The syntactic logic of street vending and market activity: a case of Jakarta

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Abstract

This paper presents result from on-going study about informal economy and transformation of the space-use, taking Jakarta as case-study. Based on previous papers on informal settlement and movement pattern in Jakarta and how space-syntax technique can be applied to analyse spatial (re)configuration and the socio-economic aspects, to both neighbourhood and city-wide scale (Budiarto, 2003), this paper aims to provide preliminary answer the issue raised before: how the idea about urban space as a layer of networks emerged out from different scales of movements is positively related to the distribution of a great range of activities within the informal street-vending and market activity, in terms of market installation, concentration of particular vendors, specialization, mingling between vending and domestic activity, etc.

There is already a great number of works proposing to think space as a layered and nested network constituted by the pattern of natural movement flows (e.g. Read, 2001; Read & Budiarto 2003). In agreement to this way of thinking, this paper tries to put some more attentions on the way socio-economic activity, particularly those on the informal sector of economy, is structured and distributed following a certain set of spatial syntactic logic; rather than homogeneously dispersed in space.

Besides presenting analysis on topology and distribution of vending activity, we try also to link the idea about activity-distribution to the way our perception and action toward the environment is structured. Accordingly, Gibson (1979) proposed that the environment not only serves as the surfaces that separate substances from the medium in which we live, but also affords our activity and action; and there is not only information in light for the perception of the environment, but also information for the perception of what the environment affords. The environment is then considered as active substance which along with our direction of movement continuously feeds us with information about affordances (through e.g. rich details and embellishments) and simultaneously 'invites' particular activity.

In this poster presentation, using photographic images and mappings as visualization means, we try to explore how picking particular information on affordances from the environment together with the syntactic logic of space and pattern of movement structure the distribution of street-level activity serving different level of urban networks, from neighbourhood to city scale. It is proposed that the structure and tacit syntactic logic behind such distribution of activity occur as total result of certain topological position and affordances-information available on the environment, which jointly create positive interference and through imposing certain set of 'constraints' and 'allowances' it 'invites' particular use (or combination of uses) of space.