



# Traditional Streetscape Adaptability: 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.

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

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## 1.0 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. 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.

## 2.0 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) when stating 'fit' as one of the five basic dimensions of city performance, apart from vitality, sense, access, and control. 'Fit' 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 word 'gentrification' is intended 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.

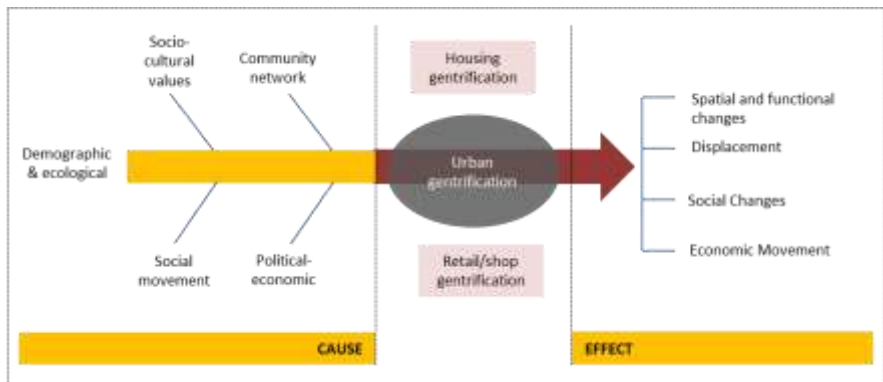


Figure 1 Urban gentrification explained

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

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).

### 3.0 Methodology

We use qualitative research method using field observations (visual observations, interviews, and physical mapping) and behavioural mapping techniques. The 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
<b>Morphological</b>	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
<b>Visual</b>	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 a certain duration of time. 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.

## 4.0 Results & Discussion

### 4.1 Malioboro Street, Yogyakarta as Case Study

The history of Malioboro Street began with the establishment of the city of Yogyakarta in 1756. Malioboro Street was designated as Rajamarga or the royal street. It is also functions as a commercial area for the city. The growth of Malioboro Street as a 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. 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. Since this era, Malioboro Street began to grow as a tourist destination of the city.

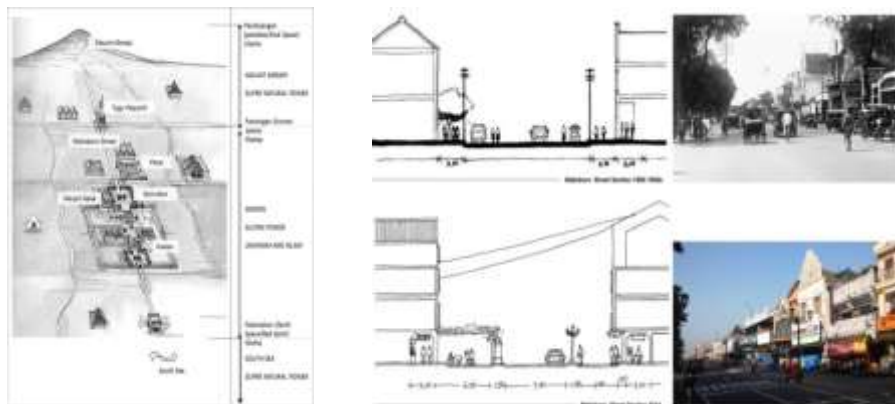


Figure 2 Yogyakarta City Concepts and the Streetscape of Malioboro Street a) 1933 b) 2015  
Source: adapted from UU Keistimewaan Yogyakarta (2012) and (Ikaputra, 2013), Sholihah, 2012, observation, 2015, and picture of 1933, <http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl>, accessed in 27/05/2015

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

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 (In-depth Interviews, 2016).

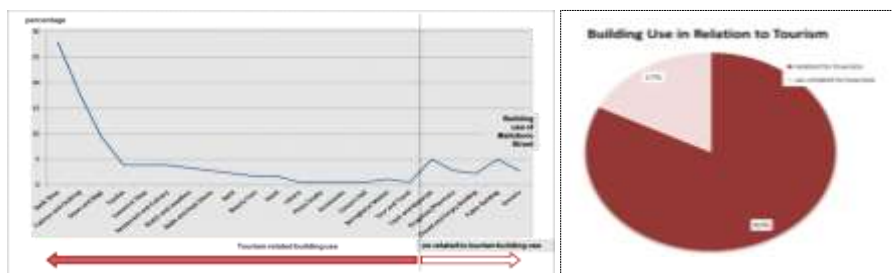


Figure 3 Building use in Malioboro Street and the relation to tourism industry  
Source: Author, 2016

In the olden days, most of the inhabitants inside Malioboro kampungs and surroundings are craftsmen produced artworks. 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 (In-depth Interviews, 2016).



Figure 4 The Land Use of Kampung Sosromenduran inside Malioboro district  
Source: Author, 2016

Figure 4 shows that some parts of Kampung Sosromenduran are now converted into accommodation 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 large 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 with tourism facilities. 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 active growth to enhance their tax revenue as the impact of new development and tourism. 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 entirely understood and anticipated. This situation is in parallel to the findings of Jeong (2015) when mapped the retail gentrification in Seoul.

#### 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. Over time, there is a process of gentrification of part of pavement space to

be 'privatized' by a group of people mainly from people living outside the district. The street vendors with their uniqueness eventually nowadays become one of the main attractions for Malioboro Street's visitor (In-depth Interviews, 2016).



Figure 5 Pavement of Malioboro Street: Privatized public space

Source: Author, 2016

Moreover, the existence of street vendor along Malioboro Street adds the vitality, creativity, and diversity (In-depth Interviews, 2016). As the most common reason for visitors using street is shopping (Rahman, et al., 2015), the unique, artistic and directly accessible characteristics along the pavement and cheap goods are advantages for the street vendors. The more reasonable tax and management make the street vendor commodities are very competitive to those sold in the shops. However, some of the vendors may cover part of the 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' as stressed out in the interviews to a shop owner. The street vendors 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 taxpayers than these street sellers. This condition has led to the distress amongst the shop owners (especially for local shops) associated with their endurance of businesses.

## 5.0 Conclusion

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. 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. This phenomenon is supposed to be anticipated to minimise the negative impact. It is hoped that the positive impact should be nurtured such as the economic development synchronised with the 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 the privatization phenomenon of pavement as street vendor spaces. In the end, it is hoped that our urban street possess the adaptability quality to face the global challenge and rapid development in the future. A further study would enable more comprehensive result on the adaptability quality of urban streets through a comparative study.

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