

## Territorial assertions and the privatization of public space within the Tugu Yogyakarta Heritage District

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received September 30, 2025 Received in revised form Dec. 30, 2025 Accepted January 02, 2026 Available online March 01, 2026</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Heritage area Inclusive city Public space privatization Territorial claim Tugu Yogyakarta.</p> <p><b>*Corresponding author:</b> Wiyatiningsih Master of Architecture Department, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Indonesia Email: <a href="mailto:wiyatiningsih@staff.ukdw.ac.id">wiyatiningsih@staff.ukdw.ac.id</a> ORCID: <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2084-9872">https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2084-9872</a></p>	<p><i>This study investigates the evolution of Margo Utomo Street, situated in the northern segment of Yogyakarta's Cosmological Axis, as a prominent hub for tourism and local culinary activities that intensively engage public spaces. The practices of food vendors and visitors in marking, occupying, and negotiating pedestrian areas reveal underlying tensions between public accessibility and private appropriation. The primary objective of this research is to identify typologies of public space utilization as quasi-private workspaces and to examine their effects on comfort, territorial behavior, and urban inclusivity. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, six culinary sites surrounding Tugu Yogyakarta were selected, representing both historical significance and intricate spatial dynamics. The collected data were analyzed to classify the forms of territorial claims and manifestations of public space privatization, as well as to assess their implications for communal territoriality and the inclusiveness of urban environments. The findings indicate two distinct categories of territorial claims, those asserted by vendors and those enacted by customers, materialized through both physical and non-physical markers. Such privatization generates unequal access contingent upon vendors' economic capacities and diminishes the overall comfort of pedestrian sidewalks. Moreover, culinary and tourism activities within this context illuminate tensions between the philosophical symbolism of the site and its quotidian utilization, highlighting challenges for long-term sustainability. This study contributes to discourses on inclusive urbanism by underscoring the necessity of participatory, context-sensitive, and everyday practice-oriented approaches in the management of public spaces.</i></p>

### Introduction

The Yogyakarta Cosmological Axis was officially recognized as a World Cultural Heritage

site on 18 September 2023 (Rinepta 2023; Tyas, Cininta, and Puspitasari 2025; Pudianti, Vitasurya, and Rudwiarti 2024). This North-South axis connects three historically significant



landmarks: Tugu Yogyakarta, the Kraton of Yogyakarta, and Panggung Krapyak. It embodies the Javanese cosmological belief system, including symbolic representations of the human life cycle (UNESCO 2023). The axis is anticipated to attract increased visitor activity and generate positive impacts on local revenue (Sutarmi 2024).

The three principal areas along the Yogyakarta Cosmological Axis each exhibit distinct characteristics. Margo Utomo Street, the focus of this study, links Tugu Yogyakarta to Malioboro Street (Suwito 2016), and has been developed as a culinary and tourism hub.

The dynamics of informal economic activity along this corridor reveal inherent tensions between competing interests. Informality constitutes a fundamental aspect of urbanity, reflecting the ways in which cities evolve through negotiation (Dovey 2025). Local communities' appropriate public spaces for economic purposes, practices which contribute to both inclusive and exclusive spatial patterns (Benedí-Artigas, Sanagustín-Fons, and Moseñe-Fierro 2025).

Communities develop territorial awareness shaped by user needs and potentially influenced by elements of the physical environment (Huang, Mori, and Nomura 2019). Another key factor influencing the formation of spatial identity patterns within a given area is users' perception of ownership (Dragutinovic and Kost 2025). Accordingly, a socio-spatial approach is regarded as the most appropriate method for comprehending how communities' articulate claims over urban space (Zhang and Liu 2024).

The discussion of territorial claims over public spaces draws upon Altman's concept of territory, which frames territory as a self-limiting mechanism involving the personalization or marking of a place by an individual or group (Altman 2007). Altman classifies territory into three categories: primary, secondary, and public. Within this framework, the pedestrian areas along Margo Utomo Street can be understood as public territory.

