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”

Temporary Cities: The newest Urban Planning trend?

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 Lasley Williams, author of the book The Temporary City, write, “An Alternative Approach is beginning to emerge.”

Chicago Pop-Up Park

By JERGEN 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."

Cultural diversity in Britain: A toolkit for cross-cultural co-operation
by Phil Wood, Charles Landry and Jude Bloomfield, 2006 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York
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

Zeisel, 1984; Hood, 1997; Bertram et al., 2003; Helsel, 2004; Careri, 2002; Basset, 2004; Black, 2009, Harmon & Clemans, 2009
Findings #1: Social 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
the market stall

- parking facilities
- structures as armatures
- surrounding activities
- shops open a market stall
- electrical supply
- street lighting
- backlane
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 #5: Catalyst for small vendors

Findings #6: Supporting the larger system

- vendor's products
  - fish crackers from wholesaler
  - cakes from wholesale bakery
  - cakes from cake factory

- light bulbs
  - 1st: RM2
  - 2nd: RM1
  - 3rd: RM1

  weekly electrical plug-points fees collected by another commercial/shopowners association

- trading license
  - RM 26.00 / year
  - Kuala Lumpur City Hall

- Vendor J purchased the stall tent from the Vendor Association
  - RM 235.00

- sometimes Vendor J sublets his extra space to casual vendor friend who sells fish satay
  - RM "negotiable"

- each vendor pay this annually to the Vendor Association
  - RM 52.00 / year

- each vendor pay this fee weekly to the Vendor Association
  - RM 4.00 / tent for garbage collection fee

- garbage collection service
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 of 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.
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