

# Green and Colourful: Night Market's Roles in Sustaining Local Culture and the Informal Economy

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# Liveable City

“A liveable city is one that through good planning, provides a vibrant, attractive and secure environment for people to live, work and play and encompasses good governance, a competitive economy, high quality of living and environmental sustainability.”

(Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore)

# Sustainable City

Among the conditions for sustainable city:

“Sustainable pattern of production, consumption, transportation, settlement.”

“The preservation of opportunities for future generations.”

(Istanbul UN City Summit of 1996)

# “Temporary & Pop-Up City”

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## Temporary Cities: The newest Urban Planning trend?

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**Keywords:** Arts & Culture, Pop Up City, temporary cities, Placemaking, Urbanism

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Urban planning has traditionally operated on a very long time line. There is something to be said for this approach, which enabled grand visions to be enacted over the generations of a city's life. However, when poor planning or limited foresight led to problems, the feedback mechanisms and flexibility required to address these situations were not in place. As Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, author of the book *The Temporary City*, write, "An Alternative Approach is beginning to emerge."



## The Pop-Up City

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### Chicago Pop-Up Park

By JEROEN BEEKMANS | Published: FRIDAY JULY 8, 2011



# Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman (TAR), KL



Lorong TAR lane  
on weekdays



Lorong TAR night market  
on Saturdays

"Diversity in its many forms is the primary element of a vibrant place – diversity of business, diversity of activities and a diversity of built form creating visual stimulation. Taking street markets as an example, they often exist in unremarkable settings and their vibrancy comes through the interaction between the people and products. The most successful markets are those where there is a wide diversity of product and supplier. Sadly, cities seem often to overlook these factors, being far more concerned with the physical form of public places. They put the responsibility on the urban designer to transform a place through cosmetic factors such as new paving, elegant street furniture and improved lighting, when the reality is that many places are unattractive or underperforming for other reasons such as failing business, traffic domination, or anti-social behaviour. These can seem merely cosmetic."

# Night Market & Sustainability



socio-  
culture



spatial  
environment

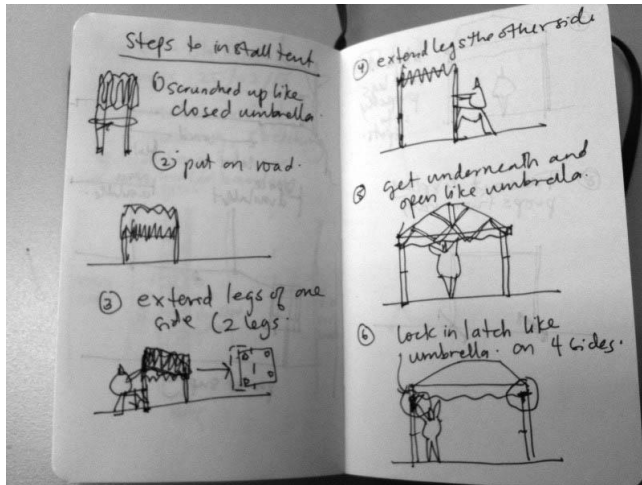


informal  
economy

Walker, 2000; Lekagul, 2002; Ibrahim and Soh, 2003; Kim, Lee et al., 2004; Deguchi, 2005; Sholihah, 2005; Hsieh and Chang, 2006 ; Zakariya & Ware, 2010

# Case Study: Lorong TAR Night Market, KL

## observations



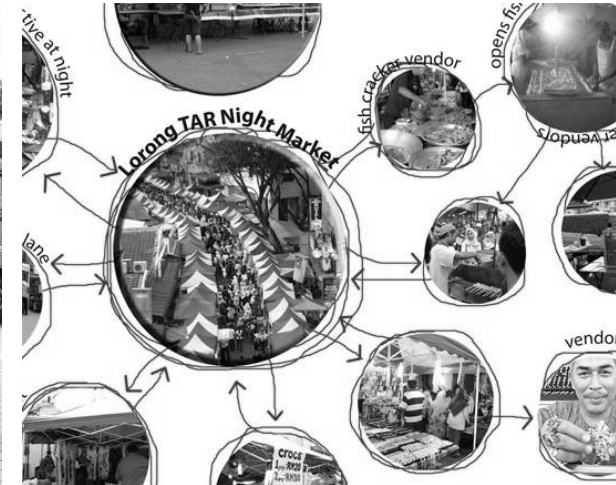
spatial characteristics  
visitor and vendor activities  
night market products  
“tactics of operation”