According to Lyman and Scott (2009), territory within public space may be classified as public territory, defined as an area accessible and usable by everyone, provided that prevailing social norms are respected. Such spaces cannot be exclusively owned or controlled by any individual or group (Poddar and Choudhury 2022). Boundaries within public territory may be constituted of both physical objects and non-

physical elements (Adisaputri and Widiastuti 2015). Territorial claims are typically expressed through markings that reflect personalization, enabling the division of space even in the absence of knowledge regarding ownership (Poddar and Choudhury 2022).

Territorial claims over public space can be interpreted as part of the broader process of space production, which encompasses three interrelated dimensions: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space (Lefebvre 1991).

The quality of public space is commonly assessed according to three criteria: protection, comfort, and enjoyment (Gehl 2010). This study specifically emphasizes the comfort dimension, which is further divided into six components: opportunities to walk, opportunities to stand or remain, opportunities to sit, opportunities to see, opportunities to communicate, and opportunities to play or exercise (Poddar and Choudhury 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to identify the forms of territorial claims and the transformations of public spaces driven by private interests through spatial arrangements and the articulation of territorial boundaries, as well as to determine their influence on the spatial and social characteristics of the Tugu Yogyakarta area.

Several research questions were formulated to guide the investigation: How are territorial claim practices over public space shaped by informal economic activities and the everyday practices of local communities? What strategies are employed to articulate territorial boundaries between public and private interests within public spaces? How do the dynamics of spatial negotiation between public interests and local cultural values affect comfort, accessibility, and the overall spatial characteristics of public spaces?

To address these questions, a working hypothesis was developed, proposing that creative economy practices, particularly those associated with culinary activities, play a significant role in shaping the character of public space and fostering the emergence of informal privatization.

Previous research suggests that user perceptions strongly influence the privatization of public spaces that are ideally intended as shared domains (Leclercq and Pojani 2023). Within tourism contexts, misalignments between urban policy and the socio-cultural realities of local residents can drive transformations in urban space (Altaba Tena et al. 2025). In heritage areas, embedded cultural values may guide the

formation of new spaces oriented toward strong cultural significance, while simultaneously generating economic benefits for surrounding communities (Zhu and González Martínez 2022).

This study contributes novelty by examining territorial claims in public space as an ongoing process of spatial negotiation shaped by everyday community practices. The findings underscore the crucial role of user-based participation in fostering inclusive approaches to urban space planning.

## Methods

### Data collection, analysis, and interpretation

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology, in which cases are bounded by specific time frames and activities, allowing researchers to collect detailed information through multiple data collection procedures over a sustained period (Creswell 2023). Six culinary locations along Margo Utomo Street in the vicinity of Tugu Yogyakarta were purposively selected as case studies.

Data collection was conducted through field observations, semi-structured interviews, and visual documentation. The collected data were analyzed using thematic coding to identify conceptual patterns related to territorial claims and the privatization of public spaces. Spatial behavior analysis was applied to map the relationship between spatial configurations and

the emergence of territorial practices. Furthermore, this study adopts Rapoport's classification of environmental elements, comprising fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed features, as a framework for interpreting spatial behavior (Tamimi, Munawarah Panggabean, and Rachma Marcillia 2024).

### Data analysis

The analysis refers to Altman's system of territories, which emphasizes open spaces that are accessible to all (Altman 2007). The quality of spaces within the study area was assessed using Gehl's six criteria of comfort, based on his Public Space Quality framework (Gehl 2010).

The practice of claiming public spaces for private economic activity is examined through the conceptual lens of public space as a social space, drawing on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space (Lefebvre 1991).

## Results and discussion

### Research location

The research was conducted along the sidewalks of Margo Utomo Street. The observed spaces were categorized into six distinct sections: (1) Tugu Yogyakarta, (2) Oman Coffee, (3) Harper Hotel, (4) Sultan Gift Shop, (5) *Angkringan* Kopi Joss, and (6) the railway gate. The boundary of the study area is presented in figure 1.

