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Raja Nur Syaheeza Raja Mohd Yazit, Elina Mohd Husini and Atta Idrawani Zaini

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Design Concept: Integrating and Creating 'Third Place' in Schools' Environment

Raja Nur Syaheeza Raja Mohd Yazit¹, Elina Mohd Husini¹ and
Atta Idrawani Zaini²

¹Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, ²Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Jalan Datuk Mohammad Musa, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.
Email: rajanursyaheeza@gmail.com

Abstract

Interactions between younger and older generations that leads to social connectivity is important. Introductions of boarding schools segregated students with the surrounding society. The segregation causes *total institution* that negatively impacted the students' social behavior, thus causes the students to be socially detached with the community. Adapting *Third Place* urban theory in smaller scopes such as educational institution can create school layout design that emphasizes social interactions. It can be defined as public spaces that serves as a rejuvenation or escapism tool from *First Place* (home) and *Second Place* (workplace). In boarding schools, *First Place* is the dormitories and *Second Place* is the classrooms. This paper focuses on the conceptual idea of integrating *Third Place* with boarding school design. Observation in an educational hub in Pengkalan Chepa, Kota Bharu shows the street hawkers' stalls allow a common area for teachers, students, government servants and the local community to interact between each other. Surrounding the site are other institution such as schools, residential, a prison and a mosque. By merging the *Third Place* of the community with the boarding school, opportunity for the students to socially interact increases in theory. This paper introduces a new conceptual idea for school layout design.

Keywords: 'Third Place', Boarding Schools, Social Interactions, Conceptual Design, Secondary School

Introduction

Sociologists identified that students living in a typical boarding school spent majority of their youth only within the compound of the school. Goffman (1961) identified this as a *total intuition*

for the students, similarly to a prison. This leads to social detachment among the students from the society. The environment of the boarding schools emphasized *living around the clock* with the same group of people doing the same thing each day, thus the students experienced pressure and stress (Cookson and Persell, 1985). However, even a small compound such as school building can be designed to optimize the socialization of students in classrooms or small gathering space (Uzma, 2003).

Ray Oldenburg introduced *Third Place* theory as to define a community friendly public environment with no prejudice towards individual's background. *Frantic scheduling syndrome* can be observed on individuals that are unsatisfied with their daily social interactions. This negatively impacts the required healthy social life. Each community that have their own public or communal space is a potential *Third Place*. These spaces are not defined by any specific program or activity, somehow it serves as a place to interact between each other through their common circulation path from *Second Place* (workplace) to *First Place* (home) or vice versa. Pedestrians and cyclists overshadow the vehicles, thus human scale within the 'Third Space' are preserved (Oldenburg, 1989).

Figure 1 shows the definition and interconnection between *First Place*, *Second Place* and *Third Place*. Although this theory observed within an urban scope, however it can be applied within a smaller scope and society or institution such as boarding schools. This type of school created a smaller community or society among the students, where the *First Place* is the dormitories or hostels, *Second Place* is the classrooms, where the students learns. This shows that *Third Place* is required in school environment to balance the students' community living.

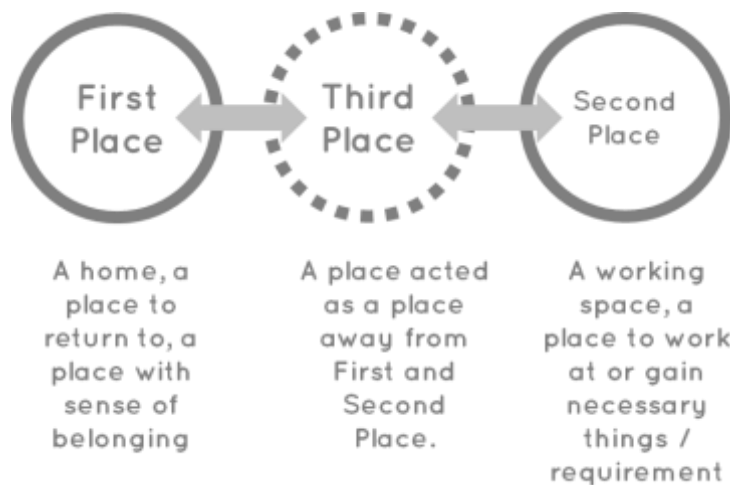


Figure 1. The Concept of Spaces (Source: Syaheeza, 2015).

