

## Strategies to Revitalize Urban Markets as Active Public Space That Foster Social Interaction

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Urban markets located in the city act as a nodal point which is able to gather people from different demographics to sell and buy. It also provides a platform for social interaction for the surrounding neighbourhood. Thus, the market is a place where a sense of community can be developed. However, the role of the urban market to serve as an unofficial social hub has lost due to the rapid modernisation and the rise of modern retails. The previous studies only focused on the factors that caused the issues and still lacked the architectural criteria to create social spaces to enhance social function of the urban market. Hence, this study is to identify the strategies to revitalize the urban market in order to stimulate social aspects in the city. In this research, case study on the existing urban market will be used as the research inquiry and interview will be conducted with the users of the marketplace. This research will explore the design criteria to revitalize urban markets to foster social interaction across different groups of people. This research will contribute to the enhancement of the sense of community and stimulate the social aspect in urban areas by revitalizing the urban marketplace. It will benefit the local community or urban dweller to ensure their social well-being. Future research can add more variables to the existing study, for instance, the political and economic aspects that influence the social role of the urban markets.

**Keywords:** *Urban Markets; Active Public Space; Social Interaction; Revitalize*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Oxford (2021), the market is a regular gathering place for the purchase and sale of provisions, livestock, and other commodities. Markets have existed since humans started to engage in trade. (Wikipedia, 2021). It is also a fundamental urban typology that cities tend to expand around it, i.e.: Agora. (Mohamad et. al., 2018). Urban market or public market located in

a city that acts as a focal point that serves the surrounding community, a place where people get access to fresh food and daily necessity. Due to its availability to gather the people to sell and buy things, the market also provides a platform for social interaction. Market is not just about trading but also social entities that act as meeting and social places that foster social relationships of the people from different demography. (Siti Z., 2016).

Urban markets have been built in the cities since a long time ago to fulfil the daily needs of the surrounding neighbourhood. People visit the marketplace to buy products, and start to interact with the people of the markets, for instance, casual greeting and exchange information between the vendors and shoppers, and build sustained social relationships. For instance, vendors who work together and interact among themselves during free time, the customer asking for more information about the product and bargain with the vendor, and customers meet other customers and share their interest with each other. These relationships developed from the market able to build strong communities and enhance the sense of community in urban areas. Thus, urban market has the potential to stimulate the social aspects in the cities. This eventually contributes to a healthy social life of the urban residents.

Nevertheless, due to the rise of the modern retail marketplace such as supermarkets, shopping malls, food and grocery delivery service, many older market buildings in Kuala Lumpur are starting to degenerate into a sorry sight (The Star, 2018). According to New Straits Times (2019), Kuala Lumpur needs fresh ideas to make old markets new to improve the current conditions of the old one while maintaining the connection to the past. The aging society in the markets will also further reduce the social sustainability. As the new generation no longer familiar with the place, the market is losing its social significant to serve as a social place in urban context and become just merely a trading place. As the result, there is no social space in the contemporary cities for all age group which they feel familiar with.

Mele et al. (2015) discussed the urban markets as the 'corrective' to the excesses of modernization and urbanization. Urban markets are a space for unmediated social interaction and serve as an unofficial social hub where people can interact with each other casually without judgement and regulations, unlike shopping malls that have certain regulation and design principles that encourage more on purchasing. The marketplace as an active public space is losing its social influence towards the community (Siti Zulaikha, 2016). Siti Z. M (2016) stated that modern retails give pressure to the urban market as they offer a one-stop shopping which is more convenient for the people. This affects the

preference of people especially the young generation to choose to visit the modern one. Social segregation can be found as every society is separated by the social spaces provided in the cities. For example, markets for the elderly, supermarket or shopping malls for the young adult, etc. Also, Aram (2019) highlighted that the decline in social interaction in the urban spaces is the urban challenge in the contemporary.