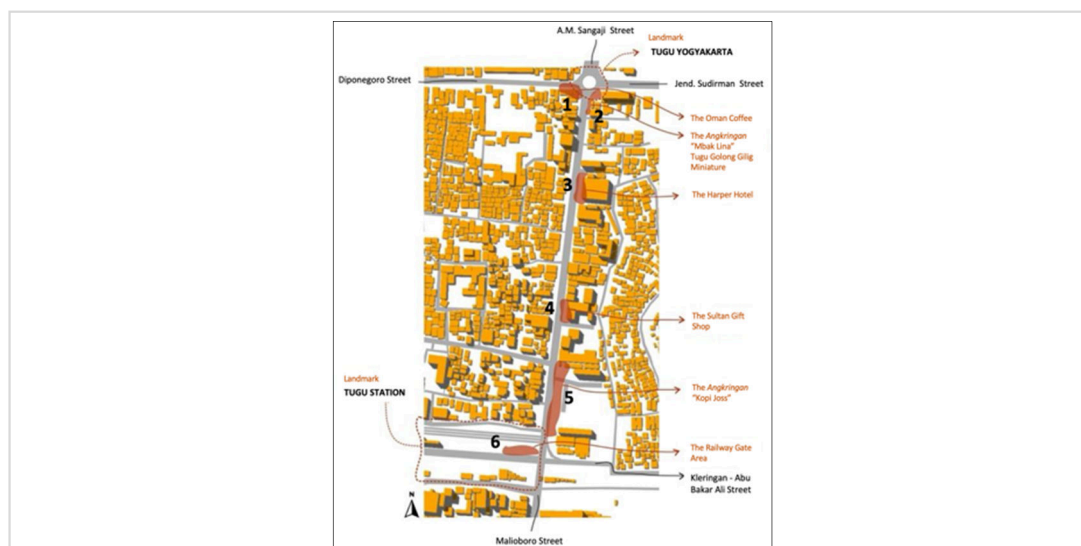


Figure 1. Map of the study area

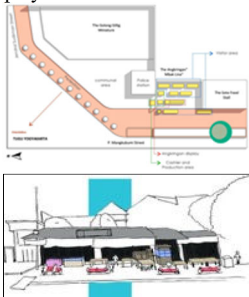



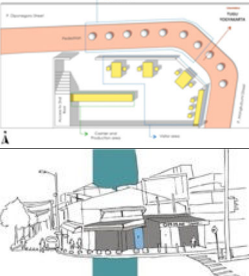


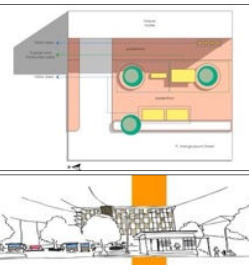


Typology of territorial claims in public spaces along Margo Utomo Street

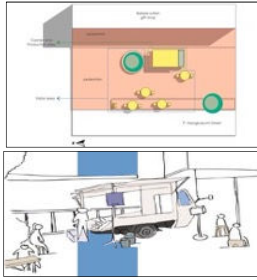

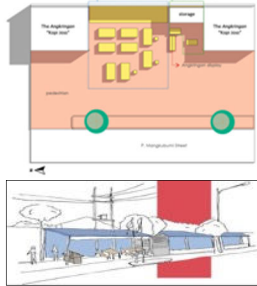

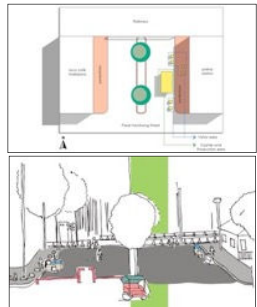

The six culinary locations exhibit distinct territorial characteristics shaped by both food vendors and customers. Two locations near Tugu Yogyakarta are dominated by public activities that engage with the monument as a prominent city landmark. The *Angkringan* Kopi Joss fosters a friendly, local atmosphere designed to attract visitors, whereas the food trucks situated in front of the Sultan Gift Shop exemplify a trendy, mobile coffee shop concept. The area on the southern side of the railway gate is particularly notable, offering an optimal vantage point for observing passing trains.

Two primary types of territorial claims were identified in public open spaces utilized for private culinary businesses along Margo Utomo Street, as perceived by space users: those enacted by food vendors and those enacted by customers. Personalization of public space along the street is manifested through alterations in environmental elements resulting from the activities of both food vendors and customers.

As illustrated in table 1, the six case studies reveal a trend whereby territorial markings using fixed elements are predominantly executed by food vendors. In contrast, semi-fixed and non-fixed elements are employed as territorial markers by both food vendors and customers.