## interviews

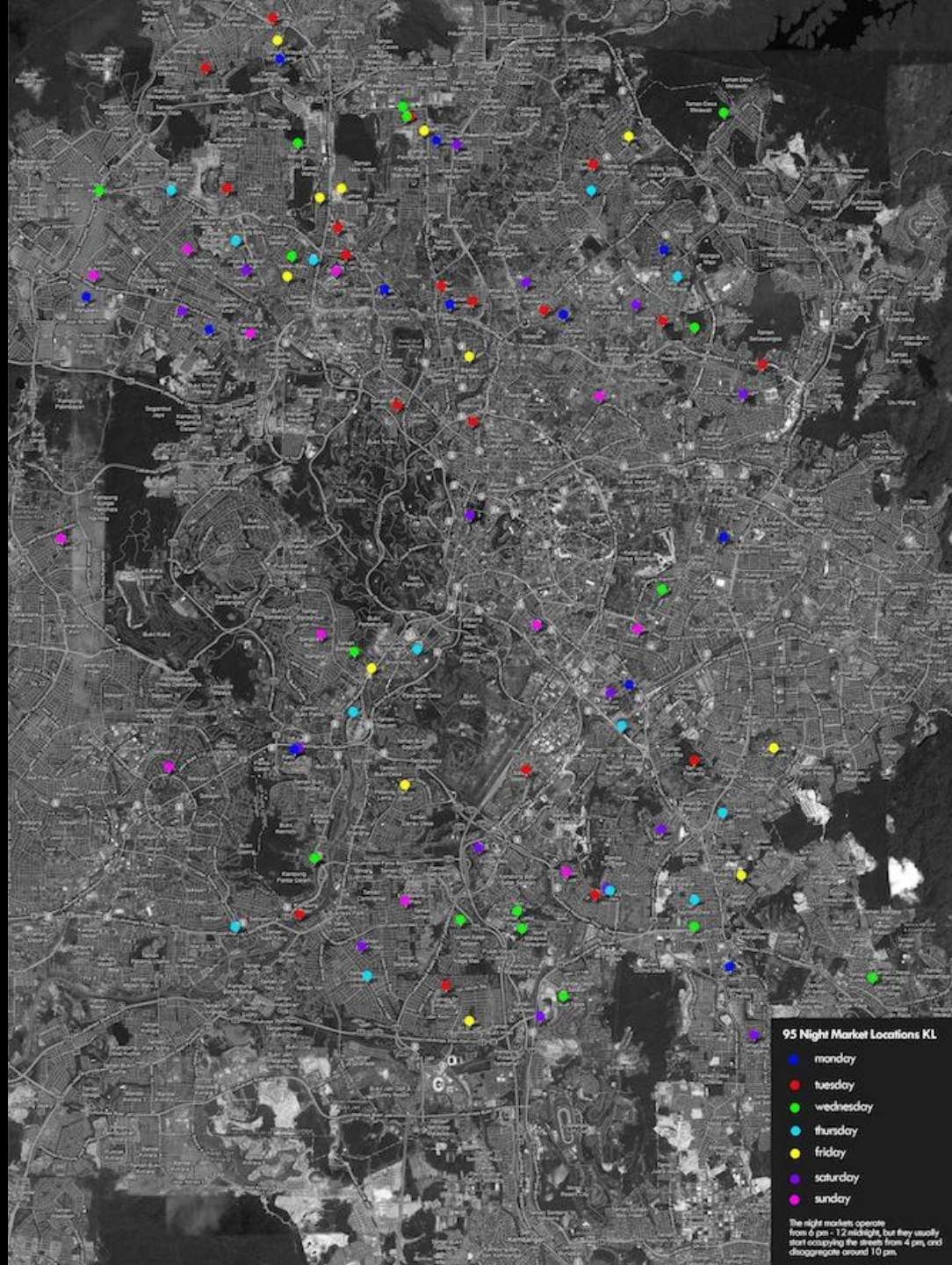


JPPPK, DBKL  
Persatuan Penjaja Pasar  
Malam Lorong TAR  
Vendor J

## mapping



spatiality  
systems  
relationships



◀ A Map of 95 Night Market Locations in Kuala Lumpur (K. Zakariya, 2010)