However, most of the current researches studied on the factors that are causing the issues and still lacking of the architectural criteria to create social spaces to enhance the social sustainability of the urban market, consequently contribute to urban dweller's social well-being in the city. Therefore, my study is aim to identify the strategies to revitalize urban markets in order to stimulate social aspects in the cities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Social Values of Urban Marketplace

Market is a trading place that has existed since people started to trade. This is a place where people get access to fresh food and other daily necessities. An urban market is a marketplace which is located in an urban context, that serves the surrounding neighbourhood. However, urban markets are not just about food and trading and also a meeting place for the people to gather and interact with one another. It has the potential to serve the community as a social space. People inside the market interact casually and mingle among themselves, from casual greetings to deep conversations and eventually develop into a sustained social tie in the marketplace.

According to Navapan (2019), the social roles of public spaces like local markets are significant as they shape people's social life, where people have various types of social encounters and form the community's identity. Watson S. (2009), also argued on markets and their unrecognised social role and the potentiality as space of multiple forms of sociality in the cities. Moreover, based on the research from Mele et al. (2015), they discussed that the urban market is the corrective to the excess of modernisation as it is a significant and unique social space that is different from the supermarkets. According to Ye Dan (2020), in Asia, markets are regularly used as public spaces in people's everyday life. She also argued that, although with the rise of modern retails, the urban market is still maintained as the

original economic and communications functional locus.

Not just the studies within the marketplace but it is important to understand the role of the urban form settings of marketplace in high density tropical cities on social encounters. Daniilidis (2018) stated that in the era of commercialization, the role of the marketplace in the new urban landscape has been diminished to a touristic attraction and a nostalgic attempt. He concluded that our society needs more initiatives from the public and institutions that can be democratic and protected from the excesses of the free market. Based on Watson S. (2006), the market offers possibilities for people to engage with each other and become accustomed to each other's differences in a public space. She also studies on the factors that make the market success to act as a significant site for social interaction for a community. Another study from Navapan (2022), claimed that the market is a vital public place of the cities, absent of special appearance but its essential part of people's daily life. He concluded that markets are the key components that can be transformed and enhance sustainable development of the cities.

However, there are some gaps between the findings from the literature reviews above and my study. Navapan's (2019) study is focus on Thailand context and only focus on inhabitants' habit, lacking of existing physical issues on markets. Thus, based on Navapan (2019), my study will be on the inhabitants' habit and existing physical issues of market in Malaysia context. Watson S. (2009) only focus on the potential on the markets to provide social space but lacking of the other factors that make the marketplace decline. Therefore, based on Watson S. (2009), my study will focus on the factors that make the marketplace no longer a space for social interaction in contemporary. Mele et al. (2015) only emphasized on the social function or the urban markets in urban context. Hence, based on Mele et al. (2015) my study will focus on the factors that causing it to lose social function in contemporary.

Based Ye Dan (2020), the study is focus on the urban design to foster social interaction and lack of the analysis on how can the social interaction within the marketplace influence the surrounding context. Furthermore, Daniilidis's (2018) study is more focus on the programming of the space. Thus, based on Daniilidis (2018), my study will explore on the solutions to tackle the issues through the spatial planning. Watson S. (2006) focus on the UK's context and the factors

that affect the success of markets may differ from Malaysia's context. Therefore, based on Watson S. (2006), my study will explore on similar matter but in the contemporary Malaysia. Based on Navapan (2022), issues focused are only on the climate change and pandemic instead of social sustainability of markets that I focus on.

In overall, my study will explore the social interaction and type of exchange that occur in the marketplace. The factors that cause the changing role of urban markets in the cities is also the focus of my research. In addition, my study will also emphasize on the potential of the urban markets to provide social spaces for the communities to mingle and develop into a sustained social tie. Consequently, the urban markets contribute to meaningful everyday life and healthy social life of the urban dwellers.

## ***2.2 Inclusive Public Space***

Marketplace provides spaces for a variety of social interaction and exchange as it has the capability to gather people regardless of gender, age, religion, income group, etc. The spatial quality of the space is a matter that needs to be considered in order to attract people to come and stay longer at the place. Once the people are accustomed to the place, environment and the differences of people, they will start to mingle with each other either just the observer or insider, they are able to feel the sense of community or sense of belonging. It will eventually contribute to the social wellbeing of the residents living in the cities.