**Table 1.** Typology of territorial claims in public spaces used for private culinary businesses along Margo Utomo street

Case	Site Location	Spatial Arrangement	Elements of Territorial Marker		
1	Tugu Yogyakarta	Pedestrian in front of the <i>angkringan</i> near Tugu Yogyakarta and its miniature display 	<b>Fixed elements</b> - Dining space in the <i>angkringan</i> - Canopy <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Food cart - Benches - Banner " <i>Angkringan</i> Mbak Lina" - Eating utensils left on the sidewalk <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Sellers and customers activities in the <i>angkringan</i> and the sidewalk	  	Canopy  Benches and banner  User's activities
2	The Oman Coffee	Pedestrian in front of the Oman Coffee 	<b>Fixed elements</b> - Bollards (street furniture) used for customers <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Signboard - "Oman Coffee" logo - Eating utensils on the street furniture <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Customers activities at the sidewalk	 	Bollards  User's activities
3	The Harper Hotel	Pedestrian in front of the Harper Hotel 	<b>Fixed elements</b> - Sidewalk - Trees <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Benches - Food cart - Plastic floor mat - Signboard - Logo "Oman Coffee" <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Seller and customers activities at the sidewalk	 	Trees  Benches  Plastic floor mat

Case	Site Location	Spatial Arrangement	Elements of Territorial Marker		
4	The Sultan Gift Shop	Pedestrian in front of the Sultan Gift Shop 	<b>Physical elements</b> - Sidewalk - Trees <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Signboard - Chairs - Tables - Benches - Food truck - Portable furniture <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Seller and customers activities around the food truck		Chairs, tables, and signboard  Foodtruck and portable furniture  Benches and trees
5	The Angkringan “Kopi Joss”	Spaces along the pedestrian 	<b>Fixed elements</b> - Sidewalk - Trees <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Chairs - Tables - Food stall tent - Food cart - Banner “Kopi Joss” - Plastic floor mat <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Seller and customers activities in the <i>angkringan</i> and its surroundings		Sidewalk   User’s activities
6	The railway gate area	Pedestrian in the railway gate area 	<b>Fixed elements</b> - Sidewalk <b>Semi-fixed elements</b> - Chairs - Food cart <b>Non-fixed elements</b> - Seller and customers activities around food cart		Sidewalk  Food carts and chairs

Territorial claims shaped by informal economic activities

Drawing on Altman (2007) conceptualization of territory, which emphasizes the personalization or marking of a place by an individual or group, territorial claims in the six case-study locations were identified through various practices of marking and personalizing space.

Two distinct types of territorial claims were observed in culinary businesses. First, the primary function of street food vendors occurs within the building, while customers favor outdoor dining areas to observe the surrounding activities and people around Tugu Yogyakarta. This spatial arrangement is evident in Case-1 and Case-2.

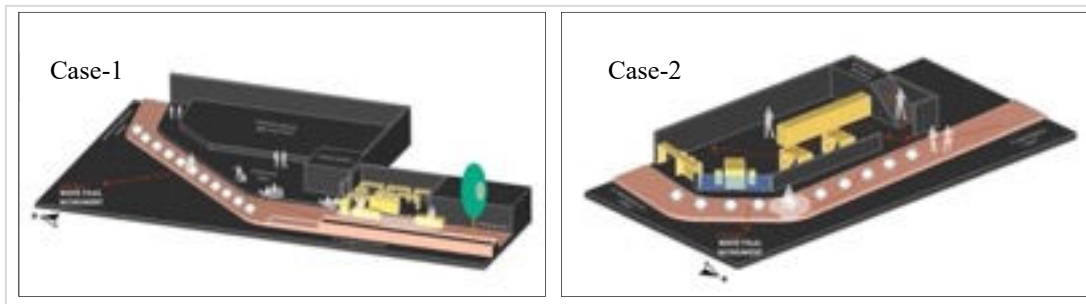


Figure 2. The spatial arrangement of Case-1 and 2

As illustrated in figure 2, the privatization of public space is signified by the placement of benches on the sidewalk (Case-1) and by customer activities surrounding the Tugu Yogyakarta miniature. In Case-2, although no benches are installed, customer activities outside the building delineate the perceived boundary of the café.

