

Learning from the Collective Space in Making Culture & Making Space:

A Case Study from Yogyakarta City, Indonesia

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Abstract

The contestation of urban space is a dialectical process in defining space by stakeholders in urban areas. We will explain the efforts of city citizens to form a collective space by promoting a making culture. With the spirit of Do It Yourself and Do It With Others, the collective space produces shared knowledge and democratizes data to increase the capacity of urban citizens. This study is grounded on empirical research in Yogyakarta through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. We discuss the formation of collective space in urban informality to encourage urban communities. This study finds that the collective space has collaborated with some local communities to promote the making culture and encourage individual creativity by contributing ideas and exploring new knowledge.

Keywords: *Urban Space, Collective Space, Making Culture, Knowledge Production*

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Introduction

A significant issue raised in this research is the emergence of citizen initiative space or collective space in Yogyakarta through making culture and making space as a form of reaction to urban space changes and the commercialization of knowledge due to industrialization's massive growth. Moreover, both in quantity and quality, limited public space encourages citizen initiative to create collective space. This collective space is not only about building favorable environments but also about the importance of concern and listening to things in the long term (Manzini, 2019). Ostrom, (1990) defines urban space as urban commons that regulate resources in urban areas that are accessible to all group members that use, share, and/or manage resources together. In this case, collective space encourages people to share their knowledge and develop collaboration between citizens to help other people.

The spatial transformation shows massive and uncontrollable changes in urban spatial planning. Spaces should be shared among others to be the space of social interaction to enjoy life and alienate the boredom habitus. Furthermore, Lefebvre (2000) states that everyone has rights to the city. The right to the city has become a social movement in its own right and a mantra for modern advocates working on many urban issues, including DIY proponents (Stickells, 2011). Different from formal urbanism, these actions encourage people to have in common a shared desire to 'propose alternative lifestyles, reinvent our daily lives, and reoccupy urban space with new uses' (Zardini, 2008) to define what the city is. Furthermore, the do-it-yourself (DIY) is a processing of producing space and constructing the meaning of urban space by the citizens.

The commercialization of urban space has led to various movements in responding to the changes. This form can be described as an urban community movement in the form of collective action to reclaim their urban space (Castells, 1983; Miller, 2006). Therefore, the movement cannot be separated from the city space context as the crucial thing to fight for. This response can be expressed through a cultural approach manifested in collective space creation. The presence of a collective space becomes a forum for citizens to interact with others and the city. In Yogyakarta, various collective spaces have emerged, such as the *Kunci* Study Forum and Collective, *Bakudapan* Food Study Group, and Lifepatch. Each collective space has issues to focus on, such as the *Bakudapan* Food Study Group, which is interested in food issues, and Lifepatch is interested in studying the intersection of art, knowledge, and technology. Fluid interactions in the collective space make it possible to collaborate on issues between collective spaces, such as expansion and collaboration (Hong, 2017).

This article engages in a discussion about the collective space in making culture and making space. This research uses an exploratory case study approach to identify how urbanism collective action, called Lifepatch, uses available tools to optimize their imagination, including discourses that appeared (Atchan et al., 2016). We conducted interviews in a structured manner to get more information, accompanied by focus group discussion and participation in Lifepatch's activities. The primary data is supplemented by secondary data collected through various related literature as a basis of the framework analysis.

The unpacking of existing concepts is already seen in a digital space phenomenon called Do It Yourself / DIY or Do It with Others/ DIWO. This paper aims to provide an empirically grounded understanding of making space and making culture by DIY and DIWO urbanism collective named Lifepatch. Some citizens of Yogyakarta city initiated this urbanism space. In their DIY and DIWO projects, Lifepatch initiated collaboration with other citizens and some scholars. Through the movements, the citizens could practice digital meetings to produce discourses or distribute knowledge needed with others. The digital space is transnational, as the practiced collective works are not limited by certain identities but rather similarity of ideas. Their projects were interesting to explore not only since Yogyakarta citizens developed this initiative, but also since it can enrich the discussion of global DIY and DIWO urbanism which is dominated by collectives from the global north (Finn, 2014).

