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## Traditional Streetscape Adaptability: Urban gentrification and endurance of business

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to assess the adaptability quality of Malioboro Street and district related to the physical and functional transformation as part of the urban negotiation and response to the ever changing environment of Indonesian cities. The street was qualitatively measured utilising field observations including physical mapping, behavioural mapping and in-depth interviews. The finding shows urban gentrification may lead to the transformation of physical and building use, which results in the changes of Kampong plot pattern and character of a traditional streetscape, people displacement and the sustenance of the local economy.

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**Keywords:** traditional street; adaptability; gentrification; Indonesia

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### 1. Introduction

As an emerging country, Indonesia has experienced fast growing economy with high impacts on urban developments. Many cities of Indonesia are transforming from traditional city based on the agrarian economy into the centre of global consumption and are now often much more advanced than cities in the West regarding infrastructure and services (Douglass and Daniere, 2009). The rapid changes in Indonesian cities are sometimes leading to the better urban environment and economic prosperity but often having a devastating impact on them.

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One of the concerns is regarding the changes of use of buildings, especially in the inner city area. There is a worrying trend on how these urban tissues can resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the impact of the continuous transforming urban landscape.

The rapid development of urban areas is not accompanied by the sufficient impact analysis, clearer guidelines, and policy, especially in urban planning. Government and the general public seem to be sputtered with the unanticipated rapid changes in their urban environment. Hence, there is an urgency to conduct a study to assess the impact of rapid physical changes in an inner city area towards the transformation of urban tissue and the impact to the local economy. This study aims to assess the adaptability quality of Malioboro Street and surroundings, especially related to their physical and functional transformation as part of urban negotiation and response to the ever changing environment of Indonesian cities. To achieve the primary aim, several research objectives are formulated as follows:

1. To recognise the physical transformation of Malioboro Street and the building use
2. To assess the condition of form and visual quality of Malioboro Street through visual and field observations
3. To evaluate the adaptability quality of Malioboro Street through physical mapping, visual observation, and in-depth interviews with group of users and retail/shop managers of the Street

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Adaptability as Urban Quality Indicator

The discourse of place adaptability as one of quality indicators in an urban area is started by Lynch (1981) in the *Theory of Good City Form* when stating 'fit' as one of the five basic dimensions of city performance, apart from vitality, sense, access, and control. 'Fit' according to Lynch (1981) refers to how well the place spatial and temporal pattern matches the collective behaviour of its inhabitants which may achieve by modification of place, or behaviour, or both (Lynch, 1981). It can be implied that high quality of place should adapt the changes of uses as the result of various circumstances.

The discourse on place adaptability has been developed quite promptly in the decade of 2000s. The concept of '*adaptability incorporated morphological, social and economic capacities to respond to change, it measured through the flexibility of the space along the street, social and economic complexity and diversity*' (Hall, 2009: 209). Adaptable urban settings, therefore, have '*...a greater chance of taking the impact of a stressor, addressing its implication, and then quickly reconfiguring itself to continue its operation and generate value*' (Desouza and Flanery, 2013: 96).

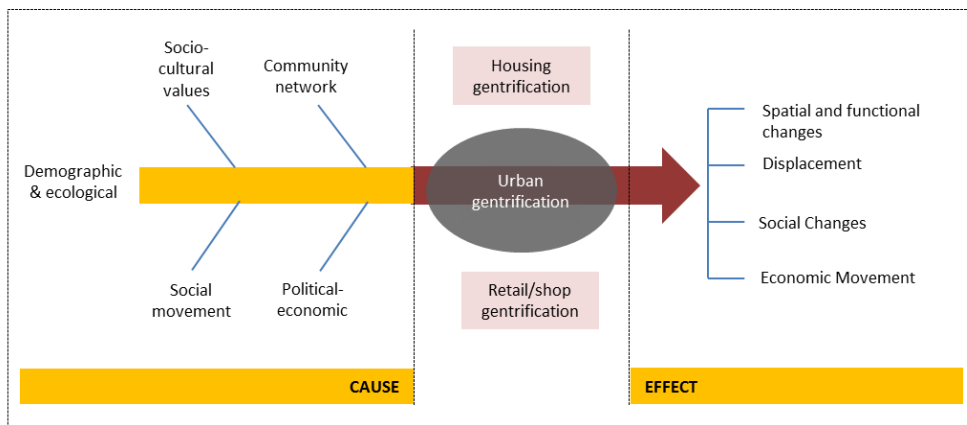
As a general rule, the life of streets and urban areas is longer than the life of individual buildings, while the life of buildings is longer than the life of their original function (Montgomery, 1998). Successful urban space should accommodate changes in various conditions. Urban tissue tends to sustain over a larger period than its contents (buildings, soft landscapes), which are subject to change due to new demands, utility, and tasks.

