

New Design Paradigm For Boundary And Urban Public Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Cities of today are shaped more by boundary rather than by rational design. Boundaries, on the other hand, are the result of the amalgamation of a community's collective living experiences. Architecture defines boundary as a formal division of lines, walls and partitions. In public spaces, boundaries can be blurred arising from needs and usages. Conventional boundaries, because they do not take into account public and cultural needs, has resulted in unyielding spatial characteristics which stifle creativity in the utilization of space. In this paper, public space, in particular the streetscape will be examined in order to redefine the space usage. This paper also offers solutions in the use of street space in order to create a better quality of life.

Keywords: Boundary, urban, streetscape-streetspace, five-foot walk, public space

ABSTRAK

Menurut Alan Waterhus, bandar pada hari ini lebih terbentuk berdasarkan kepada sempadan berbanding dengan rasional reka bentuk. Dari sudut lain ia juga adalah hasil daripada gabungan kehidupan masyarakat. Takrifan senibina terhadap sempadan adalah sebagai satu pembahagian yang formal berasaskan garisan dinding atau penghadang. Kebiasaannya sempadan tidak mempunyai sifat-sifat yang kreatif kerana ia tidak mengambil kira keperluan awam dan budaya. Di dalam kajian ini, ruang awam terutamanya lorong awam akan di kaji untuk mengenal semula kegunaannya serta mencari jalan penyelesaian kearah menghasilkan kualitikehidupan yang lebih baik.

Katakunci: Sempadan, bandar, ruang jalanan, kaki lima, ruang awam.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture defines boundary as a formal division of lines, walls and partitions. Lines drawn can always be measured, constructed and translated as borders. Borders, meanwhile, can be translated as legal space and provide ownership to a party. In other words, borders represent a formality, a human creation of captured space and function as property determination. Creating a wall or partition means constructing a specificity to define space, territory and limitations. Limiting this space, however, does not necessarily mean that the space cannot be used by others for public good.

Space itself assumes marked attributes in different cultures. Malay architecture recognizes a series of introductory space such as foyer, which is designed to control human behavior. It defines clearly boundaries of private and public space.

Space is mostly shaped by solid boundaries like partitions and walls. But in certain circumstances, it can be shaped by visual and territorial perception.

A theory on perception by Edmund Bacon (1967) shows four different ways of experiencing space. Figure 1 below shows how lines can be translated as borders. It also shows how dominant and sub-dominant space can also be created. The manipulation of these four ways of perceiving space, especially in behavior and the public that are going to encroach into this personal space in the built environment.

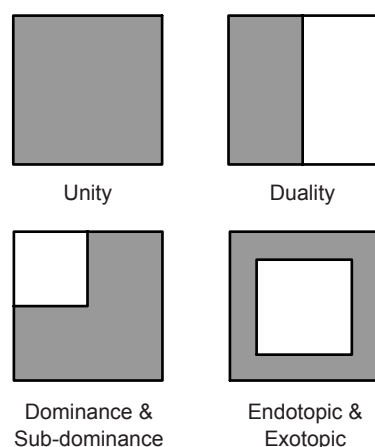


Figure 1. Edmund Bacon's theory of the different ways perceiving space

Throughout the history of human culture, public space is a very important component that promotes societal interaction. It forms the backdrop for commercial transactions, social exchanges, entertainment, protest and

contemplation (Catherine E Slessor, 2000). The street, square, or piazza of a town specifically delineates the form to the flow of human and social exchange in which ways for movement, communication, business and recreation are generated. The realm of street space, is important in order to create a harmonious balance of design between the owner's.

TYPES OF BOUNDRY

A boundary can be defined as a division of two or more spaces. Boundaries exist in our everyday life and in many cases are invisible. These 'invisible boundaries' that exist around us depend on human's instinct and perception. They cannot be translated or measured, but can be shown.

1. Human boundary

This can be interpreted as basic component of ergonomics and anthropometrics within the built environment. Every human has a different human boundary quality. It can be measured by the physical appearance, behavior and action.

2. Boundary in culture

This, on the other hand, is derived from common culture for example, in Malay culture removal of shoes before entering a house. Shoes are left at the door front before one enters the house. The entrance and doorway become a boundary marker to determine this behavior.

3. Street boundary

Street boundaries 'inform' the public of directional sense, vision, land marking and context. A street that brings out life and movement in an urban space is an ideal street as shown in Figure 2.

