Active waiting: Potentials of waiting area at airport

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Abstract. For travellers in the airport, waiting is often associated as an unpleasant activity. One of the reasons of the perception is because waiting area is viewed as a space for uncomfortable waiting experience. Bissel explains that the experience of waiting is often conceptualised as a stasis period that bore the passenger to be passive. Regarding to this understanding, Schweizer and Gasparini try to dissect the potential of a waiting space by using active waiting concept as a lens of analysing the space. According to their concept, active waiting is where waiting is seen as an activity that has balance focus between achieving what is expected and how to have comfort when experiencing the process itself. This paper argues, by incorporating this concept to a waiting space, passengers will experience in both passenger system and a new occasional experience. This paper will observe and analyse the relation between spatial elements and the behaviour of passengers at a waiting area within an airport terminal, through the lens of active waiting concept. The experience of waiting can be achieved through three stages of habitation, which is lingering, tarrying, and the state of dwelling. The expected result from this study is to discover the potentials of waiting area at an airport. Findings from this paper may be useful for planning the airport waiting in order to create a more comfortable experience for the body and state of mind of the passengers.

1. Introduction
Waiting in airport terminal is necessary to keep the flow of passengers of different flights in accord to one and another. The duration is also used for the airport operation officers to prepare the aircraft for passengers to board. Aside from the procedural aspects, waiting area is both an extension of a particular place, such as city or country, and the last contact a person has of the particular city. Thus, it is important to assure that passengers can perceive a decent viewpoint of a place trough a safe and comfortable waiting experience. Nevertheless, the experience of waiting is often conceptualised as a stasis period that bore the passenger to be passive. When in reality, it should be alive with so many potentials of activity and experience [1]. Bissel’s notion implies the possibility-on what it is to wait, one that does not define waiting as boring neither unpleasant activity, known as the active waiting concept.

This paper will observe and analyse waiting activity, focusing on the spatial elements and the behaviour of passenger through the lens of active waiting concept based of observation made in the 3rd Departure Terminal of Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. The expected result from this study is to find the potentials of active waiting at airport.

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2. Active Waiting

As a transition period between two events, waiting bridges activity that precedes and follows [2]. It indicates a certain plot from the beginning of a trip that ends with an expectation of what to achieve that top the whole journey [3]. This connection is an important part of active waiting. The word ‘wait’ itself is conceived from the French word ‘waitier’, that means to watch and from the German word ‘wake’, that means to guard. The origin of the word brings a sense of anticipation in the act of waiting upon the expectation that it holds [1]. Thus, waiting should be seen as not only an attempt to pass time, but as an attempt to enjoy time while anticipating what is coming out of it [4]. The balance between waiting and the result from the wait is necessary to accommodate an active waiting. This is also how active waiting can be qualitatively measured.

There are several variables that can be used as a tool to observe active waiting in waiting area, which are: interior elements and body movement of passenger. Interior elements are objects in waiting area that act as the medium between the spaces the human body [5]. On the other hand, the human body includes the body parts and its extension in space. In the attempt of waiting, human body show two particular ways of adapting, which is absorption and relaxation. Absorption is the attempt of human body to perceive information through the senses with awareness and anticipated, alerted, fast responding situation. While relaxation is the state of being voluntarily unanticipated to relax and self energize, to prepare it to be for the stage of absorption [4]. The interaction of two observable aspects and the personal variable such as expectation, and the timing set by the aircraft will result to the overall experience of passenger the airport [1].

The observation on the interior elements will focus on its universality, time resistance, and variation, and how this help to accommodate the active waiting and provide a comfortable place to stay and to access the space, with both connection to the important spot as well as some privacy [5]. Meanwhile, the observation on human body will focus on the absorption and relaxation phases, which can be described as the relation between human senses and how it perceives the information around them. From the observation on interior elements and human body, we can see how the spaces are inhabited by the passenger and thus conclude how the active waiting happens in the airport. There are three stages of inhabitation that caused by interaction between human and the surrounding [4], which started with an understanding upon personal expectation and to do list, but without the knowledge on where the activity would specifically take place in the wide area the waiting room provides.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on the observation took place in Terminal 3 Bandara Soekarno-Hatta, in Jakarta. The terminal is a domestic passenger terminal with two kinds of waiting area, a publicly accessed area (non-sterile) and passengers-only area (sterile). The data is based on my observation, on the movement of passenger, whether towards each other and upon the interior element of the waiting area. Terminal 3 is selected due to its recent accomplishment as the most improved airport according to the Skytrax International Airport Awards, which indicated improvement in accommodating passenger in waiting area.