First Place

First as a primary number indicate that *First Place* is the primary and initial place required for humans. This includes a space or place that one has a sense of belonging and returns back to. This place is relatable to the definition of a *home*. A permanent space or place that act as transition spaces such as dormitories, hospitals and even a prison is considered as *home*

(Terkenli, 1995). Psychologically, human's habit in a familiar space such as a home influences the occupants' behaviour and emotions, thus effecting their mental state (Boutruche, 2008). In physical environment, a home is directly related to a house or dwellings. These provides closure, safety, retreat and sanctuary from the daily demands of the world such as socialization and working requirement (Oner, 2011). Quran emphasized the importance of a home in surah An-Nahl and At-Tahrim, as shown below.

It is Allah Who made your habitations (houses) homes of rest and quiet for you... (An-Nahl 16: 80).

My Lord, build for me a house with You in the garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people... (At-Tahrim 66: 11).

Although, Kahn (2000) translated house and home different, where home is the essence of the feelings towards belongingness of a physical structure that serves human as a shelter, known as house (Kahn, 2000; Walker, 1998). Dwellings are a constructed structure for human shelter which ranges from a simple design of a hut to a more complex design such as an apartment (Schoenauer, 2000). Stronger sense of home is related to the human psychology and geographical aspects. Example, once the dweller or the occupant of the house moved further away from it, the sense of belonging decreases (Terkenli, 1995). Oner (2011) mentioned that the word *maskan* in Arabic means home is a place where the occupants rest, keep calm and be tranquil.

Gurney (1990) in other hand defined home as a place a person lives their life while developing and ideologically construct their emotional experiences. However, referring to the concept of *ideological construction* of emotions, then it is not reliable or relevant to have a house in order to experience the sense of belonging. This shows that the term home itself involves intellectual construction and not just feelings and real experience (Somerville, 1996).

Second Place

Second Place is a place where people work for a beneficiary gain such as finance, item, food, knowledge and many more. Aside from *Third Place*, it is also viewed as an important space or place for people to socialize with others. This shows that a workplace is a smaller scale community or society (Jackson & Suomi, 2004). Historically in the 15th century, formal working spaces was introduced due to overpopulated cities that lacks job opportunities caused by unavailability of working spaces. During that time, most of the newly constructed buildings are being converted into a business-based spaces by merchants (Long, 2004). In workplace that creates a positive influence to a single individual can give high impact on the environment of the workplace. One single positive influence on an individual influence even the co-workers that occupy the same space (Authayarat and Umemuro, 2012).

The emotions created from the socialization within a *Second Place* influences work behaviour as well as the surrounding community, thus required importance in consideration. Further

explained, any events occurred within *Second Place* have significant effect on the occupants' behaviour. Events that causes emotional disturbance effects the groups, individuals and society's attitude (Weiss, 2002). Occupational stress or stress involves work occurs when the demand and workers' capability disputed in reaching the desired outcome of the errands (Henry and Evans, 2008). Factors that leads to occupational stress in workplace are (Colligan, et al., 2006):

- i. Excessive workload
- ii. Isolation
- iii. Extensive hours worked
- iv. Lack of autonomy
- v. Difficult relationship among co-workers and management
- vi. Management bullying
- vii. Harassment
- viii. Lack of opportunities and motivations to advance ones' skills

Third Place

Although commonly known as common area or public area, *Third Place* consist of eight criteria to be considered as one. These public spaces are a social space or platform that are publicly open and accessible to the community. Parks, squares and pocket spaces are considered as public spaces, which the function is for people to share and gathered in the place (Syaheeza, 2015). In Islam culture, gathering place has already been implemented through the concept of *jama'khana*. Jama'a translated from Arabic is plural or multiple, which also means gathering. Meanwhile khana means a place in Persian language. The gathering space are enhanced by the scholars, educated people and their apprentices through intellectual discourse and conversations (Mohamed, 2007).

