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PROJECT: THE IMAGE OF THE CITY

PART 2: COGNITIVE MAPPING

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Petaling Street, also known as Chinatown in Kuala Lumpur is a famous tourist spot which is popular for its cheap imitated products and local Chinese food. The history of the opening of Chinatown began when the area along Petaling Street, Jalan Sultan and Jalan Tun HS Lee concentrated by Chinese immigrants who did trading and tin mining. After the tin mining activity was affected by Civil War 1870, Capitan Yap Ah Loy changed this area into an agricultural spot. During that time, Petaling Street was called 'Chee Cheong Kai' which referred to Starch Factory Street Shop houses which were built for residential and business purposes. Most of the people know Petaling Street as a road with a full of shops that sell the imitated goods. At Petaling Street, there are many old shop houses which were believed to build at Kuala Lumpur during 1884, after the Civil War. There are a lot of people's perception and spatial behavior in cities today. In order to analyze these things, the cognitive mapping method has been used. Cognitive map or also known as mental map is a method designed to identify how an environment is understood by an individual or group. It is based on methods that had been developed by Kevin Lynch, Stanley Milgram and other theorist. Cognitive mapping method can help to understand the different perspectives of individuals or groups have about the place that they had used or visited, either frequently or not. These perspectives are related to understanding of the place in term of impact of social structure, a sense of community identified with place, memories and anything else. A different person has their own understanding about the place. These understandings symbolize the differences between individuals or groups and particularly what is important and unimportant.

In this project, three peoples from different background had been chose to draw their own cognitive maps about Petaling Street. Those respondents had been chose based on their races, religions and occupation. For some peoples that never been to Petaling Street, they think that Petaling Street is only a street with a lot of shops sell a lot of imitated goods. Furthermore, for some Malay and Indian peoples, their perception of the site is that it is filled with Chinese culture, such as food. Hence, these criteria had been selected to know their own opinion after they had visited Petaling Street. The first

respondent, Respondent A, is a Malay guy who frequently visits Petaling Street. Basically, he goes to Petaling Street because of the cheap stuffs like clothes and shoes. The second respondent, Respondent B, is an Indian guy who studied at the tuition center nearby and visited Petaling Street to eat. Sometimes, he goes to Petaling Street after he prays at the temple nearby. The last respondent, Respondent C, is a Chinese guy who visited Petaling Street frequently to buy his favorite foods. Apart of that, some survey forms has been distributed randomly to the Petaling Street's visitors as a part of analysis. The survey form asked about their first impression and opinion about Petaling Street. The full survey form can be referred in Appendix A and the full results is shown in Appendix B.

Based on the cognitive maps that had been produced, there are some similarities and dissimilarities that can be found. The most significant similarities that can be found in those 3 maps is the huge gate with the sign of Petaling Street. Actually, there are two huge gates which is located at the North and South of Petaling Street. However, only Respondent A recognized those two gates in his drawing. According to him, he only realized there are two gates at Petaling Street when he covered all the road. Both Respondent B and C only draw one gates because they are already familiar with that place. So, they just walk to their targeted place through the shortcut way. Nowadays, the huge gates of Petaling Street have become a landmark of that area. The first thing that people will imagine about Petaling Street is this gates. This two gates was built in 2003 to welcome the visitors. A green roof cover was constructed, covering the whole street, dubbed the "Green Dragon". Only Respondent C includes this "Green Dragon" in his drawing.

Those 3 maps also show the pictures of clothes, shoes and other stuffs which symbolized the stuffs that can be found in Petaling Street. In Petaling Street, there are a lot of pirated products sell here. Most of it probably come from other countries like Thailand and Vietnam. The stuffs like clothes, shoes, wallets and pants are almost 90 percent similar to the original products. These things urged many people including the

foreigners to come to Petaling Street. However, according to Respondent B, some of the sellers take an advantage to cheat the foreigners by putting the different prices on their stuffs. For respondent A, he loves to come here because he can get the same type of branded stuffs with a cheaper prices. The next similarities that can be found is the food. There are many types of food that can be found here, especially the Chinese cuisine. For Respondent A, he realized about the food but he decided to avoid to have that food. This is because as a Muslim, he has to be cautious about choosing the food. Although there are some foods that he can eat there, he decided to avoid them as it his wrong for him to take non-halal food. For Respondent B, he always came to Petaling Street after his tuition class to eat *cendol* and *ice kacang*. There is a famous cendol shop located inside Petaling Street. Furthermore, his tuition center is not far from Petaling Street. Respondent C, who is a Chinese guy, he really loves to come here to eat *chee cheong fun*, *soya bean* and *muachi*. According to him, most of the food stalls are more than 40 years old. In my opinion, this is why he likes to come here, because of the originality of the recipe from that old stalls.