## Findings #1: Social activities



**sight seeing**



**shopping**



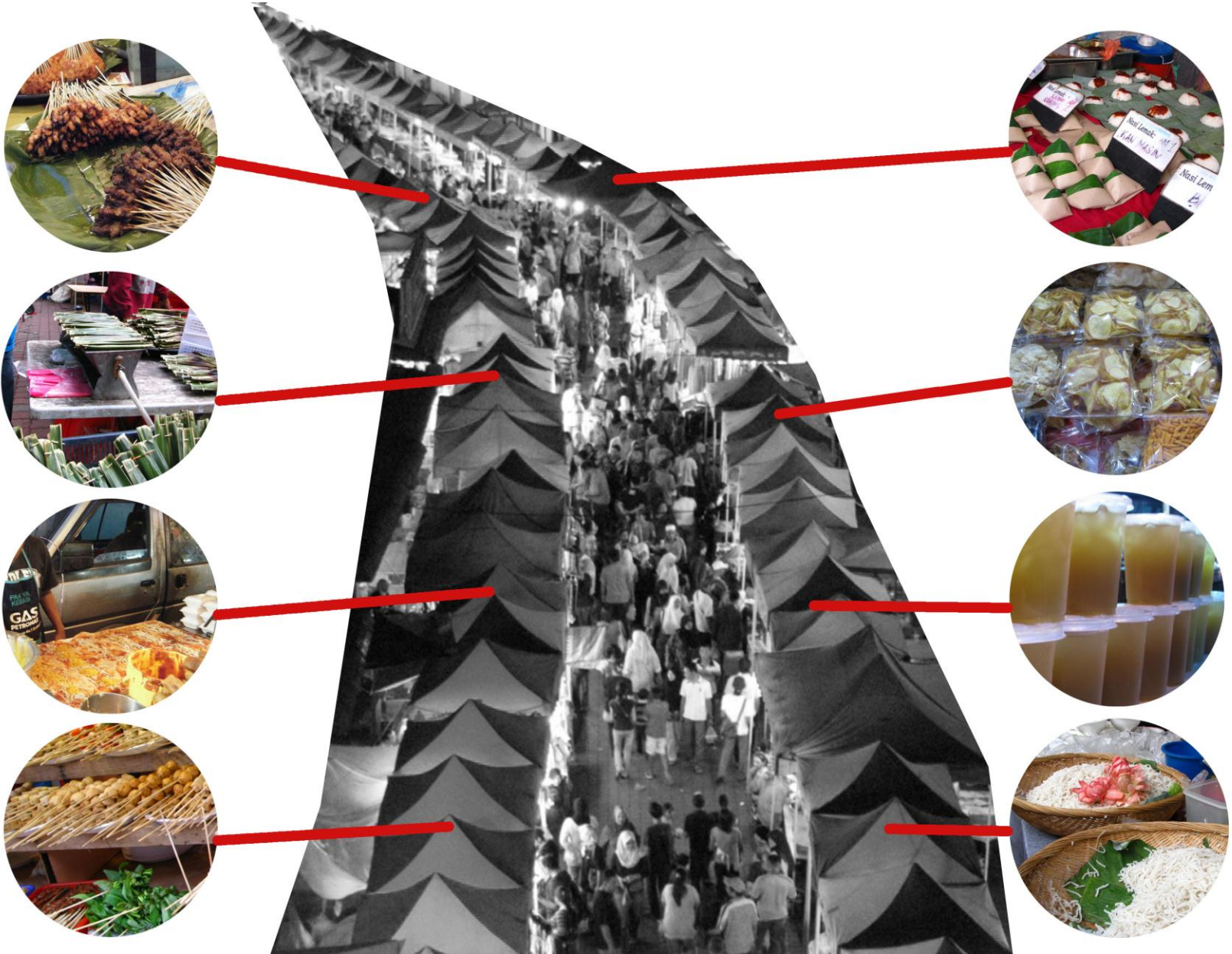
**family activities**

Local Visitor 1: “search for scarves and outfit at affordable prices”