Second, both food preparation and service occur directly on the sidewalk. In Case-3, Case-4,

and Case-6, food carts, food trucks, and chairs provided by vendors are packed and removed after operating hours (figure 3). In contrast, in Case-5, food carts and chairs are covered with a tent but remain on the sidewalk. These differences appear to reflect variations in space ownership. In Case-3, Case-4, and Case-6, vendors operate on sidewalks without paying any retribution, occupying significant pedestrian space and potentially obstructing circulation when inactive.

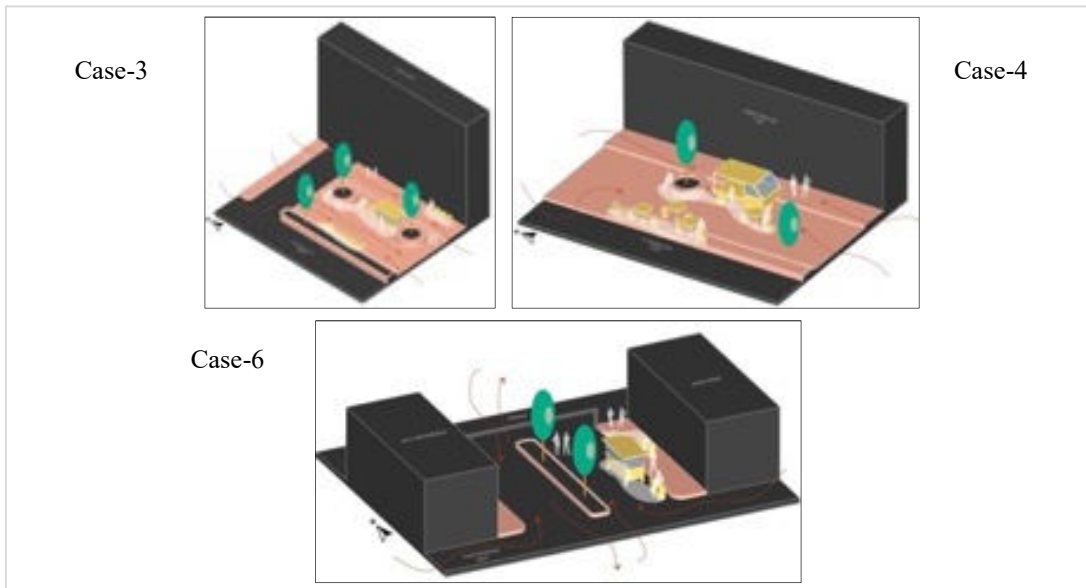
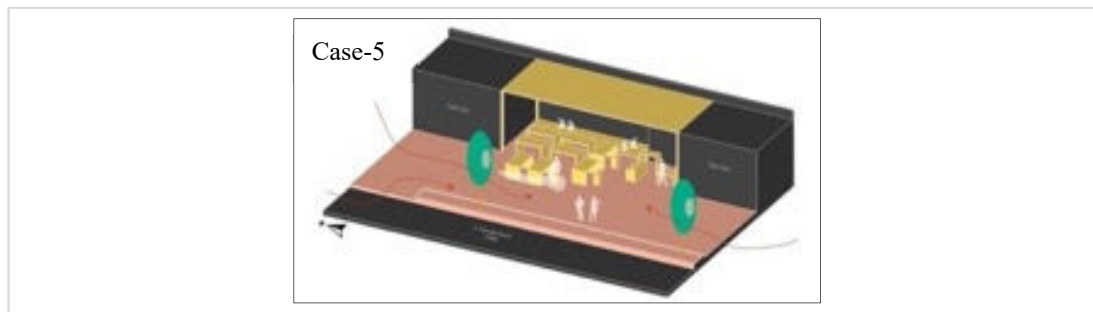


Figure 3. The use of sidewalks in Case-3, Case-4, and Case-6

By comparison, the vendor in Case-5 pays retribution to local authorities managing the

sidewalk space, allowing pedestrian circulation to remain unobstructed (figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The spatial arrangement of culinary business in Case-5

Territorial claims across the six locations are manifested through non-fixed elements, particularly the presence and movement of vendors and customers on sidewalks. Semi-fixed territorial markers, such as signboards, banners, chairs, tables, and eating utensils, are deployed by vendors to define and regulate space. Non-fixed markers emerge dynamically through culinary activities performed by both vendors and patrons.