Aram (2019) discussed the decline in social interaction in urban spaces. Aram (2019) also studied the actual presence of people in neighborhood open spaces where daily markets are held along with the effects of green spaces on the dimension of residents' socializing habits. He concluded that the desirability of the green space quality can increase attendance and social interaction in neighborhoods with periodic markets. Moreover, Prajawisastra (2018) also argued that most of the Indonesian traditional markets have social potentiality and she explored the concept of interactive to be applied to revitalize the traditional markets that are currently in decline. Prajawisastra (2018) concluded that interactiveness can be improved in open building massing, by using transparent partitions, easy accessibility and open circulation. According to

Siti Zulaikha (2016), markets are always provided with business spaces and rarely have spaces for socializing. There is the need to enhance the sense of community as the important factor to strengthen the community bond. Thus, she studied how a sense of community developed in the community from the public market. Siti Zulaikha concluded with some aspects that affect the sense of community between the market users towards the urban marketplace.

Another research by Russomanno, J., & Jabson Tree, J. M. (2021), about how a sense of community influences the engagement of customers in the farmers' markets. They argued that social exclusion can be felt by the shoppers with low incomes and discouraging them from visiting the markets. The result of this study suggests that programs or activities which are more family friendly could be the attraction for the markets to encourage shoppers at all income levels to engage. Furthermore, Ekomadyo (2021) claimed that the aspect of local wisdom became the main feature of a market. His study aims to examine the social spaces created as various forms of interaction in the market. He concludes that the form of social spaces created in the marketplace is the main aspect in social design development to economic and environmental function in the long term.

According to Moulay et al. (2017), neighborhood parks had the potential to take the roles as social integrators for the nearby neighborhoods. The study is to examine the relationship between legibility with social interaction with the neighborhood parks. As a result, legibility in designing a public space is important in order to encourage the users to stay longer and foster social interaction and eventually achieving social sustainability in the neighborhood parks. In spite of that, there is still the gap between the literature reviews on characteristics of space to foster social interaction. Based on Aram (2019), the study is focused on the periodic market while my focus is on the permanent urban market.

Thus, my study will explore how green space can be implemented in a static (or semi static) market. Prajawisastra's (2018) study only focused on the spaces within the building and lacked focus on the urban dimension. Based on Prajawisastra (2018), my study will not just explore on the building itself but also examine the potentiality of

the surrounding context to enhance the social engagement of the community in the area. Moreover, Siti Zulaikha (2016) is focused on the sense of community within the marketplace and lacking the issues of a larger perspective. Hence, based on Siti Zulaikha (2016), my study will focus on the potential of this sense of community to be enhanced to ensure urban dweller's a healthy social life. According to Russomanno, J., & Jabson Tree, J. M. (2021), the study only focuses on the sense of community in the farmer market depending on their income level. Therefore, based on Russomanno, J., & Jabson Tree, J. M. (2021), my study will be on the sense of community in the urban market with all demographics such as age, gender, religion, etc.

Furthermore, Ekomadyo's (2021) study is in a different context (Surakarta) and the characteristics of the traditional market may be different from the Malaysia context. Thus, based on Ekomadyo (2021), my study will focus on the market in the urban context in contemporary Malaysia. According to Moulay (2017), the study is to examine the social engagement within the neighborhood park in order to enhance social sustainability. Whereas, although both have social value as a public space that serves the community, my study will be on the social sustainability of urban markets.

In overall, an urban marketplace is an important social space that gathers the people to interact with each other and eventually create a sense of community. Urban markets have the potential to act as the social generator to stimulate the social aspects in the cities. This can contribute to social well being of the urban dweller when living in the rapid pace city. Hence, my study will investigate the characteristics of spaces that can foster social interaction among people regardless of their age, gender, religion, etc. in order to enhance social sustainability.