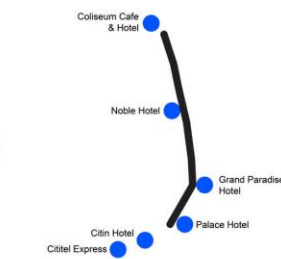
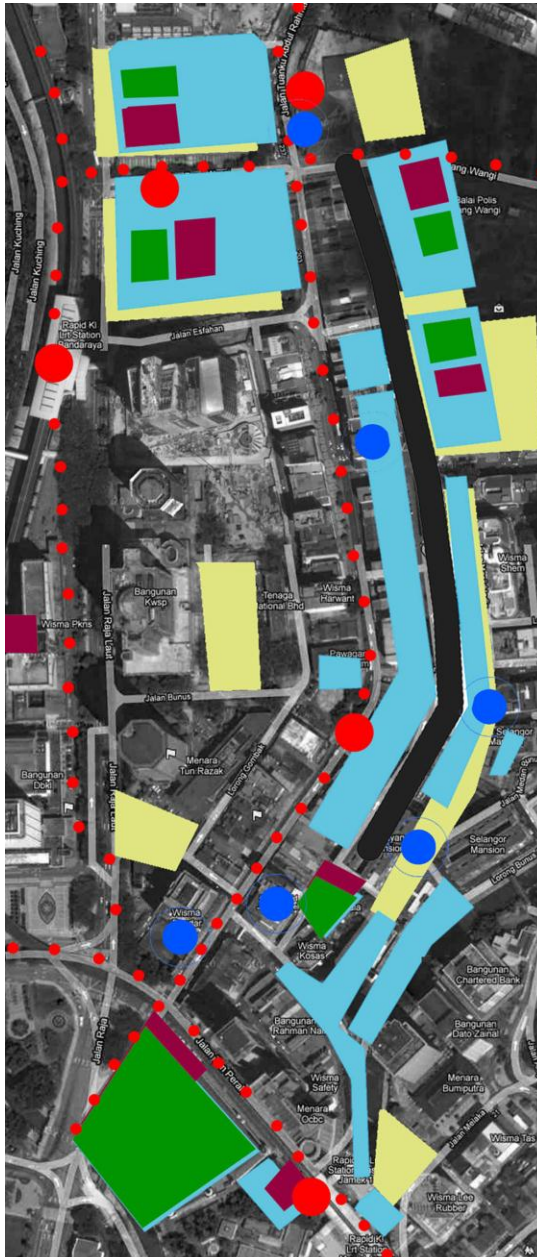
Local Visitor 2: “to buy my favourite food and strolling around”

Foreign Visitor 1: “the night market is great, we have walked from one end to another”