The Existence of Collective Space in the Middle of Contestation for City Space

The process of production and reproduction of urban space results from a constellation in defining what a city is and its purpose. Every actor in urban space has a dialectic in constructing the meaning of their urban space. Urban space is not only limited to material forms but also has a social side (Lefebvre, 1991). The concept of Production of Space describes the dialectical phenomenon of space into three forms: *perceived space*, *conceived space*, and *living spaces*. *Perceived space* is a space that is perceived intuitively based on each individual's experience in that space. *Conceived space* is a space conceptualized by specific individuals related to the authority or creator of that space. *Lived space* is a description of the definition of living space from the pattern of continuity of interaction between humans and material space (Purcell, 2002). These three forms build a dialectic of production and reproduction of the meaning of urban space.

In the practice of urbanism, the production of space becomes a framework for seeing the contestation in redefining a city space, either directly or indirectly. Every stakeholder in the city space competes with one another in questioning who has the right to create a city (Fabian et al., 2016; Iveson, 2013). This question led to the birth of the slogan "*right to the city*." The right to the city is a conceptualization of people's demands and claims for equitable urban space (Lefebvre, 2000). Based on the need for a fair and participatory urban space to fulfill people's desires for the city, carrying the slogan of the right to the city as a slogan for social movements in creating the alternatives meaning of urban space (Harvey, 2012; Hou, 2010; Iveson, 2013). Urban stakeholders – especially civil society – are trying to formulate tactics for the production of urban space in a micro and self-managed manner, referring to their preference for urban space (Fabian et al., 2016; Jabareen, 2014).

The do-it-yourself (DIY) urbanism movement emerged as part of the urban community's efforts to reshape the meaning of their urban space in a participatory manner. Jabareen (2014:425-426) argues that the DIY urbanism movement can be categorized as part of the dialectic process of space production. Every community practice in DIY activism proceeds both as a form of perceived space; conceived

space; as well as living space. Communities have a role in perceiving and conceptualizing their urban space beyond the conceptualization of the state and urban planners – who then simultaneously build a living space. DIY activism in urban space is part of a process of producing space to fulfill the right to the city.

In practice, the DIY urbanism movement is related to the community's collective efforts in shaping their urban space. It has implications for DIY in urban areas, leading to the creation of collective space. Hong said that urban citizens' resistance to urbanization could be enacted through collective space (Hong, 2017). Collective space is informal social and cultural activism rooted in new social movements in urban studies that utilize cultural activism through "art and creative practices" to disrupt established structures. Verson (2007:172) defines cultural activism as a form of campaign and direct action to re-control how meanings, value systems, beliefs, art, and various other things are created and disseminated. The dominant ways of seeing things are constantly questioned and present alternative views through cultural activism. Cultural activism allows for the transformation of political space through 'aesthetic politics' resilient to urban development (Buser et al., 2013). Aesthetic politics is an artistic experiment carried out through the spirit of making your own (Do It Yourself / DIY) which is often ignored from the development narrative.

The concept of the DIY urbanism movement is closely related to the practice of informality. Urban informality is a form of 'norm system that regulates the process of transformation' in urban space that develops outside the formal norm system (Roy, 2005). On the other hand, informality is not narrowly perceived as an effort of resistance (Roy, 2012), but rather as the process of forming a city space system that does not limit itself to a formal system of spatial planning.

The term informality emerged in the urban global south as a space production practice that is not based on a form of resistance to power, but as part of everyday life (AlSayyad et al., 2003). It makes some urban activism practices in the Global South not based on the spirit of power struggle like the western urbanism perspective which developed from urban critical theory (Brenner, 2009; Roy, 2005).

However, the emergence of urban informality in the southern hemisphere cannot be separated from the inability of the state and the market to meet all aspects of the community's needs for the city. (Berenschot et al., 2018) The community then collectively – or individually – then tries to independently fulfill their needs in urban space (e.g., needs for housing, workspace, and the supporting quality of living space) (Harjoko, 2016; Jabareen, 2014; Tunas et al., 2010; Udelsmann Rodrigues, 2019; Van Voorst, 2016).