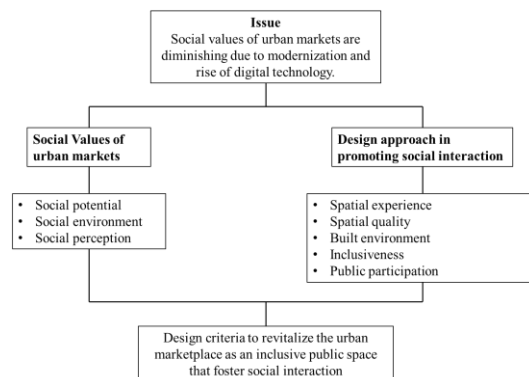
### **2.3 Place Making**

In order to create marketplace as an active public space that is more attractive and foster the social relationship among the community, place making is the strategy to be explored and implemented. Place making has been the popular approach for creating successful public space in the city to connect the people and the place.

According to Amir et al.(2020), social interaction in relation to the sociability of the public space can be enhanced with better accessibility, cleanliness, safer and attractive to the users. He also stated that street furniture will affect the preferences of the user and their time spent in public spaces. Aelbrecht et al. (2019) claimed that the place making approach with the participation of the public is able to ensure the design of the public space successfully counter the needs of the end user.

Moreover, based on the study of Ramli & Ujang (2021), the functions of urban design social attributes is examined in order to generate a meaningful creative placemaking. They found that the inclusiveness, value, diversity and the vitality of place having high relations with urban design social attributes due to the high preference and notable difference among groups of various people. However, the previous researches are focus on the place making of the urban public space. While this study will emphasize on implementation of place making approach into a marketplace to enhance the social interaction among its users.

### 3. METHODOLOGY



### 4. CONCLUSION

Urban market that acts as nucleus of a community, not just a place for daily business but also a place for social interactions across different backgrounds and different generations. People mingle with each other in the market and eventually develop a sense of community. However, the role of the urban market as social space in the city has decline due to the rapid modernisation and rise of modern retails like supermarket and shopping malls. The poor

condition and issues of aging society in the current urban marketplaces further reduce its social sustainability. The social interaction in the urban landscape is decreasing. As the urban markets also provide platform for social activities, they have the potentiality to stimulate the social aspect in the cities. Nonetheless, the previous studies only analysed the social aspects in the marketplace and emphasized on the factors that causing the decline in social interaction.

There is still lacking of the solutions to be implemented on the revitalization of urban markets to ensure social sustainability. Hence, this research is aim to identify the strategies to regenerate urban markets to stimulate the social aspects in the cities. Case study will be used as the research inquiry. This research will explore on the social role of the urban markets and the factors of its changing role in the contemporary society. At the end of the research, a design criteria or strategies will be created to revitalize the urban markets in order to ensure its social sustainability and social potential. Consequently, it contributes to a better social life of the urban dwellers who are living in a rapid pace life in the cities.

### 5. CONTRIBUTION & BENEFITS OF RESEARCH

#### *Research contribution*

This research will contribute to the enhancement of the sense of community and stimulate the social aspect in the urban area by revitalize urban marketplace which has the fundamental potential to gather diversity of people.

#### *Benefits of research*

This research will benefit the local community and the urban dwellers who are living in the rapid pace of lifestyle to ensure their social well-being and healthy social life.

### 6. LIMITATION OF RESEARCH & FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This research is conducted to recall the social role of an urban market and serve as a social platform for the urban dwellers. An urban market signifies the community, which increases the perception as communal and social spaces for diversity of social interaction (Mele et al, 2015). However, there are limitations while carrying this

research. While carrying case studies or site study, some situations may change due the pandemic of Covid 19. Is a challenge for us to discuss social interaction and engagement with the regulations of social distancing. The user's concern and perception will also be affected and some findings may not be comprehensive enough to be taken into the content of this research. Moreover, in general, the urban markets in the cities may have similar functions but the local culture and identity are also the other features to be considered. This research is using qualitative research methods but not enough quantitative research materials. Thus, the future research can explore more on more variables to the existing study for example, the political, economic and environmental aspect to influence the role of the urban market as a social space.

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