

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Seattle



Figure 1.1.1 Location of the street Western Ave at downtown Seattle. Source: Visit Seattle

The foreign city that we have been assigned for Project 1 Case Study is Seattle. Seattle is a West Coast seaport city in Washington, with an estimated population of 600,000 (Population Estimates, 2015), Seattle is the largest city in both the state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest region of North America. The city's chief harbor, Elliot Bay is part of Puget Sound, which makes the city an oceanic port. We have examined the patterns of the social activities and different contact points along one of the street located at the downtown of Seattle which is the Western Ave (Figure 1.1.1). Western Ave borders the coastline of Downtown Seattle, and an increasingly popular tourist spots with landmarks such as Pike Place Market. Hence, the vicinity of Western Ave is home to few notable contact points of varying intensity and contact level. The proximity of contact points to Western Ave is quite an influential factor.



*Figure 2.1.2 Pike Place Market, one of the busiest contact point along the street. Photographer: Dan Anderson*

Pike Place Market (Figure 1.1.2) is a public market overlooking the Elliot Bay waterfront in Seattle. It is one of the oldest continuously operated public farmers' market in the U.S. It is a place of business for many small farmers, craftspeople and merchants. With its historical and cultural value, Pike Place Market has become one of the most famous tourist destination in the world (Travel & Leisure Staff, 2014). And therefore, it is one of the most important contact point that can be found along Western Ave. With the help of the findings from Project 1, it will be chosen as one of the subject in this comparative essay to examine and study its similarities or dissimilarities based on the patterns of social activities, types of contact points and their contact intensity and compare with the other subject taken from the local site which is Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur.

## 1.2 Kuala Lumpur (Chinatown)

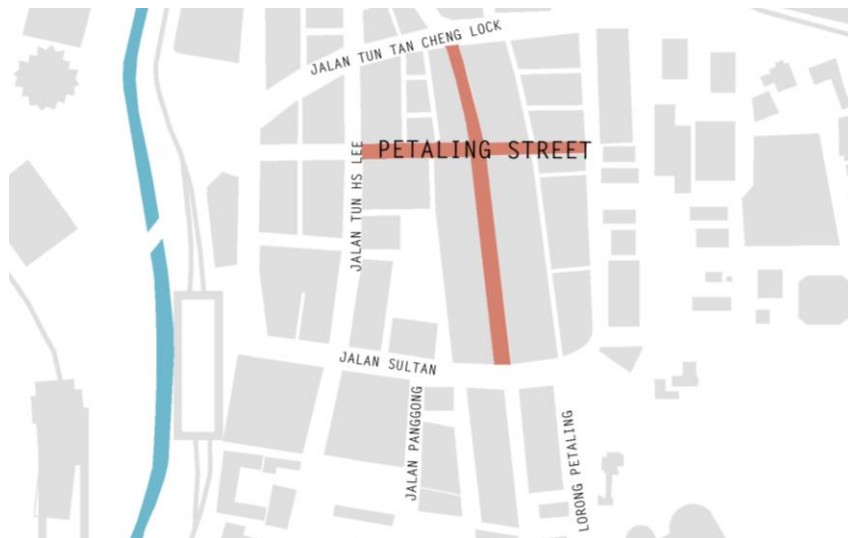


Figure 3.2.1 Location of Petaling Street in Kuala Lumpur. Source: Author



Figure 4.2.2 South entrance of Petaling Street in Kuala Lumpur. Source: Malaysia Tripadvisor

The site that we have been assigned for local site research in Design Studio is Petaling Street (also known as Chinatown) located at the heart of Kuala Lumpur (Figure 1.2.1). Petaling Street, is also known as 'Chee Cheong Kai' (Starch Factory Street), a reference to its roots as a tapioca-producing district. This area is deeply immersed in Oriental culture, heritage and history, that never sleeps and is one of the most famous tourist spot in Kuala Lumpur especially at night when the market area transforms into a lively and vibrant night market that is filled with hundreds of stalls offering all goods at extremely cheap price that attract a lot of visitors including the locals and tourists. Therefore, it becomes one of the most significant contact point located in Kuala Lumpur in which locals, students and even tourists will be visiting and gathering over there. Hence, different types of activity with different levels of intensity due to the physical environment will be occurring there.



## 2.0 Analytical Essay

In this comparative essay, we are going to examine and compare the similarities and dissimilarities between the two cities, which are Seattle and Kuala Lumpur based on the patterns of social activities, types of contact points and also the varying contact intensity between the two cities. These cities are considered as one of the busiest city in respective country whereas different types of contact point with varying contact intensity could be found over there. However, there is one contact point that we have analyzed in Project 1 which is the Pike Place Market is similar to one of the contact point that is found in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur which is the Petaling Street.