Other public spaces referred from the Arab culture is the *souq*. It refers to an open-air market originated from the middle east. Others also refers *souq* as a commercial quarter (Ayto, 2009). The architecture and planning of the settlements in the middle east created pathways between buildings, which allows a network of commercial areas for bankers, merchants and craftsmen to be established (Daryae, 2012; Yatin, Halim, Abdullah & Shahroom 2018; Gwahula (2018). The merchants in the *souq* often are friendly due to competitiveness of business as well as the beneficiaries that can be gained. The *souq* not only creates a business network, but as well as creating an intimate experience through the pathway towards mosque, larger public areas and administrative buildings or institutions (Syaheeza, 2015). Related to the theory of *Third Place* by Ray Oldenburg, there are eight criteria for a public space to be fully identified as a *Third Place*. This represented in the Figure 2 provided.

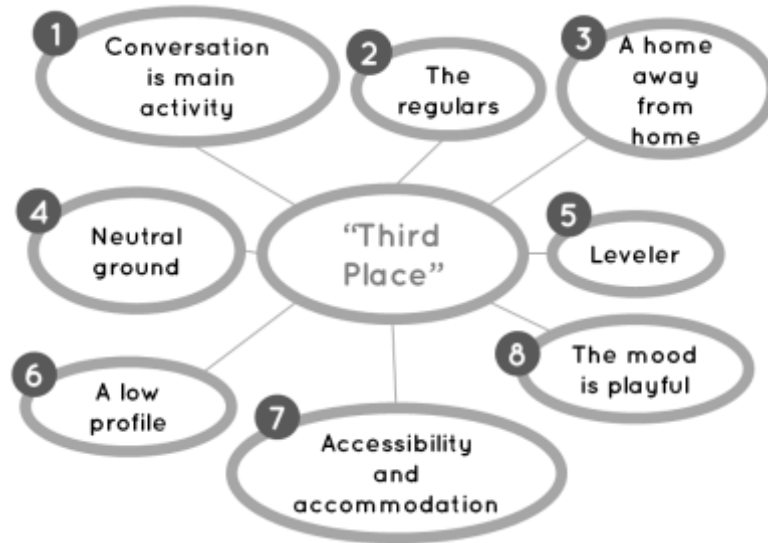


Figure 2. Criteria of Third Place by Ray Oldenburg (Source: Syaheeza, 2015).

Methodology

This paper has established an observation at the educational hub in Pengkalan Chepa, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The hub located near to the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport with many other institutions such as Pengkalan Chepa Prison, State Educational Technology Department, Pengkalan Chepa police Department, a few mosques, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and various schools. Commercial buildings are also available within the hub in order to cater for the local residents' daily needs and requirements. The map of the educational hub can be referred to Figure 3.



Figure 3. Map of Educational Hub, Pengkalan Chepa, Kota Bharu (Google Maps, 2018).

Through observation, the local residents have established an area of street hawkers on the side of the road. The road is the main road that connects various institutions such as the police department, mosque, prison and as well as the schools. Observation also shows that the street hawkers' area is fully occupied by customers during the afternoon lunch hour and after office hour in the evening. Most of the customers are police officers, students from various schools, government servants and as well as the local residents. The local residents are originally born and raised in that area even before the hub was established. Other residents are people who migrated from other state or cities due to workplace conveniences.



Figure 4. Street hawkers' stalls side of the road 1 (Google Maps, 2018).



Figure 5. Street hawkers' stalls side of the road 2 (Google Maps, 2018).



Figure 6. Street hawkers' stalls side of the road 3 (Google Maps, 2018).