### 2.2 Urban Gentrification

The discourse on urban gentrification has been started as early as 1960s when Ruth Glass a British Sociologist coined the word 'gentrification' to describe the phenomenon of the influx of middle-class people displacing lower-class worker residents in London urban neighborhood, such as Islington (Glass, 1964). The process of gentrification is now appeared to be occurred across the world especially in the place face of globalizing economic shifts (Atkinson, R & Bridge, G, 2005).

The impact of urban gentrification may vary, first is related to the spatial and functional changes. New incoming uses often lead to redevelopment, new buildings, plot amalgamations or subdivisions and, changes to the street pattern. The second impact is people displacement. Poor and working class people are forced to move from the

spaces and places in which they have legitimate socially and historically (Loretta, L et al., 2010). The people displacement also result in correlation to the weakening of place attachment (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, Ujang et al., 2015, Shabak, et al., 2015), cultural significance (Bakri, et al. 2015), urban continuity and authenticity (Ginting & Wahid, 2015). The third impact is social changes. The changes of social strata of people living in such area at the same time may accompany by the changes of norms that may shift the social values and behaviour of the new community. The social changes can be positively impacted by the reduction in crime, stabilising of declining area, and increased of social mix. However, it can also negatively impact upon the loss of social diversity, from heterogeneity to a more homogeneity community (Atkinson, R & Bridge, G, 2005, Loretta, L et al., 2010). The gentrification impact can also relate to the opportunity to develop the area that promotes general economic growth. Projects on urban renewal or urban regeneration can be more easily to be conducted in the new condition of gentrified urban area, including for heritage conservation (Amit-Cohen, 2005).



**Figure 2** Urban gentrification explained

Sources: adapted from London & Palen (1984), Atkinson & Bridge (2005), Loretta L, et al (2008), Carmona, et al. (2010), Jeong (2015)

### 3. Research Method

We use qualitative research method using field observations including physical mapping and behavioural mapping techniques. The field observation includes visual observations, interviews, and secondary data compilation such as local regulations and government planning reports. The visual observation in this study has resulted in various output such as the photograph, street map, street section, measured drawings, sketches, and so on. These data has helped this study to demonstrate the adaptability quality formulated as follows:

Table 1  
Data Collection Technique and Its Output on Street Dimensions

Dimension	Element	Output	Data Collection Technique
Morphological	Land Use	Street Map	Physical Mapping
	Building Structure	Measured drawings, sketches	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
	Plot Pattern and Street Pattern	Street Map	Physical Mapping
	Street Scale and Proportion	Street Sections	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
	Floorscape	Street Sections	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
Visual	Aesthetic Quality of Urban Architecture	3D Drawing, Sketches	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
	Façade Design	Serial view, façade drawing	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation

<b>Functional</b>	Pedestrian Activity and Movement	Plan	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
	Activities in the Street as Urban Place	Plan	Physical Mapping, Visual Observation
<b>Temporal</b>	Street Transformation: Continuity and Change	Text, Photograph	Document Review, In-depth interviews
	Time Management of Urban Street	Text, Photograph	Document Review, In-depth interviews

Source: *Urban Design Dimension* was adapted from Carmona, et al (2010)

Technically, the behavioural mapping was conducted by four research team, dividing the street space into four segments, with one for each observer during 30 minutes duration of time. After mapping completion for each time, the team then gathered, discussed, and compared the mapping findings and prepared to conduct the following mapping in different duration. After the entire mapping had been accomplished, the researcher team gathered the mapping results to be analysed and presented in a proper graphic format combined with the photograph taken during the mapping.

In-depth interviews were conducted with thirteen participants of users and managers of the shops/retails to gain their perception regarding the adaptability quality as summarised as follows:

Table 2: Summary of In-depth Interview Participants in Malioboro Street

Case	Occupation/Profession	No of Participants	Codes
Malioboro Street	Shop Owner/Retail Manager/Resident	1	RES
	Visitor	6	VIS
	Local Government/Authority related to Urban Planning	4	GOV
	Street Vendor	2	SV
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	

Source: Author, 2016

The analysis of the in-depth interviews in this study has followed the concept developed by Kvale (2007) on the interview analysis namely: coding and categorising the texts, condensation, and interpretation of meaning.