The patterns of informality that developed in Indonesia gave rise to a dialectic of collectivity and individual preferences. Several studies show that urbanism in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the interaction of traditional rural collective values and individualistic urban industrialization (Damayanti, 2018; Murti, 2015; Zhu et al., 2015). It illustrates that the anthropological context of Indonesian ur-

ban society is in a gray position which is a mixture of rural-urban social systems (Boer, 2014; Harjoko, 2016; Wilson, 2010). This gray contour is one of its unique features in the development of urbanism in Indonesia. Social movements and social development efforts in urban areas of Indonesia are strongly influenced by the existence of society's social system, which is a mixture of the rural-urban social system (Gibbings, 2013; Jakimow, 2017; Putri et al., 2017).

Concerning the conceptualization of the study described, this paper looks at the form of creating urban space through the DIY urbanism movement that developed in Lifepatch. Collective space is a reference for the goals of the DIY urbanism movement. In this paper, collective space is not only seen as limited to the physical space used by citizens for activities, discussions, and fun workshops. Collective space exists as an open arena for all people to share knowledge and create shared knowledge in the physical and digital space. It can also develop collaboration between citizens and provide independence through Do It Yourself and Do It With Others against the development of marginalized people's rights. This paper also scrutinizes the formation of collective space concerning the reality of informality in Indonesia as a form of DIY. Informality becomes a form of attraction practice of urban collectivity and individuality that moves across the boundaries of formal practice in urban space

Yogyakarta City as a Strategic Space

Yogyakarta is known as a special region that can attract people to visit for some reasons. The potential tourism in Yogyakarta has advantages and disadvantages for the Yogyakarta people. On the one hand, the expansion of the tourism industry has succeeded in supporting the Yogyakarta economy, such by increasing income from foreign exchange, opening business opportunities and employment opportunities, and increasing community income. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the tourism industry also raises problems both on an economic and social scale, such as unfair competition among hotels, issues in the land-use change process (Prihatin, 2015), and conflicts over the struggle for space in the City of Yogyakarta.

This conflict is like what happened to establish Hotel Cordela and Hotel Fave in 2014 (Apriando, 2019; Yulianingsih, 2014). Citizens take rejection action against the hotel development plan to avoid environmental degradation such as water and air pollution, difficulty accessing clean water caused by excessive groundwater absorption, and social impacts such as congestion around the hotel area (Apriando, 2019).

Environmental justice has become an issue that has been discussed for the last few years since the availability and access to land resources that were never previously questioned is a critical overgrowing problem (Suharko, 2020). Responding to environmental injustice issues, people develop new social movements through community organizing, building alliances, and direct action. The movement uses art, such as murals, songs, documentary films, and posters, as a non-violent approach to opposing neoliberal-oriented development.

The emergence of social movement and the local community in Yogyakarta related to its function as a student city. Yogyakarta has more than one hundred universities that have good quality. This condition encourages students to discuss habits, social and voluntary activities, and art performances in social and political problems, including urban issues. Furthermore, a social movement in this city is robust because there is a collaboration of civil society like urban citizens, non-government organizations, students, and local communities to promote sustainability in Yogyakarta (Suharko, 2020).

In one research that examined community movements in Yogyakarta, Roitman (2019) describes how these movements are a consequence of Indonesia's socio-political changes and the more robust understanding of citizens in expressing their opinions. However, in the process, the raised movement was not based on political objectives but rather on transforming the status quo through concrete actions. Although the process is slow, these two movements provide examples of how they can create change, especially in improving the quality of community housing.

The movement of communities and collective initiatives in Yogyakarta aims to criticize urban issues that tend to be dominated by the state and capitalism. In addition, some of them initiate *Do It Yourself ethics* to encourage personal creativity in the community and create independence. Through the DIY activity, there is a sense of pride and ownership over outcomes, transparency of the process and control afforded by doing something DIY, a collective aspect where pooling resources, skill-sharing, and outcomes that are also characteristic of art are considered socially engaged (Bruhn, 2015).