There are also some dissimilarities that can be found in the cognitive maps. First of all, the temple. Respondent B includes a temple in his drawing as he always visited this temple. According to Respondent B, *Sri Maha Mariamman* Temple is where he can find the peace. There is also where their god, *Ganesha* stayed. This two things were translated by Respondent B into 2 symbols, *Ohm*, universal symbol of peace and *Ganesha*, his god symbol in his drawing. However, for both Respondent A and C, they not included religious building in their drawing. According to respondent A, he didn't find any nearest mosque in Petaling Street. While, Respondent C is an Atheist. From the maps, both Respondent A and B drew a LRT in their drawing. This stated that both Respondent A and B when to Petaling Street by LRT. The nearest LRT station is *Pasar Seni* station which is located 500 meters from Petaling Street. While, Respondent C, he went to Petaling Street by car and parked at the nearest shops that he wanted to go.

Some people don't realize that there are a few education centers located nearby Petaling Street. The students from these education centers are also the visitors of Petaling Street. According to Respondent B, he studied at Kasturi Tuition Center which is located nearby Petaling Street. After his class, he went to Petaling Street with his friends to have *cendol* and *ice kacang*. Sometimes, he went to Popular bookstore nearby to read some comics. He also noticed that there is a hotel that his friends used to stay after their midnight class. While, Respondent C is not a student. He just noticed that he always saw Confucian Private Secondary School's students walked around that area. Sometimes, they will perform at Petaling Street for charity. Respondent A didn't realized that there are also education centers around Petaling Street. In Respondent A's map, he drew a mural drawing that he found while walking to Petaling Street. The mural is located nearby the *Sri Maha Mariamman* Temple. According to him, he found this mural drawing while searching for a shortcut to Petaling Street. The mural is about the history of that area.

Based on Kevin Lynch methods, he identified five key elements that make up an individual's perception of their city: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. In Petaling Street, these five elements can be found here. First of all is the landmark. Landmark is a point reference to the users. However, unlike nodes, which the individual enters during his or her travels, landmarks remain external features to the individual. They are often physical structures such as a building, sign, or geographic features. The range of landmarks is extensive, but the commonality is that there are used by the individual to better understand and navigate the built environment. In Petaling Street, the huge gates of Petaling Street becomes a landmark for this place. The design of the gates relates to Chinese culture that symbolize the street itself. This huge gates are like an entrance to the shopping mall. When the visitors passed through that gates, they can see a lot of shops along that street. In the cognitive maps, all those three maps show the main gates of Petaling Street as their reference point in their drawing.

Next is the nodes. Nodes are points within the city, strategically located, into which the individual enters and which is often the main focal point to which she or he is traveling to or from. In Petaling Street, the food area at the East side of Petaling Street, is one of the nodes of this place. There were many peoples gathered here to have their food especially Chinese cuisine. At the East side of Petaling Street, there is a food court covered with the food stalls along the road. From the cognitive maps, the food symbols are shown in all maps. It can be stated that, food is one of the famous things that can be found in Petaling Street instead of cheap stuffs. The other nodes is the bus stands which is located near the entrance to Petaling Street. This bus stands are been used by workers and visitors who came to Petaling Street using the public transports.

Paths consists of the "channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves" (Lynch, p. 47). These are often the most predominant items in the Respondents' mental map as this is main mechanism for how they experience Petaling Street. For the visitors who are already familiar with this place, they do not have to pass all the crowded street of Petaling Street as the food area can be easily accessed from the West entrance. Usually, the visitors came to Petaling Street through two main entrances which are located at the North and South where the main gates were located. However, there are some other entrances that can be used by the visitors such as from East and West. This two entrances are rarely used by the new visitors as one of the reason is there is no signboard notated Petaling Street located here. There are also some back alleys that can be used to access Petaling Street. Basically, most of the visitors came to Petaling Street by car and public transport such as bus and LRT. However, the parking area is a major problem for the car users. For the people who work nearby this area, they usually used the pay parking area which can be found outside the Petaling Street area. The rates are based on hourly or daily basis. For LRT users, the nearest LRT station is Pasar Seni which is located 500 meter from Petaling Street. As mention before, there are some back alleys that can be used to shorten the distance to the Petaling Street. Luckily, there are no problem for the bus users as the bus stops in front of the Petaling Street's main entrance. From the

cognitive maps, all those three respondents have their own paths to get to Petaling Street.

