Configuration or Attractors? A Space Syntactic Inquiry Into Tourists’ Movement Flow Pattern In The Melaka World Heritage Site

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CONFIGURATION OR ATTRACTORS? A SPACE SYNTACTIC INQUIRY INTO TOURISTS’ MOVEMENT FLOW PATTERN IN THE MELAKA WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the findings of a research on tourists’ movement patterns in Melaka World Heritage site. The study used a new approach that is based on the ‘spatial configuration analysis’ and ‘gate count survey method’ as established by the field of Space Syntax. It is aim to identify and explains the pattern of tourists’ movement in the selected study area either their flow are actually influenced by the factor of ‘configuration’ or ‘attractors’. The issue is raised from the critics towards existing tourist typologies which has been claimed as too simplified in details about how the tourist actually behave in terms of their movement. Since there are limited number of observation methods applied in tourism analysis (tourist flow and movement in particular), Space Syntax field provide an opportunity for the researcher to have better understanding of tourist typologies within the context of tourism and urban development discipline. According to many urban researchers, a different type of city means that they have different type of movement. However, it is also believed that although if they are different, the most integrated line or street of the city (or potential route of tourist flow) should also pass through the integration core (centrality of the city). The area can be categorised as geographical centre. This lead into further inquiries whether similar criteria may also appears to the tourists’ movement in the city of developing country such as Melaka City which is known as the oldest city in Malaysia. It is due to the emergence of city in developing country that might expand completely different from ‘organic cities’ such as the Western medieval cities and Islamic traditional cities. As the centrality of a city had experience a shift from ancient urban core to new development area, the question rises if such shifting of centrality may affects tourists’ movement? Or does it only affect the activities done by local people? The findings reveal that tourists’ movement pattern in Melaka World Heritage Site is most probably attractor-based in both local and global structure of the city. Secondly, though the integration core of the study area is not in the heritage core and thus, it seems not significantly to affect the tourists’ flow pattern. Interestingly, the findings reveals that line with high integration values (the most integrated
line in the system) as identified by Space Syntax which usually have a greater probability to attract more movement in it is insignificantly affecting the movement pattern or functioning as a primary source of movement in the study area. Where tourism aspects is concern, it was clear that tourists’ movement pattern in Melaka World Heritage site is most likely influenced by secondary elements (such as location of the accommodation and food outlet) rather than primary elements (the attraction itself).

**Keywords:** tourists’ movement patterns; configuration; attractors

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Arguably, the best way to experience and appreciate a historically, culturally and architecturally significant touristic city is to explore on foot its streets, squares and spaces between buildings while exercising our senses on the scenes and ambiance (spatial quality, aesthetics, colours, movements, sounds, smells, emotions etc.) that unfold as we progress through the historic urban fabric, connecting what we experience with known historic records, images and narratives, and probably also with bits of our own imagination. The whole experience of walking through the historic city in a pleasurable, enjoyable and memorable manner, gradually piecing together bits of historic images and elements into a coherent and logical picture of the city through time, is therefore pivotal to the overall quality of the tourist’s experience. This, in turn, underpins the attractiveness and success of the tourist heritage city. In fact, it is reasonable to postulate that the tourist’s appreciation, image and judgment of a heritage city are predominantly directly related to his/her experience in walking through the city’s streets and public space network.

As such, enhancing the tourist’s walking experience in the heritage city should be of great interest to tourism planners, policy makers and authorities responsible for promoting tourism in the city. To that end, a better understanding of the way tourists move, and what they do when and where, in the heritage city are essential. Specifically, what motivates tourists to proceed down a street? How do they choose their route? What are their dominant activities along the route? Do they tend to walk fast or slow? How far do tourists normally get to in the first half an hour of their walk? What do they look for, and at? Do they tend to depend on signage to find their way? Do they follow established trails using a map, or do they prefer to let their intuition guide them through the historic urban fabric? To what extent do the