A study by Mansfield (2021) shows that collective practices through the concept of collective individualism can be found in the street art community in Yogyakarta. Collective individualism is culturally embedded practices of collectivity that embrace both communitarian desires and yet provide opportunities for individualistic activities that operate within an assemblage. Focuses on The Geneng Street Art Project in the kampung (village) of Geneng, Mansfield (2021) explains that although street art in Yogyakarta is predominantly an individual practice on the streets, artists operate collectively in the assemblage through collective aesthetic activism and technical and emotional networks of support.

Several other Yogyakarta peoples also took the initiative to establish a collaborative space conducting exploratory and experimental work practices. Collective spaces such as the *Kunci Study Forum* and *Collective and Lifepatch*. In particular, this paper will explore Lifepatch as a collective space. Lifepatch initiates citizen initiatives on knowledge production by making space, making culture in its working practice.

Lifepatch as Citizens' Initiatives

Lifepatch is a community founded by some citizens of Yogyakarta in 2012. Lifepatch focuses on the intersection of art, knowledge, and technology in its space. Lifepatch chose this insight to accommodate the plurality of its members from

various backgrounds, such as artists, scientists, and other creative workers. Before Lifepatch was established as a legal community, some of its members had initiated an anonymous community as a forum for them to carry out experimental practices. As a sample, some members of this community took an active role in the street art to preserve the public space in Yogyakarta.

The presence of alternative spaces such as Lifepatch contributes to the contestation of space in Yogyakarta City. Lifepatch invites various parties, institutions, and society, to be involved in its experimental work. Here, the experimental practice is interpreted as a forum for citizens to express their curiosity about certain material subjects and their right to life in accessing a healthy and clean environment. As previously stated, the tourism industry's development has harmed the ecological conditions in Yogyakarta City, such as water and air pollution. Therefore, Lifepatch initiated experimental work by breaking the deadlock over the ecological crisis in Yogyakarta City, carried out through shared knowledge.

Lifepatch performs its shared knowledge production through activities such as the Jogja River Project and the Good Go Ferment. In producing this shared knowledge, Lifepatch breaks down the boundaries of knowledge that are usually hidden in scientific spaces so that the wider community can access it. The principle of data democratization becomes the basis for knowledge hacking; therefore, Lifepatch eliminates the hierarchy of knowledge in its working practice. The knowledge of everyone involved in the production of knowledge is considered equal. Thus, in sharing and testing knowledge, no knowledge is neglected. Hence, the knowledge produced in a collective space such as Lifepatch becomes shared knowledge.

Besides, Lifepatch has made efforts to democratize data through various channels such as the Lifepatch wiki/WordPress, exhibitions, and workshops. It is common for Lifepatch's knowledge hacking efforts to produce environmentally friendly and cost-effective products that can possibly be applied in everyday life. Lifepatch strives to democratize data in knowledge production with the spirit of *Do It Yourself* and *Do It with Others* as its work ethic. This spirit itself is a form of resistance to capitalization, which has resulted in perpetuating a culture of consumerism.

Knowledge Production in Lifepatch

As a medium for knowledge production, collective spaces such as Lifepatch exist to accommodate the action of the citizens.' This initiative can be carried out in various ways, one of which is producing knowledge. Citizens produce knowledge through some activities such as hacking and sharing knowledge. The knowledge production process makes DIY activism conducted by Lifepatch more focused on the informal production of everyday life culture. Lifepatch's activities illustrate the process of producing global south urban space which generally does not start with a fight against power inequality - as suggested by a critical urban perspective (AlSayyad et al., 2003; Roy, 2005).

The production of knowledge in a collective space allows citizens to interact with fellow citizens and the city. Lifepatch has initiated various activities that make

these interactions possible to produce knowledge together, such as those carried out in the Jogja River Project (JRP) and Good Go Ferment (GGF).