## Findings #2: Culture through food



# Findings #3: Sharing infrastructures



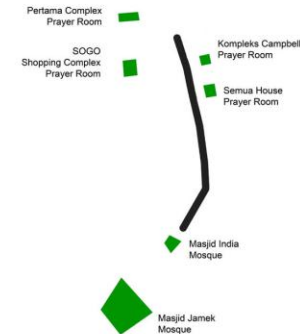
Hotels



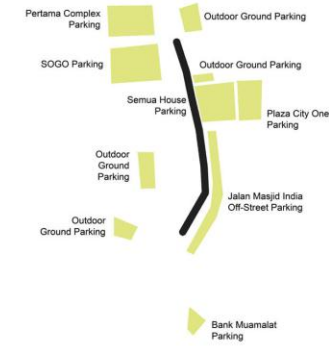
Public Toilets



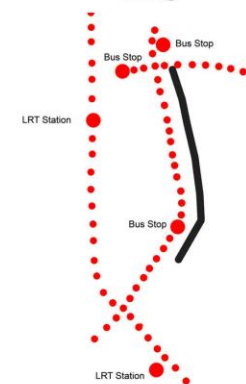
Shopping & Attractions



Muslim Prayer Facilities



Parking



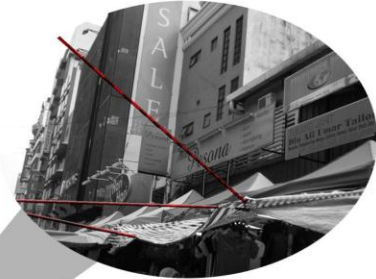
Public Transportation



backlane



parking facilities



structures as armatures



surrounding activities



shops open a market stall



the market stall



street lighting



electrical supply

## Findings #4: Contributor to the informal economy



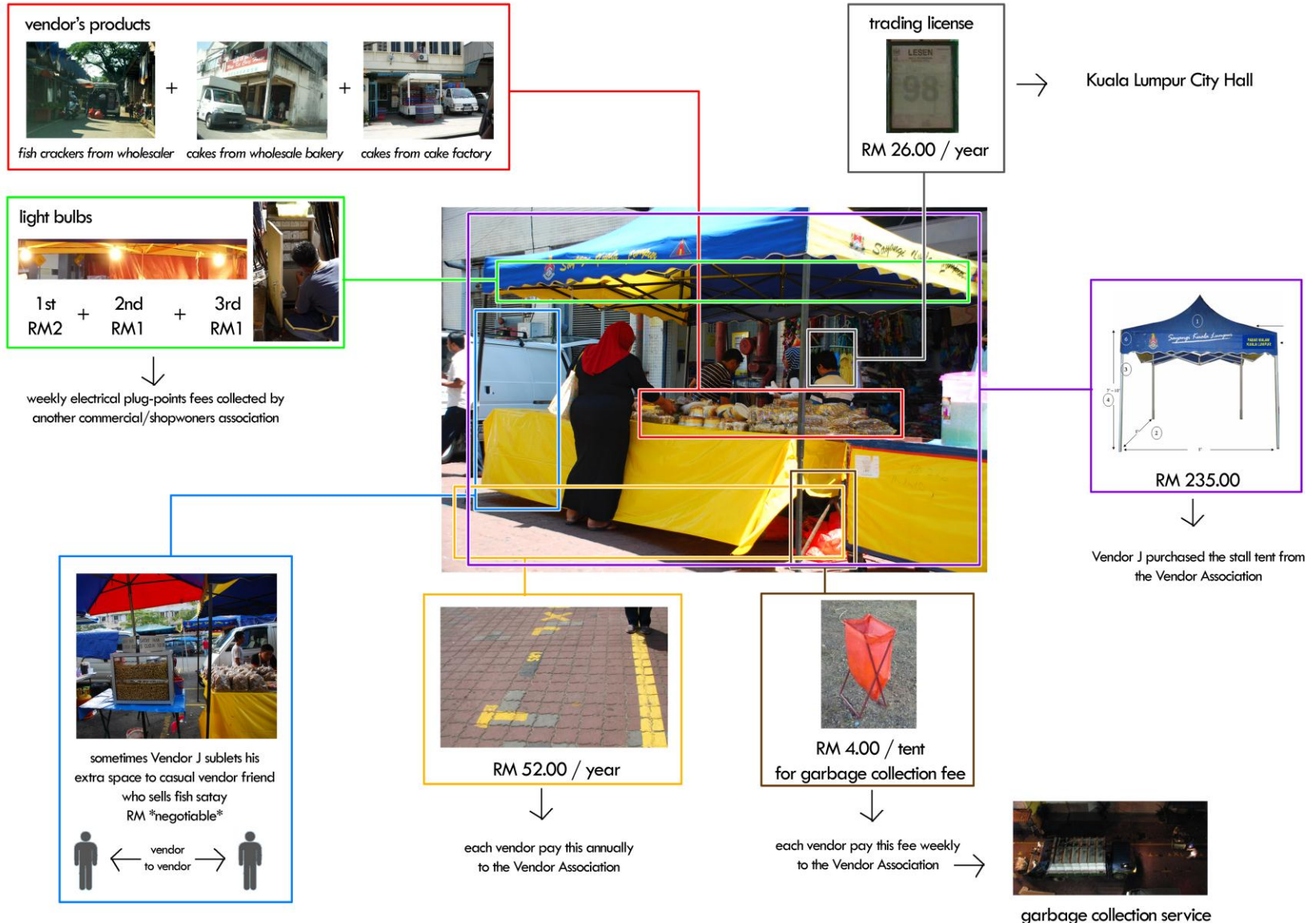
**Estimated RM 1000 transactions per night per vendor x 550 vendors**  
**RM 550,000 revenue at Lorong TAR Night Market**