4. Overview of Interior Elements and Body Movement

4.1. The Interior Elements

The waiting room in airport usually is filtered to two groups, the sterile and non-sterile area. The non-sterile is publicly accessed while the sterile are made for less people, which are those who have earned their boarding pass.
The term interior elements in this paper refer to both fixed features and non-fixed features. But, due to the different context of two airports, the non-sterile and sterile are down to have more non-fixed features, especially the temporary ones. Temporary non-fixed elements have various kinds of interaction with the passengers, and in general, the interaction happens in a short amount of time because elements such as installation of exhibition and artworks which are less functional. In the contrary, the sterile waiting area itself is less complex. Instead, the sterile one is filled with more functional non-fixed elements, such as charger booth, television, and furniture to sit on. The seating area has several kinds of shape, colour, material, finishing, size, orientation, height, and grouping. Hence, passengers can choose where to sit according to their preferences.

Both the sterile and non-sterile waiting area use the same type of materials for their fixed interior elements, such as the colour and finishing of their ceiling, flooring, and walls. However, different combination of materials results a different ambience/atmosphere. For example, the way some furniture stands out in the sterile area trigger the sense of anticipation that underlies the active waiting. The little differences, such as height, width, shape, colour, material, finishing, size, orientation, height, distinguish areas, furniture, or groupings for passenger to choose and adjust based on their personal need. The ability of waiting area to accommodate different choices will probably increase the feeling of safe and comfort experienced by passengers.
4.2. Movement
When waiting, people tend to be more anxious because they have to get through several procedures for their journey. This state of mind clearly shows in the passengers’ body movements and gestures. Specifically, in the non-sterile waiting area, people are more anxious because there are still some procedures to follow before they can enter the aircraft. The passengers are also burdened with their luggage, which are bounded to their being thus make movement more challenging. In the sterile waiting area however, people can be more relax because they have successfully accomplished several important procedures and they only a step ahead to enter the aircraft. One of the differences between the non-sterile and sterile waiting area, is that people have more freedom to move since the baggage is no longer with them.

Their belongings, before they checked their way in, massively influence the movement of these passengers on the non-sterile area. Baggage restrains them to freely contact interior elements around them in non-sterile area. Thus, minimizing the chances of interaction between passenger and the attractions added in the area. How baggage limits the interaction can be seen in figure 2, in which only small amount of people interacting with the attractions with also small amount of durations. This is due to the distance between elements and the seating areas where the baggage is stored, and the locations between each element. The suitcases burdened passenger and keep them in stasis.

Contrarily, in the sterile area, the passengers tend to move less even though they are not burdened with suitcases anymore. This can be the result of a various seating choices that offer comforts to the passengers. Moreover, the state of mind of passengers is more relaxed due to the journey they have passed, and less and leads to the relaxation of the body. The relaxation
Nevertheless, baggage, as a part of a journey still plays a certain role in the movement of passenger in non-sterile area. As stated before, it is important to make sure that the passenger feels safe when they are waiting. The observations at the non-sterile waiting area shown that, most passengers extend their body parts while sitting, as they enter a relaxation phase. Relaxation phase happen when passenger is guiding their luggage, in their most comfortable position. The reason behind this could be an attempt to relax their body parts and reach for the most comfortable position to wait. In addition to that, some of these sittings are followed by extended limb covering certain luggage to show ownership. The urge to keep luggage safe when waiting is an indication of anticipating. To keep passenger actively waiting, it is important to assure that they do not worry too much on guarding their belongings, but aware enough to realize if there is threat. This way, people can rest and guard at the same time.