Table 3: Adaptability Emerging Themes of Malioboro Street

No	Theme	Quality Indicator
1.	Adaptability and the changes of physical and retail use	Adaptability
2.	Urban gentrification: adaptability and the changes of use	
3.	Shops versus street vendor and endurance of business	
4.	Resilience of traditional street	

Source: Analysis, 2016

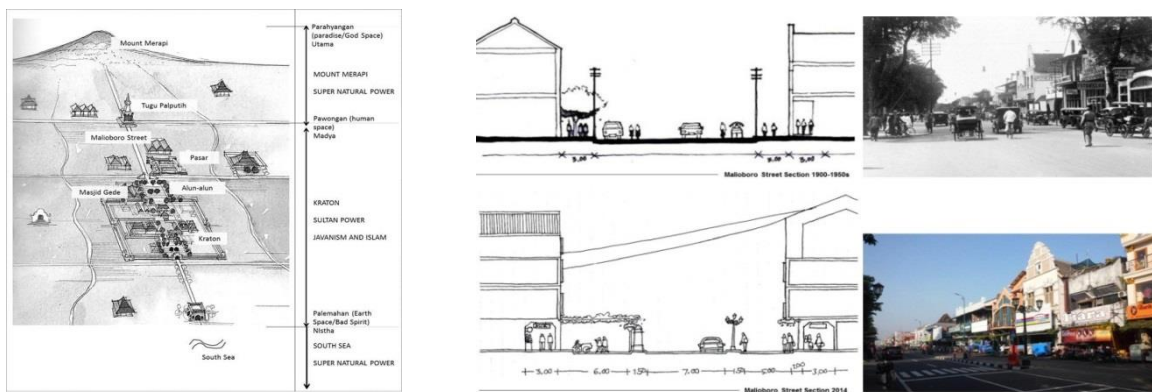
The major strengths of qualitative inquiry undertaking in this study are the capacity of taking the precious qualities of real life phenomena and the flexibility of design and procedures that allowing adjustment in the process. The in-depth interviews also offered first-hand information from the interviewees as street users and authorities. They told their perceptions, feelings, and experiences towards the street and its surroundings. However, undertaking face-to-face interviews took a long time to prepare and conduct. Some potential interviewees preferred a less time-consuming strategy, such as a survey or questionnaire. Another major challenge concerned the vast amount of unstructured data that need to be coded and analysed that also require more time to conduct.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4.1 Malioboro Street, Yogyakarta as Case Study

The history of Malioboro Street began with the establishment of the city of Yogyakarta in 1756. Yogyakarta has been shaped by a cosmological axis that connects the two supernatural powers, i.e. the Mount and the Sea. It stretches from the South Sea-Kraton (Palace)-Malioboro Street-Tugu Pal Putih-Mount Merapi. Malioboro Street as part of the imaginary axis was designated as Rajamarga or the royal street, functioned as the ceremonial path for the Royals as well as for the official visits for example by Governor Generals and other European dignitaries during the colonial era.

Besides as the royal path to the kingdom, since its early days, Malioboro Street also functions as a commercial area for the city. The growth of Malioboro Street as commercial area was then marked by the establishment of shophouses surrounding the Beringharjo Market so-called the Pecinan or Chinatown, allocated by the Sultan at the end of the nineteenth century.



**Figure 3** Yogyakarta City Concepts and the Streetscape of Malioboro Street a) 1933 b) 2015

Source: adapted from UU Keistimewaan Yogyakarta (2012) and (Ikaputra, 2013), Sholihah, 2012, observation, 2015, and picture of 1933, <http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl>, accessed in 27/05/2015

In 1970s, cultural activities began to emerge along the Malioboro Street. Stalls of souvenirs and art products appeared along the street as a result of the cultural function. Following the trend, shop owners also started selling paintings, batik, and leather puppets, three main products of the local artists in Malioboro Street. Since this era, Malioboro Street began to grow as a tourist destination of the city. The popularity of Malioboro continues growing to the present day. As an Indonesian proverb says 'You haven't visit Yogyakarta unless you visit Malioboro'.

### 4.2 Urban Gentrification: Spatial Transformation and People Displacement

The building use along Malioboro Street is stay diverse; however there is a trend to transform following the popularity of Malioboro Street as a tourist destination. Figure 4 shows the building use of Malioboro Street and the relation to the tourism industry. It indicates that more than eighty percent of the buildings are used in connection with tourism.

