

**THE ROLE OF ACTIVE PUBLIC STREETS
AS PREEQUISTE FOR LIVABLE CITIES**

YUSEF ABDOLLA AMHEMMED SAMMAS

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

To my beloved (mother)
my sweet niece (Layla)

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ABSTRACT

Cities all over the world are rediscovering their public spaces and a general awareness has been awakened regarding the need for dignified, high quality city environments for people. In some cities walking and public life are disappearing, emphasizing that life is becoming more and more privatized. Urban public streets made up the main component of any towns and cities that represent one of the major elements that create its sense of place. It is therefore very important to study and propose or recommend how they could be maintained or adapted for future reference and uses. It is also important to understand the underlying principles of their organization and design in order to be modified and adapted to be relevant to new and future settlement. Johor Bahru city is fast developing and changing in their effort to meet the current demands of the people. Living quality (that is residential settings and recreational facilities) and other environmental condition changes, with the development of the city and will evolve into new place. In the process of change, existing situation will be modified to meet its new uses and frequently it was found that many traces of the existing characteristics are erased. This situation is of loss to the place where traditional built environment is replaced by new with very little sense of continuity from their past situation, depriving the place of its roots and hence their sense of place. The development of towns and cities are normally influenced by many different aspects or characteristics such as physical (either natural or built form), socio-economic factor, land-use pattern, transportation system, psychological, behavioral and many others. They are interdependent (directly or indirectly) which is related to the history and culture of the people living in the town. The study established on the significant role of public active streets as prerequisite for creating urban livable environments. This study discussed the significance of the street as an important part of city elements. Therefore it is important to record and determine the urban pattern as well as the character of the urban space of the street for future references.

ABSTRAK

Kesedaran umum berkaitan dengan aspek kualiti dan keperluan persekitaran kepada manusia telah menjadi suatu perkara penting di seluruh bandar-bandar di dunia. Di sesetengah bandar, persekitaran kehidupan menjurus kepada bentuk yang lebih privasi berbanding dengan kehidupan dalam persekitaran yang lebih umum. Jalan awam bandar sering menjadi komponen utama untuk mewujudkan semangat tempat di sesuatu bandar. Oleh hal demikian, perlunya satu kajian untuk membincang dan mencadangkan bagaimana mereka boleh menjaga atau menyesuaikan untuk kegunaan masa hadapan. Ianya juga penting untuk memahami masyarakat supaya menjadi prinsip untuk memperbaiki persekitaran sedia ada atau menjadi asas dalam membangunkan penempatan baru. Bandaraya Johor Bharu menghadapi pembangunan pesat yang menjadi tumpuan kepada orang ramai. Kualiti persekitaran (rekabentuk kediaman dan kemudahan rekreasi) dan perubahan persekitaran yang lain perlu dititikberatkan dalam menentukan pembangunan baru. Di dalam proses perubahan, persekitaran semasa akan berubah menjadi kegunaan baru dan selalunya kebanyakan ciri-ciri persekitaran semasa yang dijumpai telah terhapus. Ini disebabkan oleh persekitaran asal telah diganti dengan persekitaran baru yang kurang kesinambungan dengan persekitaran yang asal tersebut. Pembangunan bandar biasanya dipengaruhi oleh banyak aspek seperti fizikal, sosio ekonomi, gunatanah, sistem pengangkutan, psikologi, dan lain-lain lagi. Ianya juga bergantung kepada perkaitan sejarah dan budaya sesuatu masyarakat yang tinggal di bandar. Kajian ini adalah menumpukan kepada kepentingan peranan aktiviti di jalan-jalan bandar sebagai keperluan untuk mewujudkan kehidupan bandar yang bermakna. Kajian ini juga membincangkan kepentingan jalan sebagai elemen penting dalam bandar. Ianya juga memainkan peranan dalam menentukan corak bandar dan ciri-ciri ruang bandar untuk masa hadapan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The fact much of the human activities still take place on street, which have made the street an important physical element of cities. The street environment has a large role in identifying the city character; high quality streets environments may create livable cities. Street is one of the important physical elements of cities. It is a place where human activities are concentrated. It mainly functions as a channel of movement that connects one place to another. Studies by Jacobs (1961), recognized the street a communication space, a public space, a place of social and commercial encounters and exchanges, a place to do business, a political space and a symbolic and ceremonial space in the city.

The street is a place for meeting friends and neighbors, for children's play, for window shopping, eating and drinking, or simply sitting on a bench and watching the world go by. Streets should be redesigned to reflect their role as places for people as well as traffic. Road space should be re-allocated to make sure pedestrians do not have to huddle on crowded pavements. Streets are the arena for community life. They need to allow quick, safe and efficient movement on foot from place to place. And they need to provide social spaces for playing, thinking and shopping.

According to streets Ben Plowden (2004) streets are the more or less narrow, linear spaces lined by buildings found in settlements and used for circulation and, sometimes, other activities. Streets work democratically when people feel a sense of control over them. Conversely, streets fail when people perceive them as belonging to the city or when they seem to be controlled by no one, Francis (1987). Good streets are not designed but evolve over time (Seamon and Nordin 1980; Moudon 1986). Memories of favorite childhood street environments can be important sources of current design ideas. For example, one can map a favorite street to launch a participatory design and management process for a neighborhood or downtown street, Francis (1981).

