

Identification of *Genius Loci* on the Main Street of Kotagede

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ABSTRACT

Kotagede is one of the districts in Yogyakarta with many historical sites. However, because of the dense morphology of the area that is characterised by small alleys, creating an atmosphere gap between the main street and the village tourism *kampung*. One of Kotagede's attractions, the silver crafts industries, is a sector that utilises much of the main street space in the form of retail shops. This study aims to explore the character of silver craft industry on Kotagede's main streets using the *genius loci* phenomenological method. Three parameters of image, space and character were used as the unit of analysis to identify the spirit of the area on Mondorakan and Kemasan streets. The results of the literature study and field observations show that both streets function as landmarks and representations of the silver industry sites. The results of the study are expected to be one of the references in the implementation of the revitalisation of tourist areas in Kotagede.

Keyword: *Genius Loci*, Silver Crafts, Kotagede, Mondorakan Street, Kemasan Street

ABSTRAK

Kotagede merupakan kecamatan dengan berbagai keragaman situs sejarah di Kota Yogyakarta. Namun morfologi daerah yang padat dengan ciri khas gang-gang kecil mengakibatkan adanya jarak antara jalanan utama dengan suasana wisata *kampung*. Salah satu daya tarik Kotagede yaitu sentra kerajinan perak merupakan sektor yang banyak memanfaatkan ruang jalan utama dalam bentuk toko retail. Kajian ini bertujuan menggali karakter keberadaan kerajinan perak yang tersebar di jalanan utama Kotagede menggunakan metode fenomenologi *genius loci*. Tiga parameter berupa citra, ruang dan karakter digunakan sebagai unit analisis untuk mengidentifikasi ruh kawasan yang ada pada Jalan Mondorakan dan Kemasan. Hasil dari studi pustaka dan observasi lapangan menunjukkan bahwa kedua jalan tersebut berfungsi sebagai penanda ciri wilayah dan representasi dari lokasi wisata industri perak. Dari hasil kajian diharapkan dapat menjadi salah satu acuan dalam pelaksanaan revitalisasi daerah wisata di Kotagede.

Kata kunci: *Genius Loci*, Kerajinan Perak, Kotagede, Jl. Mondorakan, Jl. Kemasan



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1. Introductions

Behind the rapid modernization and technological advancements for the sustenance of the wider community, concerns arise regarding the potential loss of culture and regional identity (Portal, 2023). Continuous development oriented towards novelty and innovation, while disregarding the possibility of an area losing its character, poses a threat to the values and local wisdom embedded within both the physical environment and societal systems (Jundiani et al 2018). The presence of the oldest traditional market in Yogyakarta, craft industries, the royal tomb complex, and the Great Mosque of Mataram are prominent historical entities situated in Kotagede.

The presence of the oldest traditional market in Yogyakarta, the craft industry, the complex of royal tombs, and the Great Mataram Mosque are popular historical landmarks located in Kotagede. Preservation challenges in Indonesia face similar issues, where the preservation character often adheres to Eastern philosophies, as outlined in the Nara Charter (Hidayat, 2023), utilizing both the historical function and structures to drive cultural heritage preservation efforts in Indonesia. Another irony arises when areas not considered to possess identity rush to create one, often hastily in the physical realm, viewed through the lens of tourism perceived to benefit and add value to the village (masterplandes.com, 2023). However, if not approached carefully, the spirit of place, may not emerge strongly due to the haste in determining identity (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). Regions with cultural heritage possess this uniqueness, both because of their historical beginnings and their resilience forged by time, Cultural resilience is enhanced by an increased ability to accept loss and transformation, which inspires people to accept uncertainty and absorb hardship in times of change (Holtorf, 2018).

Kotagede, as a cultural heritage site, is officially recognized under the Decree of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Number 186 of 2011, which also encompasses other areas such as the Royal Palace, Malioboro, Pakualaman, Kotabaru, and Imagiri. This cultural heritage area encompasses various forms of activities, material culture, traditions, customs, culinary practices, crafts, and vegetation. The preservation perspective from the intangible aspect, as referred to in international preservation language, embodies the characteristic Eastern viewpoint embraced in this regulation, particularly concerning the preservation direction of Kotagede. Here, many legacies of the past, such as buildings, are repurposed, while activities from the past are sought to be preserved and revitalized.