The street hawkers' area stretches up to 1 km alongside the main road. Figure 4 until Figure 6 shows the condition of the street hawkers' stall and small cabin. Various foods and beverages can be purchase with additional of plentiful seating area prepared by the vendors. Although the parking spots are limited, the convenience of the location is preferred by the customers. The direct pedestrian pathway from these institutions allows the customers to experience an outside of the workplace eating environment. The older generation residents will treat this place a hangout place, similar to cafes and bars in the western countries.

This *Third Place* environment, although happened unconsciously, proven that a public space is required for the surrounding communities including students to have a rejuvenation and escapism outside of the workplace, the *Second Place* before retreating to each *First Place*. This shows that a *Third Place* concept area should be emphasized in designing an institution. This is not limited to an educational institution such as schools as well. The further approach of this study is to design a conceptual master plan or layout for a residential; or boarding school.

Discussion and Design Concept

The community outside of the school has established their own *Third Place* by operating street hawker's business alongside the main road. In order to integrate the community's and the school's *Third Place*, a multi-dimensional *Third Place* need to be designed. Keeping the *First Place* and *Second Place* of each group separated, the community and the students, Figure 7 shows how the integration of both *Third Place* can produce the multi-dimensional *Third Place* that caters the need of rejuvenation and escapism for both groups.

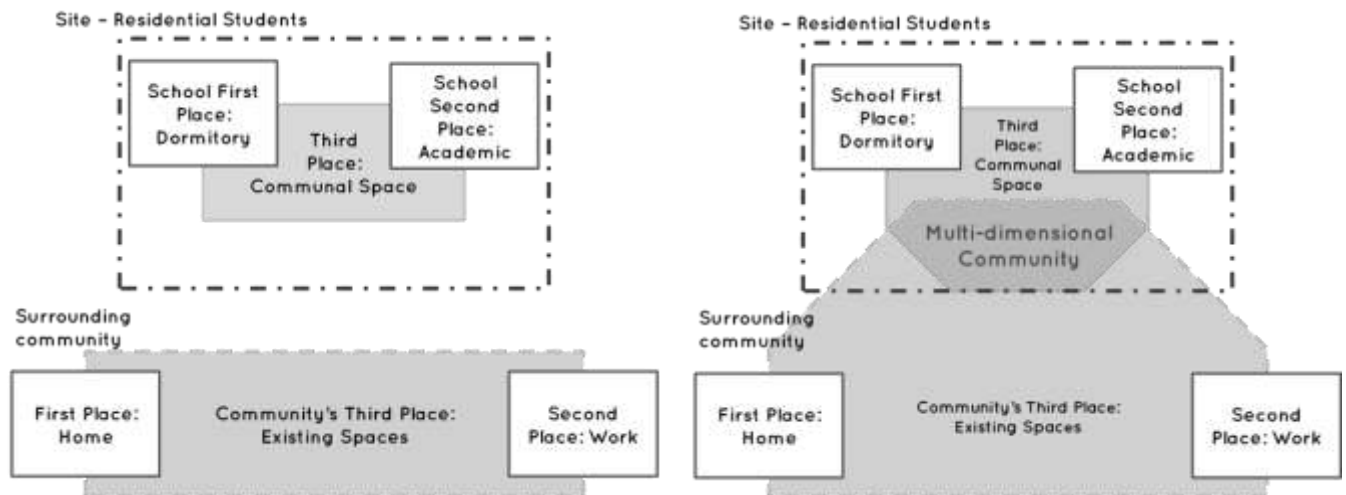


Figure 7. Integration of Third Places to create a multi-dimensional community Third Place.

The location of the multi-dimensional *Third Place* should be convenient enough for both group to access. Creating the multi-dimensional area near or within the existing *Third Place* allows it to be more prominent and acceptable to the community. In order to achieve one of the eight criteria in the theory, the multi-dimensional area should be designed with various activities considered to cater for the needs of various user with various different background.