Next is the district of Petaling Street. Mainly, Petaling Street is a business area which covered along *Jalan Petaling*. It also becomes a residential area for the locals and the sellers at Petaling Street. This is because of the shop houses that had been built along the road. There are also some educational center nearby Petaling Street. Although they are located at the other roads, they are still affected to the number of the visitors of Petaling Street. Lastly, the edges provide the boundaries that separate one region from another, the seams that join two regions together, or the barriers that close one region from another. It can be said that, Petaling Street is separated by three main roads. The North part is separated by Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. The South and East parts are separated by Jalan Sultan. And the West part is separated by Jalan Tun H.S. Lee. The main gates also became the street boundary of Petaling Street.

In conclusion, a cognitive map gives people an important sense of emotional security, it is the framework for communication and conceptual organization, and heightens the depth and intensity of everyday human experience. According to Kevin Lynch when he presents his work as an agenda for urban designers. They should design the city in such a way that it gives room for three related 'movements': mapping, learning, shaping. First, people should be able to acquire a clear mental map of their urban environment. Second, people should be able to learn how to navigate in this environment by training. Third, people must be able to operate and act upon their environment. It is important to understand how people perceive, inhabit and move around in the urban landscape. It shows that urban space is not just composed of its physical characteristics but equally by representations in mental images. Last but not less, Petaling Streets fulfilled all those 5 elements promoted by Kevin Lynch: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

SURVEY FORM: PETALING STREET

1. What is your first impression about Petaling Street?

2. When was the last time you went to Petaling Street?

3. How did you get there? (If your answer in number 2 is yes)

- ☐ Car
- ☐ Public Transports
- ☐ Other:

4. Why do you went to Petaling Street? (If your answer in number 2 is yes)

5. How can you briefly explain about Petaling Street?

6. Petaling Street is famous for its

- ☐ Food
- ☐ Cheap Stuffs
- ☐ Other:.....

7. What is the other landmark or building nearby that you know?

8. What do you think of Petaling Street's location?

9. Do you like Petaling Street? Why?

SURVEY'S RESULT

1. What is your first impression about Petaling Street?

- Amazing because a lot of things are sell with a reasonable price and allows people to bargain.
- Packed place with peoples. lots of activities going on
- A street, full with shops.
- Chinese New Year stock up and shopping spree.
- Place to buy cheap things. I also went for tuition near there when i was in secondary school (Kasturi)
- Tourist attractions. Dangerous
- Busy and business collaborated

2. When was the last time you went to Petaling Street?

- A month ago
- 6 months ago
- Last month
- Half year ago.
- A month ago
- Few weeks back
- 2013

3. How did you get there? (If your answer in number 2 is yes)

- Car 6 75%
- Public Transports 2 25%
- Other 0%

4. Why do you went to Petaling Street? (If your answer in number 2 is yes)

- Visit Guan Di Temple for prayers and also update on any events by the local community. Not to forget to have a good meal on the chicken rice stall which had been existed since my father's generation.
- To check out some stuffs for an event
- survey goods
- For foods
- My grandmother had a function in which she was honored for her contributions in society
- Looking for cheap things.
- to carry out research

5. How can you briefly explain about Petaling Street?

- Wonderful place with a lot of shops that sells variety of products.
- There are a lot of shops sell the pirate goods. There are also a lot of Chinese food stall.
- Dodgy. Cultural. Local. And lively
- One of the places that make Malaysia what it is
- Many Chinese stalls and foreigners
- Petaling Street is full of attractions, place where negotiations, interacting space. With various of activities, and lots of races
- It used to be a multicultural street majored by Chinese of course, and yet everybody is helping each other out in term of business and local events. But now it seems, local youth are not too interested in handling the business there and making it a place where business are run by foreigners. But overall, there are still business run by the older generations and still practicing the local community spirits.

6. Petaling Street is famous for its

- Food 2 25%
- Cheap Stuffs 5 62.5%
- Other 1 12.5%

7. What is the other landmark or building nearby that you know?

- Maybank tower
- Brown hotel in the middle of the market
- Masjid Jamek
- Central Market
- The entrance
- LRT station

8. What do you think of Petaling Street's location?

- Strategic, public transportation are convenient and parking for vehicles are easy, but yet quite pricey nowadays.
- It is strategic location as it is in the heart of the city.
- Situated well in the city. Easy to access.
- Strategic but hectic
- Crowded but unique.
- It's strategic but it's quite difficult to get parking if I drive. But the decoration is just nice.
- Strategic

9. Do you like Petaling Street? Why?

- Not really because I hate to walk /be in a street/shops/malls that have a lot of people.
- Not much because of the crowded street and the crime issues.
- Yes because everything is affordable and can 'cuci mata'.
- Yes because easy to find stuffs. and lots of tourist
- Neutral. it has its specialty and usually I would go there for the food
- Yes, it's like tradition to me since I grew up by visiting it for Chinese New Year celebration shopping spree. And well, not to forget the food too.