Kotagede, situated as one of the districts in the southern part of Yogyakarta City and bordering Bantul Regency, has its origins traced back to its establishment by Ki Ageng Pamanahan, a loyalist of the Pajang Kingdom. It once served as the capital during the era of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom. The inhabitants of Kotagede are historically divided into two groups: the first being the courtiers who held administrative authority and were responsible for overseeing the mosques and tombs of the kings in Kotagede, and the second group known as the Kalang people, who were nomadic groups scattered across Java. The Kalang people predominantly roamed the forests, particularly in Central Java, until they were granted settlement in Kotagede by Sultan Agung around 1640. Primarily engaged in jewelry trading, the Kalang people contributed significantly to the local economy (Soekiman, 1993; Budi et. al., 2019). Architecturally, the term "Kalang" is also used to describe the European-style houses in Kotagede owned by merchants, contrasting with the traditional Javanese Joglo houses (Kundha Kabudayan, 2021). Kotagede has been renowned as a craft area since before the Dutch colonial period, although its exact origins remain unclear (Soekiman, 1993). During the reign of Hamengkubuwono VIII, the household metal industry in Kotagede emerged as the primary supplier for the nobleman's crafts and jewelry, leading its artisans to be bestowed with the title "abdi dalem kriya." The silver craftsmanship in Kotagede experienced rapid growth and reached its zenith between 1934-1939..

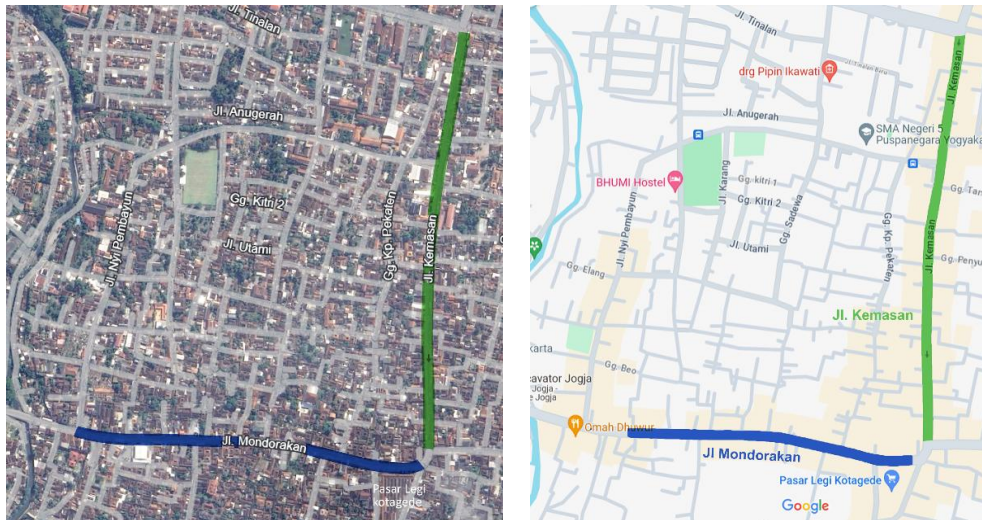
The activity envisioned and cultivated to become an iconic and grand image is the "Silver City," a designation rooted in historical traces dating back to the 16th century and subsequently gaining popularity. Its artifacts can be traced as far back as the 1930s, undergoing continual transformation up to the present day in 2020 and beyond (Museum, 2023). This transformation is evident in the types of products sold and the crafting processes involved. Moreover, it marks how the spatial patterns of Kotagede adapt to these silver crafting activities. This evolving spatial pattern represents a process of cultural change and cultural flow in the overall silver crafting stages, including melting, shaping, and finishing. While these activities are human-engineered, their impacts manifest naturally, such as the space required, resonating sounds, and emitted heat, all contributing to the ambiance and atmosphere akin to the *genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz, 1979), which shapes distinctive spatial patterns grounded in unique reasons.

The study is conducted to explain and illustrate the clusters that have emerged in the development of Kotagede in the area of the phenomenon of silver craftsmanship in the past, which are most likely to be sought and the most recent changes that can be found. The presence of a rooted silver industry in Kotagede undoubtedly influences the patterns of existing residences, thus forming a unique *Genius Loci* in the area. The concept of 'genius of place' in architecture remains at the level of sentimental mythology and

phenomenology, influenced by topology and geometry (Rappaport, 2023; Vecco, 2020). Genius loci are defined by tangible and intangible values, and can be protected by preventing irreversible transformations to cultural heritage sites (Żmudzińska & Wałek, 2024).