(As reported by President of *Persatuan Penjaja Pasar Malam Lorong TAR*, 2010  
based on a study by Bank Pertanian)

## Findings #5: Catalyst for small vendors



# Findings #6: Supporting the larger system



# Discussion on the 'green' and 'colourful' roles of the night market

## 1. The market as a system:

Small, individual scale – the vendor and his stall

Large, collective scale – the market, surrounding businesses, other services

Small activities collectively can create a multiple networks of small impacts and keep on expanding

## **2. Sharing of infrastructure:**

The street as a market space

The market as a social and commercial space

Public amenities offer multiple use

Public spaces and city infrastructures need to be robust to cater for different activities

### **3. Enhance city's street life:**

Re-activate 'dead' spaces

Offer weekly or seasonal events

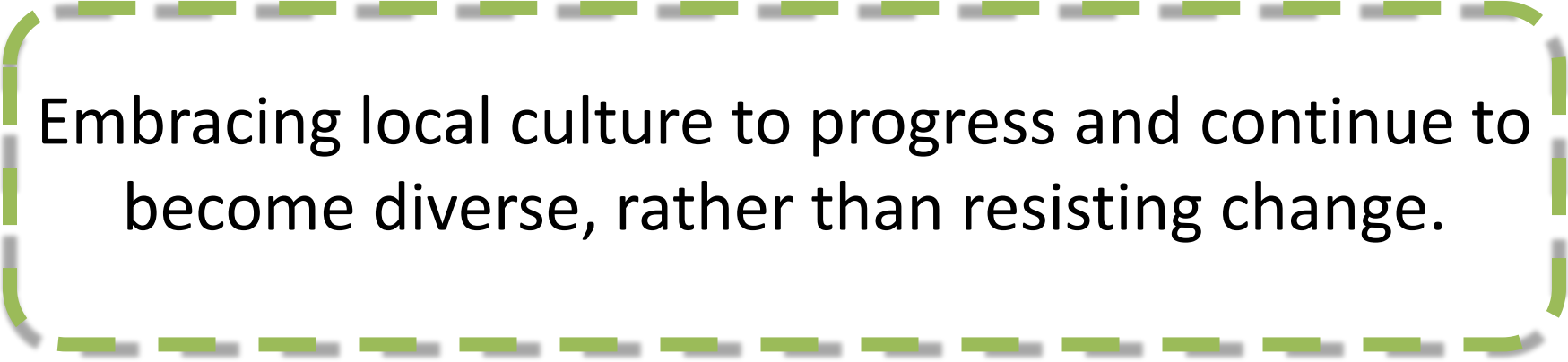
Temporary activities can optimize the use  
existing spaces and enliven inactive places

#### **4. An 'incubator' for living culture:**

Local food and local trends

Assimilation of global food and global trends

Market activities



Embracing local culture to progress and continue to become diverse, rather than resisting change.

# Conclusion

The night market can act as a model that demonstrates how contributions to sustainability of a city work at multiple scales and through multiple roles.

Temporary activities like the night market should be reconsidered in the planning and design of cities for its cultural and economic contributions, rather than seeing it as 'just another everyday space'.

# Suggestions for future research

Management of night market wastes: consumption and disposal of packaging materials, attitudes of visitors and vendors towards littering and cleanliness, etc.

‘Green’ practices in operating night markets: BYO containers, supporting local produce, etc.

Contributions of small-scale public spaces, micro-architecture, temporary landscapes, etc. to the city at the larger scale