AN ICONIC MARKET PLACE FOR MUAR TOWN

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To my beloved family and friends.

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ABSTRACT

Providing node in Muar town allows local people to have their public activity. By constructing a new market place in an aging town, it could act as "magnet" to attract people to the place, bringing back vibrant and existing culture to the place, unite among the people and place together. At the same time, it reduces brain drain phenomenon especially during the age from 20 to 30, resulting the decrease of population in Muar town. An aging town had so-called as "retired town" or "dead town" by local people during the unstructured interview. Due to the lacking of public place, local people prefer to stay indoor rather than linger and mingle at outdoor. Observation shown that the town has become quiet and peaceful after dinner time, similarly to weekend, as local people prefer to drive to Melaka for night life, which is not far from Muar. The aim of this research is to create a new node for Muar town, by having suitable market place for local people to carry out their public activity. By having spice and herb market, it could revive the identity of the place, as spice and herb were the main economy that generate income from the past, develop Muar into a small town. The new market place also creating a new iconic image in Muar town, not only to attract local people to the place, but also attracting tourists from different places. A new node could also create sustainability to the place, as the research examines that local people and economic activities could bring prospect and possibility to the upcoming growth in Muar town. The focus target user would be the elderly people, as during the site observation, majority of elderly were found to be linger around as long as there is a gathering place. The findings covered the site observation, ethnographic study, unstructured interview, case study and questionnaire for collection data about the place. As a result, existing nodes in Muar town such as morning wet market and Food Street would be the focused for the discussion in order to understand deeper about the culture of the place. Later, the significance elements of existing nodes will be applied as design strategy and create a new iconic image for Muar town.

ABSTRAK

Muar merupakan satu pusat bandar yang strategik dan membolehkan masyarakat tempatan mempunyai aktiviti awam. Oleh sebab masalah kekurangan tempat awam, mereka lebih suka tinggal dan duduk di dalam rumah, hubungan kejiranan telah terjejas kerana mereka sudah kian kurang berinteraksi dan berkomunikasi antara satu sama lain. Kemeriahan Muar telah kian mundur, penduduk tempatan akan sentiasa memandu ke Melaka terutamanya selepas waktu makan malam untuk menikmati kemeriahan bandar. Hal ini menyebabkan Muar menjadi satu bandar yang senyap dan bosan terutamanya pada waktu malam. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mewujudkan "node" baru di bandar Muar dengan membina satu pasaran baru untuk penduduk tempatan demi menyediakan tempat awam dan menjamin penjalanan aktiviti awam mereka. Dengan membina pasaran rempah ratus dan herba di Muar, ia dapat memulihkan identiti tempat asal Muar kerana rempah ratus dan herba merupakan ekonomi utama yang menjana pendapatan Muar dan membangunkan Muar menjadi sebuah bandar kecil. Selain itu, pasaran ini dapat mewujudkan imej ikonik baru di Muar yang mampu menarik perhatian penduduk tempatan dan juga pelancong-pelancong dari luar tempatan. Ia juga boleh menyediakan platform kepada penduduk tempatan untuk menjalankan perniagaan sendiri. Hal ini dapat membangunkan bandar Muar dan secara tidak langsungnya mewujudkan kelestarian di Muar dari segi ekonomi. Penemuan dan data kajian ini adalah dipelajari dan dikumpulkan melalui pelbagai jenis cara termasuk pemerhatian di tapak Muar, kajian etnografi, temu bual secara tidak berstruktur, kajian kes-kes, dan juga soal selidik. "Node" yang telah bersedia ada di Muar seperti pasar pagi dan "Food Dtreet" akan menjadi fokus dalam perbincangan kajian ini untuk mendapat kefahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang budaya bandar ini. Unsur-unsur penting yang didapati daripada perbincangan tersebut akan digunakan sebagai strategi reka bentuk kajian ini dan seterusnya mewujudkan satu imej ikonik yang baru di bandar Muar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

An active aging lifestyle is how a person is working with daily activities, but not living alone. The level of activeness is based on healthcare monitoring, involve in community activities, and financial situation (H.W. Ho, 2011). From time to time, the relationship between elderly and the home-environment started to change in term of physical, social and economic. Eventually, the sense of the place with memorable places also starts to transform. The values and the perceptions of the old place, which gave them meaningful may no longer remain harmony with cultural constructs (H.W. Ho, 2011).

From the past, Muar is a place that has a long history of agriculture, especially spices and herbs. A wet market from that time are mainly selling spices and herbs, daily produce with majority of fresh ingredients to eateries in Muar, producing a fine quality of famous foods. Muar has later grown a reputation for its delicious food such as Otak-Otak and Mee Bandung. Hawker stalls selling delicious food started to develop themselves into a restaurant, gathering all the people from different ages and races. Thus, foods are necessity for everyone, foods bring people together. Crowed happen wherever there is famous foods (H.W. Ho, 2011).