2. Method

The study is conducted using a qualitative case study research method. Genius loci is employed to analyze the character of a place. Data is collected through field observations. The observations are conducted on two streets in Kotagede, namely Mondokan and Kemasn streets. These two streets serve as the main access points to Kotagede from the city, hence numerous buildings with industrial and commercial functions are found along them. Being main thoroughfares, Mondokan and Kemasn streets also feature many silver crafting shops, embodying the spirit of place of Kotagede itself



Gambar 1. Lokasi Jl. Mondorakan dan Jl. Kemasn, Kotagede
Sumber: google earth (kiri), google maps (kanan)

2.1 Parameters

There are three points of analysis in determining the genius loci of the main streets of Kotagede, namely image, place, and character. These parameters refer to Norberg-Schulz's discussion on the elaboration of genius loci in his book: *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980).

3. Findings

Table 1. *Genius Loci* analysis on location of study

| Variable | Identification | |
|--------------|--|--|
| | Mondorakan street | Kemasn street |
| <i>Image</i> | The old-fashioned shops with magnificent buildings, characterized by Indische and Jengki architecture, represent a fusion of traditional Javanese buildings adapted to the needs of commercial establishments. | The old-fashioned shops transitioning towards modernity through transformation, characterized by middle-to-lower class Javanese architecture, are marked by smaller house dimensions compared to those on Mondorakan Street. Many are small to medium-sized kiosks undergoing vernacular Javanese transformations towards modernity. |
| <i>Space</i> | Divided by bustling yet smooth-flowing traffic, the area is not densely packed. Despite the shops having ample space, the distance | Split by a bustling yet smoothly flowing traffic, the area is not densely packed. The distance between shops is close, and often the shops do not have ample space. |

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| | between them is close, with narrow lanes dividing the shops into clusters. | Narrow lanes divide the shops into clusters. |
| <i>Character</i> | The homogeneous ethnic group is the Javanese. The traditional silver shops are beginning to transform into modern silver shops. The transformation of silver shops involves a shift in function to other forms. | The homogeneous ethnic group is the Javanese. The modern silver shops are smaller in scale but strive to retain traditional values as an effort to maintain their distinctiveness. The transformation of silver shops involves a shift in function to other forms. |

3.1. Image

The primary image formed is that both streets serve as the face or representation of Kotagede as a silver industry tourism destination. Shaped by the abundance of silver retail stores (and several workshops) that continue to exist until today, the interactions built are mostly transactional between sellers and buyers. In contrast to the Kotagede village area, which provides a deeper and more social cultural craft tourism experience. However, this enhances the impression of Kotagede as a region renowned for craftsmanship and jewelry in the city of Yogyakarta, as its main streets prominently display silver products showcased in every shop.

The main visual image of the Kotagede area is rich with buildings from the past, both by regulation from the government as part of the cultural heritage area and through active conservation efforts by the community. These efforts include repurposing buildings while striving to maintain their authenticity. The buildings along Mondorakan and Kemas street embody layers of history from different generations, ranging from traditional Javanese structures complete with complexes to "Indische" and "Jengki" buildings, which are a fusion of Javanese and Dutch architectural styles suitable for commercial purposes. Buildings along the roadside typically adopt the "Indische" style, featuring wooden panels as doors, clay tiles for roofing, and ornate steel and wooden beams with a knock-down system for assembly, using bolts instead of nails for connecting materials. The predominant materials used in the shops along Mondorakan, the oldest street, are wood, cement, iron, and clay tiles.

The combination of these materials creates an ambiance along the streets of Kotagede reminiscent of old-fashioned shopping districts, evoking a sense of nostalgia rather than antiquity and squalor. This impression is further reinforced by some modern adaptations such as billboards, banners, and advertising tools. Nearly 85% of the buildings along Mondorakan and Kemas street serve as retail spaces offering a variety of goods, ranging from remnants of the past such as silverware and batik to newer items like convenience stores and local culinary delights. Additionally, the pedestrian areas on Kemas street are utilized for small stalls such as "angkringan" (small street stalls) and eateries serving traditional Javanese dishes like "gudeg," where patrons can dine in accordance with the dimensions of the sidewalk.