Figure 2.1 Fish stall in Pike Place Market. Source: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 2.2 Restaurants in Petaling Street. Source: Expedia

A series of outdoor activities are created around these contact points, and these activities are highly related to their physical environment and so will be influencing them to a varying degree in many different ways (Gehl, 1986). One of the outdoor activities is the necessary activities, in general definition, including everyday tasks and pastimes for example walking to work, shopping, or even waiting for a bus is considered as a necessary activity. Thus, in terms of necessary activities between both contact points as mentioned, there are not much differences that can be found between them as they are serving the same purpose as a market, and so similar necessary activities will be occurring between them. Necessary activities also described as functional activities that can be found around both contact points would be the economic activities. The economic activities as in selling goods, local foods and also some restaurants that can be found in both contact points are considered as necessary activities as in these are the daily tasks for them to go for work and that will take place throughout the year regardless of the weather or the condition of exterior environment. Moreover, for

some of the visitors that are there for shopping, it is also considered as a necessary activity as this is an activity that is more or less compulsory to participate.

Necessary activities that occur around these two contact points are more or less similar to each other as the main function of the place is the same. On the other hand, from these outdoor activities, other than necessary activities, there are some optional activities happening around there as well. From its definition, optional activities occur only when someone participates if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible (Gehl, 1986). This category of activities also described as recreational activities, is highly tied to the exterior physical conditions, as it only occurs when the weather and place invite them. With this condition, contact point at Pike Place Market will be having a slightly higher contact intensity as compared with the contact point at Petaling Street as this category of outdoor activity is highly dependent on the exterior physical conditions. Referring to Pike Place Market as a high level contact point, visitors of the market not only stop by the markets but also circulate around the vicinity to find some resting spots, primarily Victor Steinbrueck Park (Figure 2.3) that is a well-designed open green scape within the urban city hub to a variety of activities for the people there to spend their time together, gathering and chilling around there.



*Figure 2.3, 2.4 Victor Steinbrueck Park nearby Pike Place Market. Source: Downtown Seattle Association*

This is the point that is different between contact point in Pike Place Market and Petaling Street in terms of the planning of the space. The contact intensity of the contact point at Pike Place Market is higher as compared with the one at Petaling Street as they are influenced by the surrounding physical environment. Referring to Pike Place Market, the surrounding physical environment with some open green scape allows the people there to experience other people, buildings or even the nature, allows them to have a direct relationship to other people and so to the surrounding social environment. On the other words, the design of the environment contributes to a high quality space, and acts as a catalyst



to spur the beginning of human relationships. Therefore, this points up another important need, named “the need for stimulation” (Gehl, 1986) that is required to make a living city. On the other hand, as a same physical environment of urban setting, contact intensity around Petaling Street might be lower as compared with Pike Place Market.



*Figure 2.5, 2.6 (left) Urban setting nearby the contact point at Petaling Street, no green scape is found.*

*(Right) New construction of MRT line nearby Petaling Street. Source: Author*

This is because of the planning of this place considering a famous tourist spot in Kuala Lumpur area, it is full with commercial shop houses and even hotels at the surrounding without any green scape that can acts as a breathing space or contact point within this busy urban city that allows people there to interact and so improve its surrounding social environment. On the other words, Victor Steinbrueck Park in Pike Place Market is vibrant with various level of activities as compared with the surrounding shop houses or hotels in Petaling Street. Thus, considering the segregation of city functions, and also the reliance on automobile has caused the city become duller and lifeless without stimulation that brings up experiences with other people, buildings or the nature. If the activity between building and the interaction between the people with the street is missing, the place planning might considered as a failure, where the surrounding social environment is not planning well, no experiences between the people and city and therefore there is no life between buildings. Also to mention that the planning of the place should not be focusing only on how it will function or how it will look like, we must always take into consideration how this place will be interacting with the people that is using them as mentioned.

There is another type of outdoor activities which is the social activities, it depends on the presence of other people in public spaces (Gehl, 1986). Social activities are affected by the people and also the activities occur within a space, thus it is indirectly supported whenever necessary and optional activities are given better conditions in public spaces. Therefore, public space with high quality, satisfies all conditions to accommodate three levels of activities. Referring to the contact point at Pike Place Market, the social activities occur inside the market and also outside the market. The activities for example people that is selling or buying goods there are actually considered as a social activities to a certain extent. This point of social activities could be derived from the contact point at Petaling Street, as the main purpose of the market is the same. Whereas, the character of social activities varies depending on the surrounding context and activities in which they occur.



Figure 2.7 “The Tallboys” street performance at Pike Place Market. Source: Seattle Tourist

In Pike Place Market, the contact intensity will be higher also because of the activities occurring around it that create and enhance the social relationship between the people. There are several street performances that occur at the Pike Place Market where the people there get to engage through this form of social activity. The people able to experience other people or even the place in a different way other than just by seeing or hearing other people in which that’s considered as the lowest contact intensity. On the other words, the performances can be described as an activity that acts as a medium for contact, because without activity, there is no requirement for people to use and share a space, erasing the need for contact. When there is social relationship between people, then the people become the main attraction of even more people, in Scandinavia an old proverb tells it all:” people come where people are.”