The privatization of public space differs across the cases. In Case-1 and Case-2, food preparation within buildings reflects a formalized and established business environment, unlike Case-3, Case-4, and Case-6, where food-related activities are conducted entirely along sidewalks. Case-5 represents a hybrid condition: while operations occur outdoors, the business maintains a relatively formal organization.

Formalized spatial entitlement encourages the establishment of more permanent and organized food stalls, as reflected in the systematic placement of tools and equipment along sidewalks. Thus, the use of sidewalks by street food vendors varies according to tool configuration, business formality, and space ownership.

Strategies for articulating territorial boundaries in public space

The articulation of territorial boundaries in the six locations demonstrates how informal activities employ spatial strategies consistent with Altman (2007) theory of territoriality, whereby claims are expressed through semi-fixed and non-fixed elements that personalize and regulate space.

As shown in table 1, semi-fixed elements, particularly the arrangement of furniture, play a prominent role in Case-2, Case-3, and Case-4. Vendors delineate their workspaces through chairs and tables arranged in coordinated colors and patterns, forming visible territorial markers

that define dining areas and subtly discourage non-customers from occupying them.

In Case-1, the placement of eating utensils on the sidewalk functions similarly, signaling ownership and structuring access to the vendor's workspace. Non-fixed elements also contribute to boundary formation: in Case-5, the continuous presence of a server at the edge of the outdoor dining area creates a behavioral boundary that discourages non-purchasing individuals. In Case-6, flexible positioning of food carts and simple seating arrangements establish territorial boundaries, corresponding to the minimal spatial requirements of ready-to-eat food service.

Collectively, the six cases demonstrate that territorial claims emerge through everyday practices that combine physical arrangements and behavioral cues. These strategies allow vendors to transform open sidewalks into semi-private workspaces, illustrating how informal economic activities actively shape public space through ongoing processes of spatial negotiation.

Spatial negotiation as a framework for understanding public space quality  
Territorial Claims on Sidewalks and Implications for Urban Inclusivity

The conversion of sidewalks into spaces for culinary businesses illustrates a tension between public accessibility and private appropriation. Drawing on Altman (2007) concept of public territories, sidewalks along Margo Utomo Street are intended as shared spaces accessible to all. However, their use is not entirely unrestricted. Vendors operating without payment must remove equipment after business hours, restoring sidewalks to pedestrian pathways. This arrangement demonstrates how access to public space is mediated by economic transactions and informal agreements with municipal authorities.

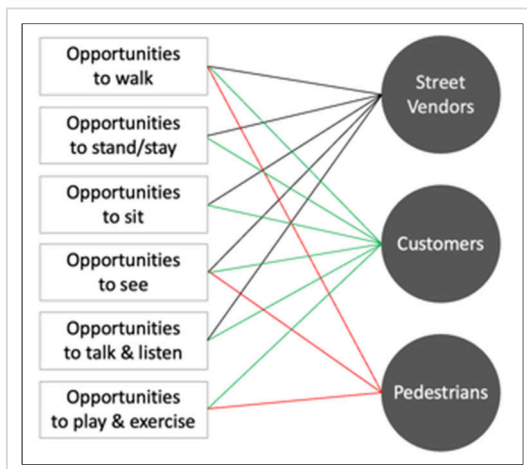
These conditions produce differentiated levels of access among street food vendors. Vendors

with greater economic capacity or formal recognition secure more stable operational spaces and provide consistent seating or service areas, whereas less-established vendors cannot.

According to [Poddar and Choudhury \(2022\)](#), public territories should function as universally accessible spaces, free from exclusive control. However, along Margo Utomo Street, access is shaped by ongoing negotiations, informal regulatory practices, and vendors' economic capacity. Consequently, territorial claims become central in shaping and at times limiting urban inclusivity.

#### Comfort conditions on the sidewalks of Margo Utomo Street

Sidewalk quality was evaluated using [Gehl \(2010\)](#) comfort criteria, as adopted by [Poddar and Choudhury \(2022\)](#), encompassing six components of public space comfort. Results for the six observed locations are shown in [figure 5](#).