The land conversion from housing to tourism facilities also occurred inside the Malioboro District. Tourism facilities, such as hotel, hostel, homestays, restaurants, internet café, money changer, etc. are blooming inside the kampungs. As a result, Malioboro District which was predominantly functioned as a residential area with communal and social facilities, such as schools, is now transforming and adapting to the new functions. The most common

phenomenon is conversion of houses for hotels, as commented in the interviews by a street vendor in the eastern pavement, as follows:

'Currently the kampongs behind this street mostly have been converted into hotels, once they were residential, now they turn into hotels. It is because of the [strategic] location, they were purchased at high prices...' (MAL-SV-012, In-depth Interviews).

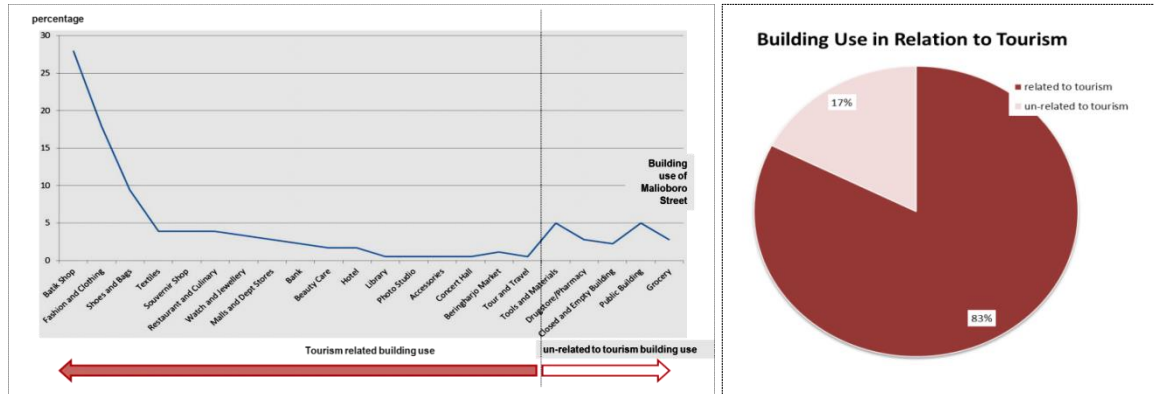


Figure 4 Building use in Malioboro Street and the relation to tourism industry  
Source: Author, 2016

In the olden days, most of the inhabitants inside Malioboro kampongs and surroundings are craftsmen produced art works. They then sell the products along Malioboro Street arcade as or to the street vendors. They did the activities by profession and learned their skills traditionally, which were handed through generations. These changes have direct impacts on the displacements of Malioboro District inhabitants that were, commented in the interviews as follows:

'if we go to the kampongs at the back of Malioboro Street, for instance Sosrowijayan, now almost all the houses were converted into new hotels, and those hotels are large, this has changed the district pattern, even some neighbourhoods have been disappeared [relocated]...' (MAL-VIS-003, In-depth Interviews).

Figure 5 shows that some parts of Kampung Sosromenduran are now converted into accommodation (hotel and homestay) and mixed use buildings are mainly residential and commercial use. The original spatial pattern of this kampong is small plots residential with narrow alleys. However, nowadays many parts have turned into massive plots which in the end it has massively changed the spatial pattern of the area. Furthermore, many houses adding their function also for business associated to tourism facilities, including internet café, warung (small restaurant), souvenir corner, travel agent, and etc. Many of them owned by the original landlord, but many more have taken over by the new landlords, such as developed by real estate developers into new shop-houses.

The transformation process experienced in this area is seems hidden from the eyes of the policy makers, especially the local government. The local authority may see this phenomenon as the positive growth to enhance their tax revenue as the impact of new development and tourism-based economy. However, the social, cultural, and spatial impacts of this economic growth need also be calculated. The conflict potential between the old and local business community and the new business are not fully understood and anticipated. This situation is in parallel to the findings of Jeong (2015) when mapped the retail gentrification in Seoul.