Recently, the economic is getting worse in every place, only few opportunities offered by big cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bharu and Singapore which are far better-off. It is expected that local people in Muar would gain brain drain to developed cities, hoping for higher education and work opportunities, leaving the elderly people and aging town in Muar. According to Johor State Investment and World Population Review by Shane, the population in Muar constantly decrease from 2008 (391,600) until today (127,897), which is 67% of population move out form Muar town within 10 years (World Population Review, 2017).

1.1 Problem Statement

What is Muar from the past? In fact, many historical records and archaeological works had been found in Muar and believed that Muar's history began earlier than Sultanate of Melaka. As mentioned by Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Ghani Ohtman,

> *'Since 1889, Muar State Railway (MSR) have been constructed, connects Muar to Parit Jawa with a good road network. It brings convenience in term of transportation to the cultivation of Gambier and black pepper (spices) to other places, which became the solid source of income to Muar'.*

<div align="right">(Borneo Post Online, 2012)</div>

Economy of Muar started to develop very rapidly and generated many leaders, intellectuals, scholars, religious theologians and authoritative educationists, increasing the population and bring crowed in Muar Town. Huge number of people from China and India move to Muar to start up their business.

Unfortunately, due to the huge development in big cities, people got attracted by the place such as Kuala Lumpur or Johor Bharu in order to increase their living standards. Teenager prefer to study or work in the better environment out of the town.

Even through during the weekend, some temporary night market or event happening during the festival, local would prefer driving to Melaka to spend their time as a big city is more happening. Bianchini and Landry (1994:9) define a place should offer a wide variety of activities. There should be a place where people live, work, learn and play and it will only become the heart or the engine of city. In the other word, "town and cities, especially their public places, need human interactions and interventions for them to be meaningful" (Arendt, 2002).

Population in Muar Town slowly decreasing as everyone focusing with their own life. From the unstructured interview, majority of elderly so-called Muar town as "dead town" or "retired town". Eventually, the place has slowly isolated and forgotten, development was slowing down as well. Thus, the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim decided to create a new identity for Muar Town, "Bandar Maharani Bandar Diraja" (The Maharani Royal Town) and attracts tourist to Muar Town. Yet the population of the place still decreases constantly as one couldn't see the development of the place.

1.2   Research Questions

The focus of this research is to introduce new node for Muar town, such as spice and herb farmer market as open space for local people to carry out public activity.

1. What are the new images that can attract not only local people but also visitor to the place?

2. Which type of public spaces that could enable local people to carry out their public activity?

3. What are the significant elements of existing nodes in Muar town and the culture between people ad place?

4. What are the potential of spice and herb that can improve the social sustainability of Muar town?

1.3   Research Aim and Objectives

The research aim is about to introduce an iconic market place, that can bring a new image for aging Muar town and acts as node by maximizing the public space for local people to carry out their public activity.

The objectives for this research are as follow:

i.   To make recommendations of the new image for aging Muar town which could attracts visitor to the place

ii.   To identify the different type of public spaces for local people to carry out their public activity

iii.   To discover the significant elements of existing nodes in Muar town, reflect to the culture between place and people

iv.   To improve the social sustainability of Muar town thru the potential of spice and herbs market

1.4   Significance of the Research

This research will deliver influence to the community in Muar town in terms of:

i.   In order to revitalize an aging town, one of the solution is to create a new iconic image for the town, which is not only can reduce the brain drain phenomenon but also attract visitors to the place.

ii.   Understanding the different type of public spaces allowed local people to carry out their public activity, linger and mingle around to create social interaction.

iii.   Before constructing a new node for a place, it is important to understand the significant elements of the existing nodes and the culture between people and place

iv.   Discovering the potential of spice and herb market is one of the method to promote the goods and giving a platform for local people to start up their own business

1.5   Research Statement

Muar town is currently so-called as "retired town" by the local people as there is a very limited public activity happening in the outdoor area, and the town is totally quiet after 7pm. Local people couldn't see any potential of development in Muar town, caused majority of young generation moving out to big city such as Johor Bharu, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, resulting in 67% of decreasing population within 10 years. This research is about to propose the spice and herb market as public area, attracting local people from different ages and also tourists to the place by creating a new image for Muar town. The market will be a place that creating sustainability among the town and having social interaction from the trading activity. The discovery about the potential of spice and herb allowed local people to learn more about the benefits of spice and herb, at the same time to increase the trading activity among the local people and tourists.