**Figure 5.** Components of comfort in public space by user type

[Figure 5](#) demonstrates that all six comfort components are available to customers in street food areas, whereas pedestrians' access only three, opportunities to walk, see, and play or exercise, limited to areas partially occupied by vendors. Street food vendors enjoy nearly all comfort components except play or exercise, reflecting a commerce-focused use rather than recreational use.

These findings reveal unequal comfort distribution. Pedestrians experience reduced comfort, indicating that sidewalk privatization for economic activities diminishes the

multifunctionality of public space. Through Gehl's lens, informal territorial practices transform pedestrian areas into zones prioritizing commerce over public access, reducing inclusivity and overall sidewalk quality.

#### Spatial negotiation between heritage conservation and informal economic practices

Applying [Lefebvre \(1991\)](#) production of space framework, the appropriation of public space for private business along Margo Utomo Street represents a manifestation of perceived space, where communities employ public areas to support daily practices. This use is dynamic, requiring negotiation to maintain social acceptability.

As conceived space, sidewalks within the northern section of the Yogyakarta Cosmological Axis are formally designated as pedestrian corridors to preserve the visual character of the heritage landscape. The expansion of informal economic activities introduces new spatial functions that may blur or weaken this intended heritage image.

Simultaneously, the lived experience of sidewalks around Tugu Yogyakarta reflects how the symbolic meaning of heritage is reinterpreted through contemporary cultural and economic practices. While such practices demonstrate the adaptability and relevance of heritage spaces, unregulated territorial appropriation can undermine the aesthetic, symbolic, and functional values underpinning their status as a world cultural heritage site. Therefore, permitted activities and spatial boundaries must be managed inclusively to balance heritage conservation with local livelihoods.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm the working hypothesis that creative economy practices associated with culinary activities significantly shape the character of public spaces along Margo Utomo Street, while simultaneously fostering informal privatization. Sidewalks originally designated as pedestrian pathways within the heritage landscape of the Yogyakarta Cosmological Axis have been transformed into functional workspaces for both permanent and non-permanent culinary enterprises. This transformation reduces the spatial capacity for

pedestrian circulation: permanent food stalls generate continuous obstructions, whereas non-permanent stalls produce temporary barriers during operating hours.

Territorial claims across the six case-study locations are manifested through a combination of physical and non-physical markers. The nature of customer activities is shaped by the placement of food stalls and surrounding environmental elements, resulting in distinctive territorial characteristics unique to each site.

The ideal of public space as an area that cannot be exclusively claimed by individuals or groups is not fully realized along the sidewalks of Margo Utomo Street. Access to these spaces is mediated by the economic capacity of vendors, producing spatial inequities that reduce the overall comfort and inclusivity of the pedestrian environment. Assessment of comfort conditions indicates that vendors and customers enjoy greater access to comfort features compared to pedestrians, who experience diminished comfort and restricted access. This uneven distribution illustrates how informal territorial practices reorganize public space to prioritize economic functions over collective use, thereby undermining urban inclusivity.

Within the context of the Tugu Yogyakarta heritage area, Lefebvre (1991) concept of lived space demonstrates a shift in meaning: sidewalks and surrounding spaces have transformed from zones reinforcing historical monuments and collective memory to areas shaped by tourism pressures and informal economic activities. These dynamics exemplify an ongoing spatial negotiation between heritage conservation imperatives and the economic needs of local communities.

Overall, the study demonstrates that culinary-based creative economy practices profoundly influence public space utilization, the formation of territorial boundaries, the distribution of comfort, and the evolving significance of heritage sites over time. Consequently, the sustainability and inclusivity of the Tugu Yogyakarta area depend upon the capacity to negotiate effectively between heritage preservation, everyday community practices, and local economic activities. These findings contribute to theoretical frameworks of inclusive public space by highlighting the necessity of recognizing everyday spatial practices within urban planning processes to ensure equitable access and shared use of urban environments.

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#### Author(s) contribution

**Wiyatiningsih** contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

**Agustini Dyah Respati** contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

**Claudia Olla Mandayu** contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.

**Steffany Hartono** contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.