JRP is a project initiated by Lifepatch in 2011. JRP activities are not always the same and are not routinely carried out every year. According to Siagian, a Lifepatch member in his blog, JRP started with the simple idea of Lifepatch to get to know and bring us as citizens of Yogyakarta to the rivers in the city (Siagian, 2013). The first JRP was held in *Kali Code/ Code River* and the Community of Microbiology Laboratory of the Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Cantigi Indonesia, and among individuals with the same interests.

The first JRP held on March 22, 2011, to coincide with Earth Day, was conducted by a walk along the banks of the Code River. Several activities follow through within the JRP, including taking river samples, monitoring the intensity of changes in color and water discharge, and documenting Watersheds or *Daerah Aliran Sungai* (DAS). Activities within the JRP carried out by Lifepatch, and other communities are trying to answer the ecological crisis in urban areas, particularly regarding access to clean water for city citizens. Apart from that, through the JRP, Lifepatch and Yogyakarta City communities also work to protect rivers and their surrounding habitats.

During their walk, JRP participants found that the material left over from the eruption of Mount Merapi in 2010 had a significant impact on the area along the Code River, such as the rise in the riverbed, which caused the potential for river water to enter citizens' homes.

Besides, together with the Community of Microbiology Laboratory of the Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Lifepatch conducted a coliform analysis test to detect Code River water contamination. The results show that the water in the Code River is polluted where coliform levels increase in the water downstream (Siagian 2013). Lifepatch publishes the Code River water sample test on both the Lifepatch website and the personal WordPress of Lifepatch members to make it accessible to more people.

JRP in 2012, located in the Winongo River. Like the previous year's JRP, it was enacted through river tracing and sample testing. The difference between JRP in this year and the previous year is in the communities involved in JRP. In the JRP 2012, there were around 30 communities involved. In addition, this activity invites participants to do visual documentation and identify vegetation and animals in the Winongo River.

Furthermore, in 2013, to disseminate knowledge about water sample testing, Lifepatch and the Microbiology Community of the Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Gadjah Mada, conducted a fun workshop to implement learning by doing process on water sample testing from Lifepatch's house. Various groups participated in this workshop, including the community around Lifepatch. In the same year, Lifepatch, together with its collaborators, developed a 360 camera to support the process of visually documenting several rivers in Yogyakarta.

Apart from initiating JRP, since 2018, Lifepatch has also initiated Good Go Ferment (GGF) activities. The implementation of GGF is motivated by the degradation of urban community knowledge on the importance of consuming quality food. In quality food, consumers know the origin of the raw materials and how they are processed. Thus there is no distance between consumers and the goods they consume. Unfortunately, the consumptive culture has degraded this relationship and has resulted in the neglect of the rights of urban society to consume quality food and beverages.

As the name of initiating suggests, Lifepatch invites urban communities to learn how to produce food and beverages using fermentation techniques in this activity. This technique produces food and beverages such as tempeh, cheese, kombucha and kefir. Fermentation techniques were also beneficial for the manufacture of organic fertilizers.

Making Culture as The Daily Practice of Lifepatch

The growing DIY urbanism movement has been gaining attention from America and the rest of the world (Finn, 2014). This movement emerged when making culture was implemented by amateur designers in micro-public spaces in urban areas. In their practices, DIY and DIWO urbanism projects initiated by urban society have different tactics and usefulness for people. Sometimes, urban citizens' initiative has created a spontaneous intervention in their practices. In America, spontaneous intervention was shown by installing homemade benches at bus stops.

Moreover, the DIY and DIWO urbanism movement potentially influences the urban design planning by elites. Therefore, in his study, Finn (2014) argues that urbanism DIY movements are challenges for city governance, city management, and city design planning. Deslandes (2013) in her study said that amateurism, informality, and marginalization cannot explain the risks experienced by city citizens. This inability shows since not everybody has the same capital in claiming space injustice.

The DIY and DIWO practices themselves are common practices of city citizens in the Southern Hemisphere (Global South) as a form of their culture responding to the absence of state development (Jabareen, 2014). The DIY and DIWO urbanism movement in Indonesia is not a new discourse. In his study, Luvaas (2012) expresses that Indonesia is his main research location since Indonesia's DIY and DIWO movement is the biggest, although not widely known.