1.6   Scope of Research

The research scope only covered central of Muar town to produce the specific site data. Later, it can only ensure the data collections are able to fit the local people's needs. Firstly, this research will basically focusing on how to create a new image for Muar town, attracting people to the place, At the same time, this research also focusing to the community aspect of the local in Muar town as it is intended to provide more

public space to guarantee the public activity. The market is a platform for local people to generate small income, and able to bring back the sense of place in Muar, based on the research and unstructured interview in Muar town. Last but not least, the journey program will be part of the building in order to educate local people and visitors about the history of Muar, Importantly, the potential of spice and herb will also become as part of the research as spice and herb having the varieties of products.

1.7   Research Methodology

This research cover up the direction through the understanding of existing research and literature review patterns. From the overall basic research framework, it will be divided into four different stages. First of all, figure out the research problem, collect the significant data, analysing the data and concluded the research. The adoption and division of the methodology will discuss later and elaborated further. As the beginning, the data will be collected through site observation, unstructured interviews and given out questionnaires to local people in Muar town. Next, data collection will be collect through literature reviews, ethnography, book and reading materials, case studies from website, journal articles and internet-based articles. Last but not least, reference from dissertation that done by alumni will be taken as secondary data to support the primary data. To achieve the research objectives, architecture design thesis is done with a solid approach, such as formal, objective and systematic process to analyse the data.

1.8 Expected Findings

In the nutshell, this research paper will point out the suggestion that allows local authority and public to work together with same direction to achieve the sense of place in aging Muar town. The research will go through in depth findings, unstructured discussions, and recommendations on the needs between local people and the place. There will also a research about the potential of spice and herbs which is benefit to local people and the market culture in Muar comparing to other places.

1.9 Structure of Dissertation

In the overall dissertation, there will be six chapters are structured. Normally chapter 1 will provides overall understanding of the dissertation and the introduction of the research, including elements such as background study of the topic or place, the aim of the research, objectives, research questions, statement of the research, research methodology and the findings that normally expected. Next is the chapter 2, that usually cover the literature review, few topics will be discussed, related the place attachment of Muar town, the comparison of market cultures and the potential of spice and herb as well as discussing about the direction to guarantee public activity. The topic above is covered through readings, group discussion, site observation, unstructured interviews, questionnaire, case study, alumni thesis references and ethnology. Chapters 3 will usually explain the research methodology for the primary and secondary data collected, and the data will be later analysed and documented in Chapter 5. Looking for chapter 4, it is basically documentaries and analyses the three case studies of the different markets from different places, as mentioned in chapter 3. Last but not least, Chapter 6 is about the conclusion and findings, come from the discussion in Chapter 5, related to the suggestion about the limits of discussion, challenges and guidelines. Appendix will be attached at the end of research paper, which will relate to the researched findings and the thesis design proposal.

Table 1.1: Basic Structure Framework of Dissertation
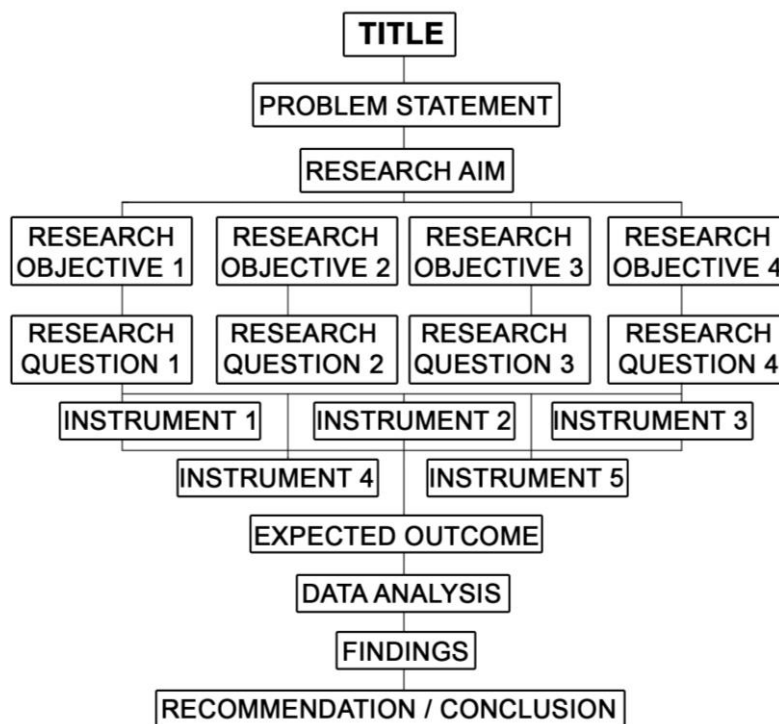
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