THE NEW DESIGN PARADIGM

A promenade and urban street life cannot be separated in order to generate active vitality street culture quality. In Malaysia, the *kaki lima* (five-foot passageway) cannot be omitted from link shop lot design. The main function of this *kaki lima* is to provide a passageway to link shops, provide shading and temporary shelter during heavy rain. During the day, it is common to find



Figure 2. Business conducted along the street created the atmosphere of the boundaries [Jalan Masjid India & Jalan Petaling, Kuala Lumpur]

'itinerary traders' or illegal traders operating their businesses along the *kaki lima*. Usually the typical question that arise is the demarcation of between private property and public area. In Malaysian culture, tolerance, and a 'blind eye' from the authority have given rise to this 'blurred' boundary. This phenomenon or, architecturally known as event, will constitute one of the main components that will form the proposed reformation of a framework streetscape as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 4 shows how this event shapes a new street architectural design. The box represents a street area. Formally, urban street boundary is controlled and formed with specific guidelines by relevant authorities. The authorities enforce the law, operation hours, tax, etc. on these premises. However, urban culture has reformed this street space according to the ever changing lifestyle and requirements. This can be interpreted as both legal and illegal. For example, a *mamak stall* in

Kuala Lumpur operates on the streets after 5pm. It often extends its dining spaces to triple the size or more from the original permitted spaces by the authority.

Events that take place in this commercial sector are street retail traders such as mobile pushcarts, food and drink stall, reflexologies, daily merchandisers, etc. that would operate their businesses along the *kaki lima*. Their business operations have no specific boundary of space and time. The more crowded the street, the better it would be for them to set up their businesses. Ideally, 'street culture' should be developed according to these events. At present, events are not taken into account the street space design. With this consideration included, there is a need to redefine boundaries that overlap between private property and public space. Figure 5 shows the theoretical framework for the design of a new streetscape.

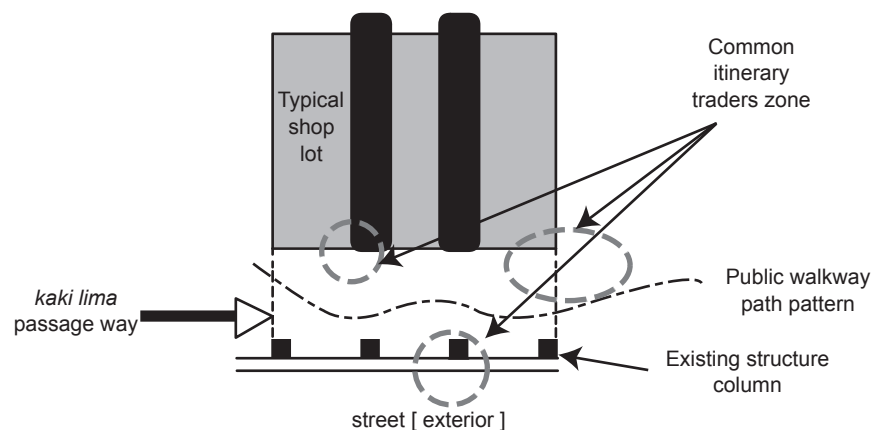


Figure 3. Typical example of Malaysian shoplots sharing spaces with itinerary traders

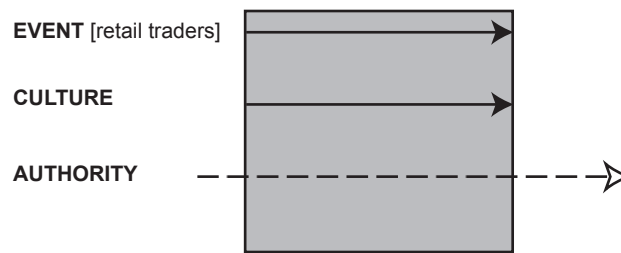


Figure 4. The three components for a new street architecture design

THE ALTERNATIVES

Figures 5,6 and 7 depict how a new paradigm can be incorporated into the design of contemporary streetscape on a typical shophot building in Kuala Lumpur. This transformation of design would promote street life vitality if the local authority willingly enforces the proposed building guidelines by allowing these business activities to be conducted at specified time periods and at permitted business zones. Currently, these 'itinerary traders' are stretching the rules by conducting businesses in these spaces without time and space considerations [*blurred ownership*

boundaries]. This creates tension between these traders, shopkeepers and consumer.

CONCLUSION

Events, culture and authority guidelines have to be clearly identified in order to generate a good quality ambience streetscape of the existing street scape. Enhancement of streetscape design policies can be introduced to establish dynamic space for both private and public space. Full integration of street furniture, signages, retailers, end users, and authority guidelines should be implemented in order to enhance the design of street spaces without interfering with the existing street culture.