The magnitude of the DIY and DIWO urbanism movement in Indonesia cannot be separated from the origin of social and cultural in Indonesia. It can be seen from the culture of mutual cooperation (*Gotong Royong*) in Indonesia for solving problems together through making. The making movement from Indonesia, the global south, enriches the discussion of the making movement, which is dominated by the global north (Luvaas, 2012).

Lifepatch applies mutual cooperation in their making movement to respond to environmental injustice and food injustice. The former has been done by testing

water quality in urban rivers and the latter has been done by rearranging production and consumption culture. These projects were experimental practices by urban collective space in knowledge production.

One or some Lifepatch members started the projects that realized urban problems. The role of individuals is important to get new ideas based on the experience and skills of a member of Lifepatch. In collective and collaborative work, the creativity of individuals is not eliminated (Mansfield, 2021). Every individual in Lifepatch can explore their self-interest to contribute to Lifepatch activity and get new experiences. Related to the urban problems, they created urban projects such as JRP and GGF. In JRP, Lifepatch initiated collaboration with scholars to ensure their experiments followed scientific standards. This collaboration shows that knowledge production can be carried out through collaboration between professionals and amateurs citizens. In GGF projects, Lifepatch has collaborated with some local communities to promote the making culture in the production and consumption of food for urban society.

In their practices, sometimes, the DIY and DIWO projects of Lifepatch do not have a clear design of sustainability. Such as in JRF, Siagian (2013) said that JRF projects are not routinely done every year. This inconsistency of knowledge production potentially degraded the improvement of citizens' consciousness of their right to the city. In addition, this inconsistency of DIY and DIWO urbanism movements decreases their potency in encouraging governments to formulate new citizens' rights-based policies.

Conclusion

The constellation of urban stakeholders largely determines the practice of producing urban space. Citizens are one of the essential stakeholders in the production of urban space, where they are the first actors affected by the production of urban space. In the Global South, the practice of space production by the community tends to occur in informal ways of life. Informal urbanism works as a part of everyday life that is not specifically present as resistance to power. It makes DIY activism - a form of community space production - not only an expression of resistance but also a cultural expression.

Informal urbanism in the Global South - especially in Indonesia - is strongly derived by the combination of traditional collectivist values and capitalist individualism. Those factors also influence urban DIY/DIWO activism in producing space. This paper concludes that Lifepatch as urban DIY/DIWO activism also conveyed Indonesia's informal character.

Lifepatch as a collective space is present as a cultural expression of space in Yogyakarta City. By carrying out experimental work practices by producing shared knowledge based on the spirit of DIY and DIWO, Lifepatch invites Yogyakarta citizens to get to know themselves and the city where they live. To democratize data, Lifepatch uses digital spaces such as Wikipedia and blogs, and fun workshops to implement learning by doing as process. This activity breaks the hierarchy of knowledge which is often closed. However, Lifepatch also showed individual

concern in their urbanism practice as a collective initiative. Every individual is respected as his/her idea contributes to Lifepatch's development.

Lifepatch introduced each other and the city where they live through various activities such as the Jogja River Project (JRP) and Good Go Ferment (GGF). Through the JRP, Lifepatch invites Yogyakarta City citizens to know the river that crosses the city where they live and find out what problems exist in the river. The choice of the river as the object of observation material cannot be separated from Lifepatch members' awareness of water's importance as a livelihood source.

In addition, Lifepatch also initiated GGF activities. Through GGF Lifepatch seeks to raise awareness in urban communities of the right to eat food with dignity. The industrialization has changed the culture of consumption of urban communities to become consumptive. In a consumptive culture, the distance between the consumer and the goods consumed increases. It can be seen from consumers' ignorance of their food origin and production method. Therefore, through GGF, Lifepatch seeks to break this gap by inviting Yogyakarta City citizens to produce their food independently or collectively.

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