among the vendors and the visitor on their opinion towards the occurrence of spill over activities around the market place.

*Mr. Hassan (street food stall owner)*

“The market only functions as to sell goods but the activities outside the building are the ones that give colours to this area”.

*Mr. Ragesh (food stall worker)*
“Diners and people hanging around the stalls make the space safer for me and other people. This increases the sales daily because when people are around, it increases the security level of the market as more eyes are here compared to just be in the market”. The interviews with the vendors reveal that they feel that spills over activities functional dimension are more than providing a setting for commercial activities. Spill over activities gives colours to the surrounding whereby having more people and activities, the areas are enliven. Spill over activities help to boost their sales and increase security for people to conduct business and walk in that area. According to some interviewed visitors, spill over activities gives them great opportunity see and grab their needed items while walking on the pedestrian walkways towards their car.

4. Conclusions

Marketplace is an important public place in a community where it is a setting for interactions while fulfilling their need for groceries. In today’s development with malls and big stores, it has become a competition for the survival of the market place. Market place for a small town like Sungai Besi is strong in the sense of place and is friendlier as well as affordable for different layers of community as compared to the luxurious malls. With the increase in population, spill over activities become a common scene in the market place. Spill over activities such as vendors setting up stalls alongside the roads and people gathers on pedestrian walkways to chat increases the liveliness of the area. The most significant function of spill over activities is that it provide more eyes on the street thus, increase the sense of security towards the market. The authorities play an important role in nurturing positive spill over activities to occur around the vicinity of a market place. Better facilities and anticipation of activities overflow could be channelled towards the benefits of vibrant streets in the city.

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