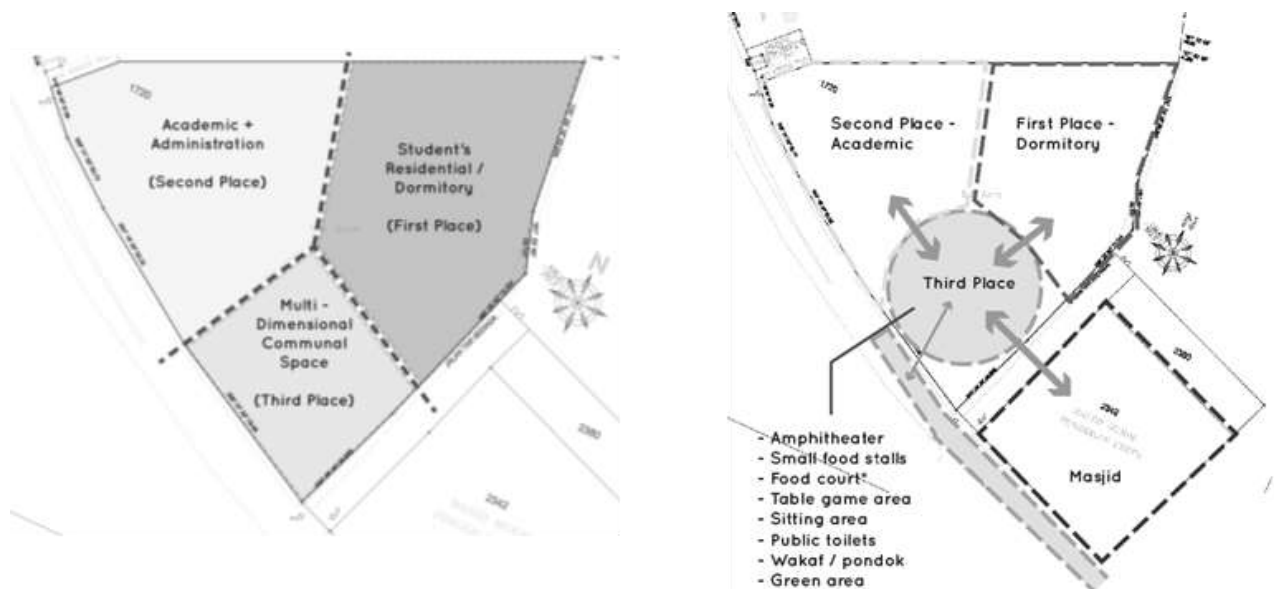


Figure 8. Example of zoning and layout design for schools with the multi-dimensional area (Syahzeeza, 2015; Dimasi & Aravani, 2013).

Figure 8 shows an example of integrating the schools' *Third Place* with the existing street hawkers' area. The integrated design allows the students and local community to have a common

ground to interact with each other. Thus, this can lead to a more proper platform for both of the group to socially interacts and reduces the students' social detachment issues. Implementing the eight criteria of the theory would increase the successfulness of the multi-dimensional *Third Place* design.

The multi-dimensional area, although within the property and owned by the school, a porous design can be implemented to blur out the boundaries between both. The local community can benefit the space if given them the opportunity to over spill the street hawkers' business into the space. Since it is owned by the school, it can be design with its own stalls and rented out to the community. Thus, both the school and the local community can benefit financially from the design. The students can benefit the place as a retreat or hangout area during the weekends or after class session. This strengthen the student's motivational spirits as well.

Conclusion

The issue of social detachment towards surrounding communities is not only relatable within boarding schools, but also exist within a larger institution. Implementing the theory of places by Ray Oldenburg enhances not only the communal spaces' quality, but also humans' life quality. If the theory implemented properly, it reduces the possibilities of social detachment towards surrounding communities among younger generations. Therefore, these criteria of the theory are required to be fully understood by architects and designers so that the interpretation from a theory into physical built environment can be translated with minor error of understanding during the process of implementation and design. Although, further study and a sets of reliable case studies are required to prove the successfulness of the multi-dimensional *Third Place* theory in the future.

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