

FLEA MARKET

KABK

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THEORY

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Is the location and used space relevant for the success of flea markets?

To learn and get a better understanding of the flea market, my research will investigate the current development of these kinds of markets that pop up in all kinds of spaces.

The flea market is a type of bazaar, market well known in Asian countries, and means a market where lots of people sell goods. It is a permanent enclosed merchandising area, marketplace, or street of shops where goods and services are exchanged or sold. Thus the similarities between the flea market and bazaar are many.

There are two theories about the origin of the name flea market. One says that the “Fly Market” started in New York in the early 1700s¹, and the other theory says that the name is from the French “Le Marché aux Puces,” dating back to the 1860s. Albert LaFarge states in the “Today’s flea market magazine”: *There is a general agreement that the term “Flea Market” is a literal translation of the French marché aux puces, an outdoor bazaar in Paris, France, named after those pesky little parasites of the order Siphonaptera that infested the upholstery of old furniture brought out for sale.* ²

A flea market is a facility that rents space to anyone that offers for sale to the general public merchandise, products, items, services and all other material needs of the buying public. These renters are known as vendors. To better explain this idea of work, some examples of different kinds of flea markets will be explained below.

Panjiayuan flea market – Beijing, China

It is the largest, most complete, cheapest and most popular market selling second hand goods and curiosities in China³, covering an area of 48,500 square meters and accommodates over 3,000 stalls. It is a place where you can find everything from toys to old furniture. It started over 20 years ago when it was called the “dirt market”. To earn some money, the sellers used to come from the country side to sell antiques to the people from the city. It used to be open only during the weekends, but after some refurbishment work, it is now open for business seven days a week.

¹ The History of Flea Markets: http://www.hollisflea.com/flea_market_history.html

² http://www.hollisflea.com/flea_market_history.html

³ <http://www.travelchinaguide.com>

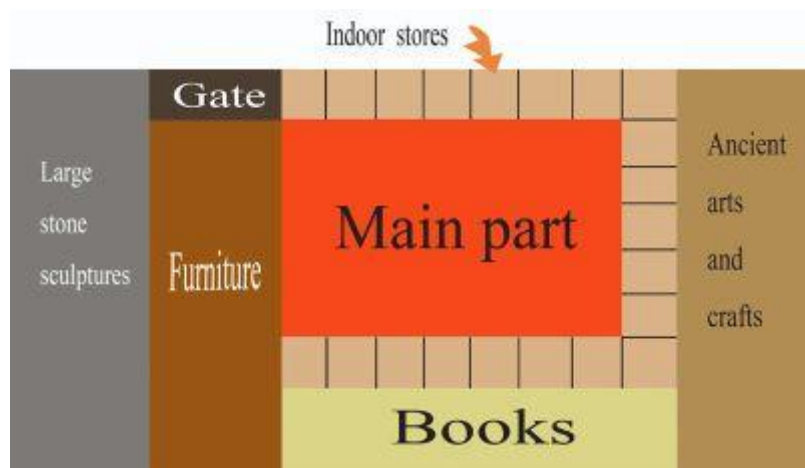


Picture 1: top view from the outside part of the market



Picture 2: seller and buyer on the market

The market is divided into six parts: 1. Open area (large, stone, sculptures), 2. Furniture into a two store building, 3. Main part – open at the weekends, 4. Books- narrow lane, 5. Ancient arts and artifacts and 6. Indoor stores – highest class antiques.



Picture 3: Layout plan of the market

The 127 Yard Sale - Michigan-Alabama, United states

This market is known as the world's longest yard sale and began in 1987. Every year the residents of the area organize the market in front of their yards along the Hwy 127, corridor stretching over 690 miles from Michigan to Alabama.



Picture 4: Part of the route

It is an annual event and begins on the first Thursday in August, and runs through Sunday. The yard sales are found in the front yards of people's homes, fields, and pastures, on side streets along the route, in empty

lots, at businesses, community parks, and town centers. Some areas will have large groups of vendors together, while others will be set up separately. The public for this

market are in general the travelers of this route and the ones that organize the travel just for the market.



Picture 5: the travelers on the route



Picture 6: the market

Les Puces de Saint-Ouen flea market – Paris, France



Picture 7: overview of part of the market

It covers seven hectares and is the largest antique market in the world, receiving between 120,000 to 180,000 visitors each weekend from Saturday to Monday.

Today, the flea market hosts 15 markets which offer an authentic and unique atmosphere where you can find antiques dealers, designers, artisans and artists⁴.

This flea market gathers different activities as expositions and festivals, not only selling products. What attracts different publics as well as a powerful business location. Two of the 15 markets are the Biron market, a real route of the periods in art history and Malik market the sportswear and trendy clothing paradise in the Les Puces.



Picture 8: The Biron market



Picture 9: The Malik market

⁴ Official site of Marché aux Puces: <http://www.marcheauxpuces-saintouen.com/1.aspx>

Flea market – Voorburg, Netherlands

This market is placed in a big park just next to a big road. It happens one time per month during the weekend and normally they have around 100 sellers that are randomly organized.



Picture 10: View from the market



Picture 11: Sellers and buyers

There are no specified spaces for each seller, it is organized quite randomly. They can organize their products displayed on top of towels on the ground, just using the back of their cars or in a more common way with stands.



Picture 12: products displayed with stands



Picture 13: products displayed on the floor

This overview of different flea markets shows that the atmosphere of the flea market, which brings the impermanence, the unpredictability, and the freedom still attract many people to the industry either as a seller or buyer. According to Maureen Stanton, "Flea markets are great for people who are independent and entrepreneurial, who like the freedom, who don't want to set up a store with the red tape and bureaucracy of that."⁵ The flea market buyers can choose which kind/disposition of the space is better for them. They can choose for a more organized and settled way as in China or Paris, where all the stands are always in the same place, they are even organized per categories of the products. Or if they prefer the free way where you

⁵ Killer Stuff and Tons of Money: Seeking History and Hidden Gems in Flea-Market America. Maureen Stanton, 2011

discover by walking as the USA and Netherlands examples above, where the sellers are disposed randomly, without a plan.

Moreover it is believed that part of the public is attracted just because it is free entertainment. They go to a flea market where there are 100,000 people and “it’s like a carnival. It’s fun.” Says Maureen. The other part that includes sellers and buyers, are encouraged to head to a flea market especially in tough economic times, with the thought of keeping the products in circulation.

Therefore the relation between space and flea market is that there are no spatial qualities required that can contribute to the popularity. Strengthening the idea of no settled place. The people are attracted for different reasons, and the main one is because it is a place where they can find all kinds of different products, sometimes with historical value and normally with a really good price.

A flea market is just a market that can take place indoors, in a warehouse, at school, a factory or others, and can also be outdoors, in a field, a parking lot or under a tent. Flea markets can be held whenever people are interested to sell, they can take place everywhere.

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