The silver shops along Mondorakan street boast varying ages, each marking the uniqueness of the buildings. Along Mondorakan street, silver shops are characterized by the utilization of indische and jengki architectural styles. These silver shops often occupy large, old buildings, with facades spanning more than 5 meters and sometimes even occupying standalone structures. The vintage, antique, elegant, and luxurious ambiance exuded by these silver shops is not only due to the association of silver itself with luxury, social status, and high value but also influenced by the architectural style and historical significance of the buildings. Examples of such establishments include Djono Silver & Gayatri Wedding Ring, HS Silver, Perak Bagus Silver, Sri Dadi Silver, Asri Silver, Narti Silver, Ansor Silver & Kalang Silver, among others. However, with the changing times, smaller-scale silver shops like SR Silver, La Silver, and Setiti Silver have emerged, often utilizing small kiosk-style shops and employing display window strategies to maximize limited space. Many silver shops have ceased operations, leaving them vacant, for sale, or repurposed for other commercial activities.

The shops along Kemas street present a slightly different image compared to Mondorakan street.

Mondorakan, as the oldest hub of activity, features houses and shops with a more grandiose ambiance compared to Kemasan street. Kemasan street, being the youngest thoroughfare, reflects the consequences of modern times, particularly economic and land-related issues, in its development. Buildings are becoming smaller, and density is increasing, unlike Mondorakan street where houses and residential complexes are transformed into shops. Along Kemasan street, buildings facing the road are practically converted into single kiosks. Various types of silver craft shops are found along Kemasan street, with the most common being the single kiosk type. Examples include Yon Silver, Ceria Silver, Farah Silver, Salim, YK Silver, Mila Silver, Kemasan Silver, Andini Jewellery, Savira Silver, MD Silver, DD Silver, Dewi Silver, and NR Silver. These kiosks typically have a square or rectangular layout with dimensions around 5 m x 5 m or 6 m x 6 m, covering an area of approximately 12 - 36 m². The walls are made of plastered cement, and the entrance or shop door is usually made of removable wooden panels that can be opened or folded (Folding Door). Generally, kiosk-type shops have a separate canopy from the main roof, which can be of the plana or limasan type. The materials used are commonly found in vintage shops, including wood, iron, clay tiles, and some still use wooden shingles. Although there are some house-like shops along Kemasan street (such as Kotagede Silver, Queen Silver, HH Silver, Istana Silver, Nur Parwanto Silver, Djoglo Moeljo, Nufa Silver), they do not appear to have been originally designed as shop spaces. This is evident because house buildings that convert their front rooms into shop spaces lack certain characteristics typical of shop typologies in Kotagede, such as wide front doors made of wooden planks with folding opening methods and the minimal use of facades as display spaces, as commonly seen in shops across Kotagede.



Image 2. Suasana Jl. Mondorakan (left) dan Jl. Kemasan (right), Kotagede

Source: dok. pribadi

3.2. Space

The space formed serves as a representation of the silver industry area, although intertwined with the daily activities of Kotagede residents centered around its traditional market. The function of silver shops, in essence, does not differ from other stores; they all engage in selling goods, and their interaction patterns revolve around commercial transactions. The commercial area along Mondorakan street is densely populated, yet unlike modern commercial areas characterized by tightly packed walls and multi-story buildings, the structures along Mondorakan and Kemasan streets resemble vintage shops resembling houses with spacious yards, where the shop is positioned at the front while the owner occupies the back space. Thus, the commercial buildings on Mondorakan street serve a dual function as both shops and residences. Narrow alleyways divide these shops into random blocks in terms of quantity, but they can actually be categorized according to alleyway intersections, such as jagalan, sayangan, pekatén, and narrow streets, effectively dividing the commercial area into blocks. In the present day, this area is congested with motorized vehicles, including single-directional car traffic and two-wheeled traffic, due to the relatively narrow dimensions of the street. The sidewalk space on Mondorakan street is not clearly defined because it overlaps with the shop yards. Consequently, pedestrians sometimes walk on the vehicle lanes and other times on the sidewalk. Street furniture and public vegetation are almost non-existent on this street, primarily due to space constraints. Owners of larger shop spaces typically engage in private planting. The most noticeable aspect of Mondorakan street is that as it approaches the Kotagede market, the space becomes increasingly narrow and crowded

Kemasan street exhibits a spatial configuration similar to Mondorakan street, with a tendency to narrow down as it approaches the market area. It can also be observed that the space becomes more crowded and congested towards the market. Silver shops located in the northern area are generally newer and do not represent the antique silver shops from previous generations, particularly those that are single kiosk-type

shops.