To be free from the fear of losing their belonging is not the only way to give the safety feeling for passengers. Just like the description of active waiting, which includes awareness of activity in the present as well as the future, providing safety for passengers also means to keep them away from the possibilities to lose their flights. This can be achieved if the waiting area provides a well spread information regarding the flight information, reaching the whole waiting area, including the toilets, corners of the seating area, shops, and dining. Thus, passengers can enjoy doing various activities without fear of missing neither their belongings nor their flights.

5. Overview on Observation

5.1. How Interior Elements Stimulate the Absorption Phase while Waiting
When observing the behavior of passengers, we can see body movement made by passengers. The movements show anticipation and attempts to react quickly in response of new information given to them. These movements include moving into the source of information, for example by getting closer to information board or screen, or closer to the officers. These acts of seeking the source of information are an attempt to keep one self-safe from missing the flight. Nevertheless, it is not possible for a person’s body to always be alerted at all times. Thus, there are times when the person feels not necessarily be alerted to gain information regarding the flight and switch the body to do the attempt to not miss the flight by relaxing and reenergizing the body. In between these two phases, it is important for interior elements to be the perfect switch between phases of passenger’s body. Theoretically, phase of relaxation is not needed functionally to achieve the goal of waiting, but it is needed to support the absorption phases, in which it is considered needed.

Interior elements in the sterile are mostly objects for seating that adjust the spine upright, and have full access to the auditory and visual attention can keep a passenger informed even when they are not located near the crowds or officers. In my observation, the variation of seating help passenger to perfectly accommodate their self according to the phases they are in. In consequence, this waiting area stimulate and maintain absorption phase of the body and trigger the passenger to successfully board on time voluntarily, without feeling forced neither treated like logistic goods. It means, the comfort of human body and the state of mind are being taken care of as they board, which indicates potentials of active waiting.

5.2. Inhabitation Process in Waiting Area
Time and expectations are very much needed in order to achieve and experience the right amount of absorption and relaxation phase while waiting. The three other aspects form a waiting experience as it responds the existing interior element of the waiting room and affect human body to give another response. This constant cycle of response between time, expectations, experience, body movement and interior elements takes part in the process of inhabiting the chosen waiting area for passengers. In Figure 3 and Figure 4 shown the attempt of experiencing the waiting room. From the two comparable figures, we can learn that the state of lingering, and even the rest of states, in the non-sterile area tends to last longer than in the sterile area. This is due to the how the waiting room is defined by the operational in the sterile waiting area.
In figure 3, a type of camouflage from a similar toned color surrounding give comfort for the passenger to inhabit the area, even when the object is not common in waiting area. While in figure 4, The place is filled with several elements such as seating and signage that people are familiar of compared to man-made garden on the other side of the passenger’s terminal. The process of inhabiting usually occurs when the passenger are looking for the perfect fit in between many slightly different choices. These give a deeper interaction with the space because passenger do try to sense, the information they can perceive in their absorption phase. It is also important to note that these state of lingering, tarrying and dwelling provided by the interior elements in the waiting room are not a process to dwell. The state of dwelling is the highest state of the inhabitation stages where Schweizer believe is a condition where the passenger feel the most comfortable and earn their freedom to actively do what they ought to do during their waiting period, without any limitation or fear [4]. Therefore, the state of dwelling is temporal conditions that can easily disappear once a certain condition made by the airport or the airline take place.

**Figure 3. Inhabitation Diagram in Non-Sterile Waiting Area**

**Figure 4. Inhabitation Diagram in Steril Waiting Area**

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6. Conclusion
The analysis from each point suggests that interior element can provide comfort while also secure passenger by providing personal comfort trough the sense of safety or physical support through the elements. At the same time, interior element is also able to lead both absorption and relaxation phase of human body that help passenger to inhabit the space and experience a meaningful waiting process at its best.

The interior element, in waiting area, holds a very important in provoking potentials of active waiting. It is able to trigger a continuous cycle between body movement of passengers, their expectations, time, and provoke experience of waiting, whereas, the feeling experienced by passenger progress from a state of lingering to the state of dwelling in the top of inhabitation stage. Upon this understanding, we can conclude that either adjustable, or slight variation of interior elements is a step in generating inhabitation as an attempt to accommodate a comfortable waiting experience for the body and the state of mind of passengers.

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