Figure 2.8, 2.9 Street outside Petaling Street, no interaction between the people there. Source: Author

Whereas for the contact point in Petaling Street, there is only low-intensity contact without any other outdoor activities for example street performances as an attraction for better social relationship within the context. The social activities in Petaling Street can be described as the social activities that occur only in city streets where there are only buildings and traffics without any connection between the people and the street in which the people is either alone or else with others on a relatively demanding level (Gehl, 1986). The social activities in such context are more superficial in a way that only passive contacts occur which is the seeing and hearing of surrounding unknown people without any other interactions between them.

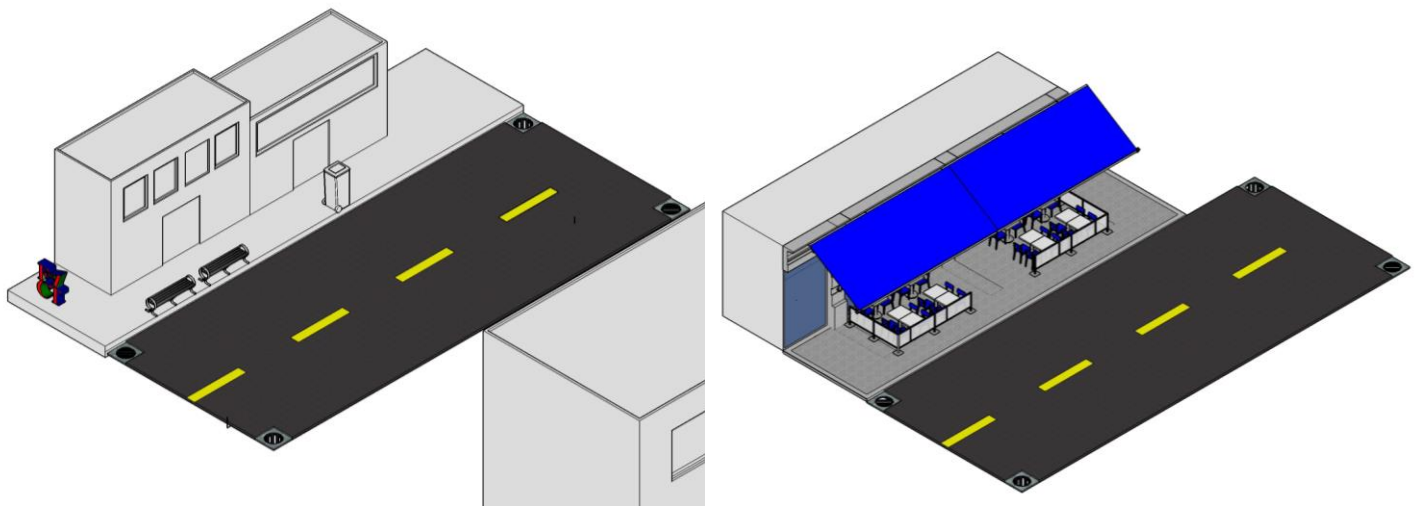


Figure 2.10, 2.11 Benches (left) and sidewalk café (right) found along the street nearby Pike Place Market. Source: Author

Moreover, benches and sidewalk cafes that provide good view of surrounding activities can be found nearby the Pike Place Market. It kind of created an attraction to the people there to spend some time sitting over there, no matter if they are alone or with someone else, because there will be a connection between them with the street and this is what that is needed to stimulate the experiences between the people and the streets or the buildings there.





*Figure 2.12, 2.13 No benches or sidewalk cafes found to attract the people. Source: Author*

Whereas, in Petaling Street there are no benches or sidewalk cafes found to act as an attraction for the people there to improve the social relationship between them and also their experiences with the place. There are no stops found along the street with dull exhibits that will affect the relationship between the people and also the surrounding social environment.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the relationship between the people and the surrounding social environment is important whereas it is crucial to take into consideration in place planning. Stimulation is needed to enhance and improve not only the experiences between the people but also with the surrounding context and social environment. Contact points at Pike Place Market can be considered as a success in a way that the activities there are happening not only for the sake of one purpose, but at the same, these high quality activities become the medium for another activities as a result to attract more people and bring up their experiences with the other people and the space. On the other hand, the contact points in Petaling Street is lacking of stimulation and experiences with the other people and also the social environment there. Therefore, Petaling Street might become a place that is dull with no attraction to other people to carry out some other activities especially the social activities between the people there. Perhaps there are only necessary activities occurring within that social environment and so making the place dull and less vibrant. Thus, life between buildings are important that we can achieve in many ways to bring up and enhance the experiences of the people with the spaces within this social environment.

## 4.0 Reference

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