3.3. Character

The streets serve as markers of the area's characteristics along the Mondorakan and Kemas roads. The presence of silver jewelry retail shops scattered along Mondorakan and Kemas streets imbues the image of the silver industry, alerting visitors and passersby to the fact that they are entering a silver industry area. Many buildings owned by the Muhammadiyah organization are also dispersed along both streets, despite the majority of Kotagede residents being Muslims, divided between practicing Muslims and nominal Muslims. This aligns with the reality that the current generation of residents is largely dominated by Muhammadiyah affiliates. (Utomo, 2014).

The character emanating from Jalan Mondorakan in Kotagede is marked by a uniformity of style and the phenomenon of the area trending towards modernity due to practical choices driven by economic motives. The simplicity of the past-era shop buildings creates a cohesion based on quantity, with saddle and village-style roofs, wooden elements, clay tiles, wooden boards, and ornaments or carvings giving the area a collective compactness. Since ancient times, ownership in Kotagede rarely changed hands, and the residents remained of the same lineage, dating back to the era of Ancient Mataram. Consequently, the ornaments created, especially on the silver shops, consist predominantly of plant vines, with scarce representations of animals or living creatures, or statues. Though visually associated with Islam, the floral motifs commonly used in silver craftsmanship are inherited from Hindu culture. This non-architectural homogeneity forms a typology of buildings rooted in the collective identity of architectural elements.

The silver shops along Jalan Mondorakan exhibit a character of grandeur and elegance, reflecting their status as lucrative commodities during their construction. These shops boasted the highest income compared to others, resulting in architecture adorned with intricate carvings, high-quality wood materials resistant to decay and capable of regeneration, and larger building scales. On the other hand, the silver shops on Jalan Kemas exhibit a character of small-scale silver shops, evident in their depicted scale and visual strategies commonly found in small-scale retail establishments. This includes minimal carvings and lighting that does not yet play a prominent role, although the context involves showcasing silver craftsmanship products.

3.4. Genius Loci sebagai Ruh Kawasan

The role of both streets as representations of the region embodies a fusion of economic, social, and cultural spaces intertwined with the daily activities of local residents and visitors/tourists. Through vending activities and public service engagements, both streets exemplify the spirit of the region. These activities reflect the daily lives of residents, which tourists can naturally experience. Rooted in the historical preservation efforts of the Kotagede region by its inhabitants, the silver tourism in Kotagede demonstrates resilience against the currents of time, positioning Kotagede as one of the thematic tourism areas in Yogyakarta.

4. Conclusions

The main streets of Jalan Mondorakan and Jalan Kemas in Kota Gede, which divide and connect the Kotagede area, exhibit slightly different morphologies. These differences stem from the development of settlements, the dynamics of craftsmanship, and spatial adaptations. The epochs representing different phenomena of silver craftsmanship are evident and preserved in Jalan Mondorakan and Jalan Kemas. Jalan Mondorakan symbolizes an era when silver craftsmanship reached its peak, as evidenced by the owners' ability to construct both shop and residential buildings of larger and more luxurious dimensions. On the other hand, Jalan Kemas represents a younger era of silver craftsmanship development, succeeding the full and dense condition of Jalan Mondorakan. The declining dynamics of silver craftsmanship in Jalan Kemas can be observed through the shrinking and narrowing of settlements and houses. Shops no longer double as homes but instead become small kiosks solely dedicated to commercial activities.

Genius Loci, as a form of approaching the identity and character of an area, does not negate the existence of secondary identities. These identities also perceive the area from other possible angles inherent in the observed objects. Jalan Mondorakan and Jalan Kemas have secondary identities as areas with residential areas characterized by Old Javanese nuances using styles from Ancient Java, Indische, and Jengki eras. The significance of space occurs due to economic activities and tourism that sustain both streets. The spirit of the area emerges from the fusion between the distinctive character of Kotagede with its silver industry and the phenomena of daily activities of the inhabitants in that area. Both streets can serve as intermediaries marking

tourist areas, giving a distinctive color that tourism activities are inseparable from the existence and daily needs of the residents living in that area. Tourism activities are indeed a reality of life for the local residents of Kotagede, so they coexist and operate alongside daily activities within the same space.

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