There are two types of users of the street, first the people live and work in the street, second the visitors. People use the street for different activities, necessary activities, optional activities (urban recreation) and social activities. The streets are places where informal activities take place along with the formal ones. Formal activities take place within the buildings of both side of the street space; meanwhile informal activities take place in between the buildings. As a manifestation of street culture, informal human activities take most part of the street spaces in between the physical street walls on both sides of the street space. These informal activities refer to all human activities in street spaces which are economic-based, social-based, cultural-based and the combination amongst them. Street peddling, social interacting, and street performing are examples of these activities. The existence of this informal aspect is complementing with the formal one in the context of the public life of a street, (Arif Budi Sholihah 2007). Some of these activities have taken to parks, restaurants, and public buildings. And street has been a circulation entity. There fore it is important to bring them back to the street.

Streets of Asian cities have specialties and significance in the context of urban public life. Asian streets have culturally and traditionally served the city as a public space, a place where people come together to do commerce, to eat and to socialize. Similarly, Poerbo (2004) argues that the urban realm of many Asian cities is not attributed to great parks, squares, or even boulevards, as that in many European cities. On the contrary, the urban life takes place on the streets and along its

corridors. This narrow tunnel in the front of buildings and corridor has become a suitable space to move and to interact with each other.

Communities have the right to live in a healthy, convenient and attractive environment tailored to their needs, and to freely enjoy the amenities of public areas in comfort and safety away from intrusive noise and pollution. However streets still the favored gathering place for many people to express themselves.

1.2 Importance of the study

There is more focus than ever before on the human dimension in city planning and the need for quality in the public realm of our cities. Cities all over the world are rediscovering their public spaces and a general awareness has been awakened regarding the need for dignified, high quality city environments for people. People are invited to repossess their cities and restrictions are being made to reduce parking and traffic in central city areas in order to make room for more people oriented activities.

Two characteristics in city planning can presently be identified. In some cities walking and public life are disappearing, emphasizing that life is becoming more and more privatized. In other cities public life is carefully supported by the introduction of good pedestrian environments in order to supplement the private life spheres with a well functioning public domain offering a wide range of attractive public activities. The fact that people in all parts of the world respond eagerly and enthusiastically to these new opportunities for walking and participating in public life in public spaces, indicates that walking environments and other types of public spaces where people can meet are important assets in present day society (possibly even more so than 20, 30 or 50 years ago). In a world being steadily privatized public spaces are gaining in importance.

1.3 Problem statements

1. Street has inundated with vehicles traffic to such an extent that the pedestrians and the public life have almost been squeezed.
2. The simple activities such as walking, talking and eating; have taken to parks, restaurants, and public buildings. This makes the street an uninteresting space.
3. Street designs are unfriendly for disable persons.

1.4 Aim of The Study

The main aim of this study is to determine the significant role of public active streets as prerequisite for creating urban livable environments. This study will discuss the significance of the street as an important part of city elements

1.5 Objective of The Study

In order to effectively achieve the primary aim, the following objectives were established in this study:

1. To identify the functional aspect of the street.
2. To determine the characteristics and design strategies for above stated street activities.
3. To examine the physical manifestation of active street place with the use of some case studies in Johor Bahru city.

1.6 Scope of The Study

The study is limited to investigate the role of the street function of Wong Ah Fook Street in the context of function of street as public entity in the city.

The discussion is mainly in the context of public realm of Wong Ah Fook Street, focusing on the street space between the street walls on the both sides of the area. The area inside the buildings is not included this study.

The primary concern of this study is the street activities as a manifestation of Public street and significant feature of street life, and thus to maintain these features.

1.7 Methodology of The study

The procedure of this study will be carried out by Rational-Deductive Method, which start with the theoretical and literature review and other secondary data connected with the primary data. Analysis of findings will be carried out to examine the improvements to case study area.

1.7.1 Primary data (Field Survey)

Data collection will comprise of physical and non-physical information based on the field survey of (i) physical elements of urban environment, in this case the physical street environment of the street. (ii) Non physical information will be based on the kinds of street activities, location of the activity, time of the activity, etc. The types of data will be based on records, words and also numbers. The method of the field survey is on documentation and observation which can be described as follows:

1. Physical Mapping

Documentation of the physical elements of streetscape is extremely useful in the analysis stage and final reports because it can help precisely imaging the condition of the street. This exercise is based on base-map, block plan map and landuse map of the street . It is conducted to find the basic data and understanding of the site context and configuration of the informal street activities in one-week period along the street, at different times.

2. Inventory of street Activities

The device to document each unit of the street activities is an Inventory Form. This form is used to record the setting of unit activity and configuration of unit, kinds of activity and also the time period of operation. In order to capture all the street activities in study area, Time Budget Method is used to observe the street in several time periods. Based on a preliminary survey, the time period suitable for observation is 9 am to 11pm (daily activity period) on week day, Friday and weekend. The observation is divided into several time periods to gain maximum outcome. Weekend was chosen for inclusion due to the fact that shopping activities are at their peak, as most workers are free from their official engagements to go shopping. Friday is equally a suitable day for observation as Muslims and non- Muslims alike take advantage of the working week's longest break for leisure, shopping and other social activities.

1.7.2 Secondary data

The secondary data are obtained from the reference studies of related matter such as, literature (books, journals, research paper, newspaper and magazine articles, etc), local plans and other relevant physical plans and information. This chapter has illustrated the research design by emphasizing the procedures adopted in the collection and analysis of data. It can be argued that the choice of methodology adopted is based on extensive review of previous researches as well as existing theories on research methods. The field observation method adopted also resulted in

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