Figure 5 The Land Use of Kampung Sosromenduran inside Malioboro district  
Source: Author, 2016

#### 4.3 Gentrification and Economy: Endurance of Business

The unbalance business competition in Malioboro Street also occurred between the street vendors and the shops. Historically, the vendors are the local community living in the surrounding area. They sell local products such as paintings and craft as a result of cultural activities in Malioboro Street since the 1970s. Over time, there is a process of gentrification of part of pavement space to be 'privatized' by group of people mainly from people living outside the district. It indicates that most of the vendors are originally from Sumatera, especially the Minangkabau ethnic group, which illustrious for their ability as merchants in Indonesia apart from the Chinese community. They occupied the arcaded pavement in front of the shops and even they then rented these public spaces to other vendors in quite a high cost as happen to be the case of one of the street vendor respondent. The street vendors with their uniqueness eventually nowadays become one of the main attractions for Malioboro Street's visitor. This was commented in the interviews, as follows:

'Street vendors have emerged as the street 'trademark', although they also exist elsewhere, perhaps street vendors along Malioboro Street are different, the street ambience also supporting, it is comfortable, full of people walking as well as vending...'(MAL-VIS-004, In-depth Interviews).



Figure 6 Pavement of Malioboro Street: Privatized public space  
Source: Author, 2016

The existence of street vendor along Malioboro Street to add the vitality, creativity, and diversity of use is also recognised by one of our respondents from the local authority:

'In fact, the street vendor is one of the charms of Malioboro Street, if we eliminate them, then the essence of Malioboro Street will be lost...' (MAL-GOV-007, In-depth Interviews).

As most frequent reason of visitors using street is shopping (Rahman, et al, 2015), the unique, artistic and directly accessible characteristics along the pavement and inexpensive goods are advantages for the street vendors. The cheaper tax and management (no need to supply air conditioning, shopkeepers, and building maintenance) makes the street vendor commodities are very competitive to those sold in the shops. Moreover, their existence also covers part of the shop entrances, which can hinder the visitors to enter the shops. Hence, the relationship between street vendors and shops that once was 'a symbiotic mutualism' however, now can turn into 'a symbiotic parasitism'. The conflict and distressed from one of the shop owner point of view was expressed in the interviews, as follows:

'Those street vendors are trading in our building lot, we do not get any benefit, but they occupy the pavement, it is not their right, it is an injustice ... the street vendors feel protected by the city government after the government made an organisation to unite them...' (MAL-RES-009, In-depth Interviews).

In Indonesian context, street vendors are usually those are jobless or low-income society trying their luck by selling in urban pavements. However, the street vendor in Malioboro Street have been gentrified, replaced by the middle-income traders, and even their income may compete with the long term shop owner as higher tax payers that these street sellers. This condition has led to the distress amongst the shop owners (especially for local shops) associated with their endurance of businesses.

## 5. Conclusion: Towards the Adaptable Urban Street for the Better Future Urban Spaces

The research recognises the importance of adaptability quality of such traditional urban streets in coping, accommodating, address the impact of the continuous changes and then reconfigure to continue its existence and sustainability. The overall findings show the urban gentrification phenomenon is not only occurred in housing but also towards the changes of 'landlord' of street vendors from the low-income to middle-income traders. This situation was then a solid impact on the endurance of business amongst the shop owners, especially the local shops. In this context, the ability of Malioboro Street and surrounding area to respond and cope with changes while retaining their identity is being challenged. As according to the previous studies: meanings, social, physical and visual are components of place identity in the traditional neighborhood (Ghoomi, et al., 2015, Sholihah & Heath, 2016). How the new harmonious equilibrium will be created without failing their performance in social, cultural, and economic context? The spatial transformation, migration, and social changes should be seen in balance, bearing in mind that these changes also bring new economic growth and revenue. The finding also confirms the continuous interrelation



between human behavior and their environment. The challenge is how a 'new' or 'certain' behaviour may change the environment, and how adaptable the environment would be?

The findings of this study have important implications for future practice and urban policy. The urban gentrification phenomenon is supposed to be anticipated by the local authority to minimise the negative impact, such as regarding the spatial transformation, people displacement, and social changes. It is hoped that the positive impact should be nurtured such as the economic development synchronised with social, cultural, and environmental capacity of the urban street and district. There is an urgent need of clearer urban policy and guidelines regarding the land conversion and also regarding the privatization phenomenon of pavement as street vendor spaces. There is also an urgent need for the regulation of street vendor in order to bring back the symbiosis mutualism between the vendor and the shops (especially local shops) and to meet the right of pedestrians to use the street pavement accessibly and with comfort. In the end, it is hoped that our urban street possess the quality of adaptability quality to face the global challenge and rapid development in the days to come. However, the scope of this study is limited to Malioboro Street and surrounding area, and the result therefore might not apply to other settings.

Based on the findings and contribution of the study, a further research in the form of cross-city and cross-national research of Indonesian and Asian Streets is recommended. This further study would enable more comprehensive result on the adaptability quality of urban streets through a comparative study.

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