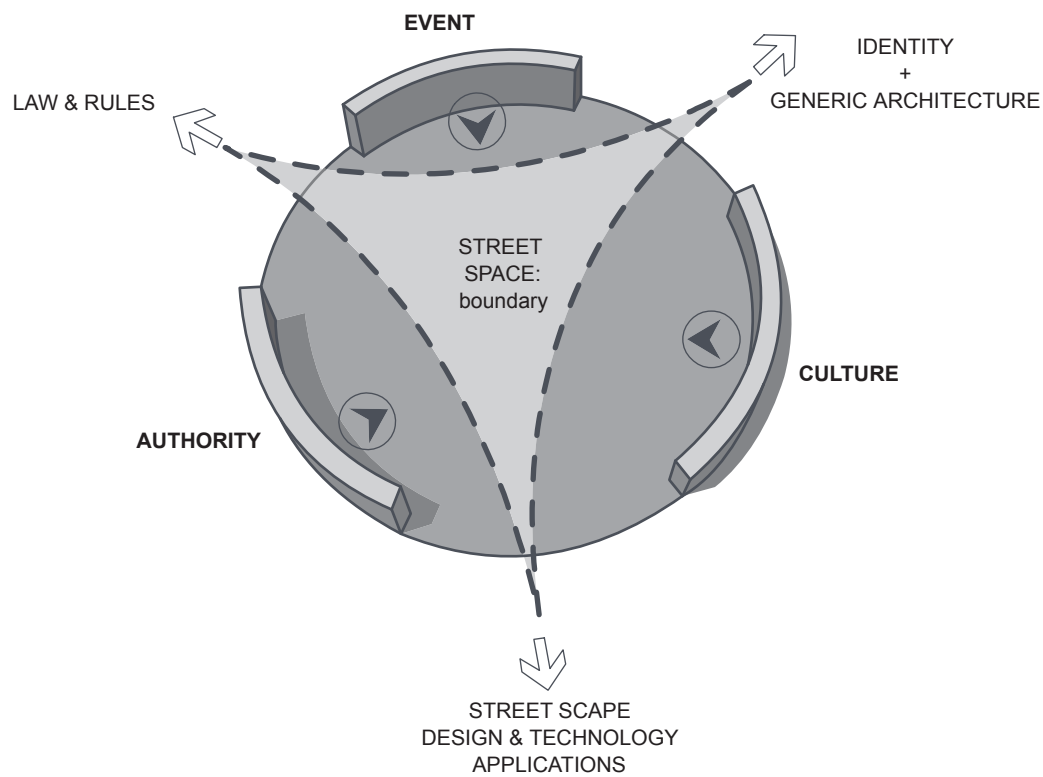


Figure 5. Theoretical framework for the design of a new streetscape

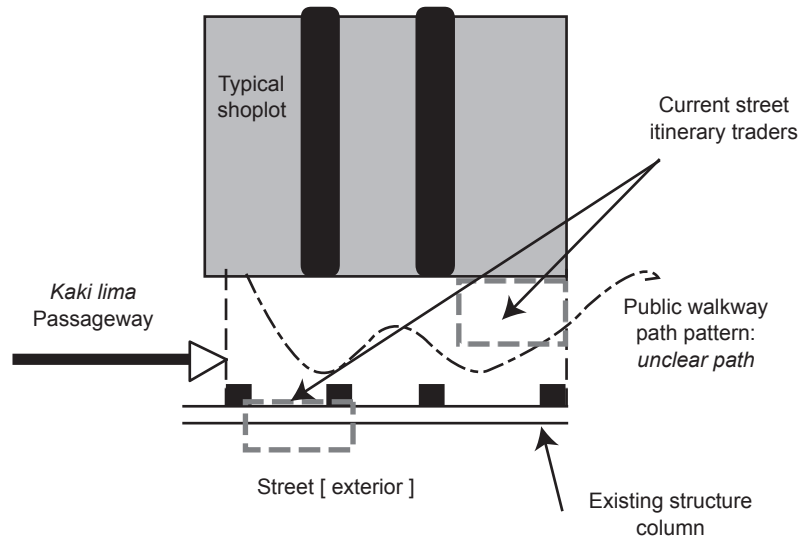


Figure 6. Layout of public space in a typical shoptop in Kuala Lumpur

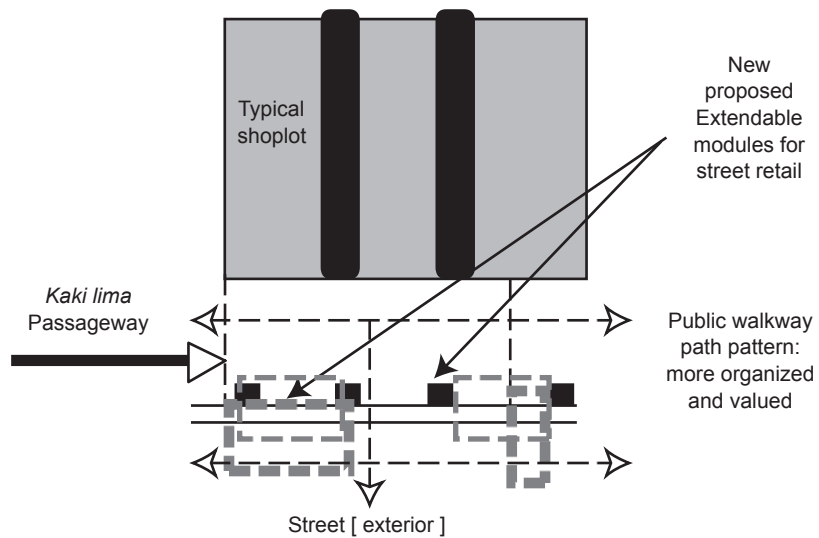


Figure 7. Layout on space structure for proposed new street retail design

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