

# Elevating Informality: Street Vending, Design Politics, and the Remaking of Public Space in Bandung

Sidh Sintusingha

Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne, Australia

**Correspondence:** Sidh Sintusingha ([ssint@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ssint@unimelb.edu.au))

**Submitted:** 31 July 2025 **Accepted:** 2 December 2025 **Published:** 25 February 2026

**Issue:** This article is part of the issue “Streets as Platforms of Public Life” edited by Jenni Cauvain (Nottingham Trent University), Antonella Bruzzese (Politecnico di Milano), and Andrew Karvonen (Lund University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.i464>

## Abstract

Teras Cihempelas, an elevated pedestrian walkway in Bandung, Indonesia, presents a unique case of integrating informal street vending into formal urban infrastructure. Designed under former mayor and architect Ridwan Kamil, this project sought to both accommodate and regulate informal traders while enhancing public life in a dense, urban fabric. Unlike conventional pedestrianisation efforts, Teras Cihempelas spatially segregates vendors from the street, creating an urban spectacle that blends informal livelihoods with a curated experience of public space. This article critically examines the design, politics, and socio-economic impacts of Teras Cihempelas, exploring how it reflects broader tensions between modernisation, post-colonial urbanism, and gentrification. The study adopts a longitudinal narrative research approach, drawing on field observations (2015, 2017, 2019, 2025), analyses of municipal documents, and local and national media coverage, supplemented with review-based evidence to trace user and vendor experiences. This allows for a reconstruction of how the project has evolved across nearly a decade of changing leadership, urban policy, and vendor practices, and how they impacted public life. The article situates Teras Cihempelas within global trends of urban informality management, in line with Bangkok’s vendor “reorganisations” and the aestheticisation of public space seen in projects like New York’s High Line. This study asks how the design, implementation, and evolution of Teras Cihempelas reveal the politics of formalising informality in Bandung; how vendors, visitors, and officials experienced and responded to the project; in what ways Teras Cihempelas reflects both the potentials and contradictions of reconfiguring streets as platforms of public life; and what broader lessons it offers for design-led approaches to managing informality in rapidly urbanising contexts. Despite its ambition to legitimise street vending, the project ultimately reveals the complexities of formalising informality and the ongoing struggle for inclusive post-Covid urban spaces. The findings contribute to discussions on how cities can balance economic integration, urban design, and the right to the street in evolving urban landscapes.

## Keywords

design-driven solutions; gentrification; pedestrianisation; public space and life; street vending; urban informality

---

## 1. Introduction

Urban informality, particularly street vending, plays a vital role in Southeast Asia's urban economies, providing livelihoods for millions while contributing vibrancy and accessibility to the public realm. In cities like Bandung, Indonesia, street vendors, or *pedagang kaki lima* (PKL), are central to everyday urban life but often face precarious legal and spatial conditions. While critical in sustaining the street-based livelihoods of urban populations across income groups, the PKL are persistently perceived through developmentalist discourses as a transitional or temporary phenomenon, tolerated only until “modern” urban forms and formal employment can replace it.

Public spaces in such contexts serve dual roles: as sites of social interaction and as vital platforms for economic survival. However, rapid urban development turned public spaces into sites of contestations where informal practices are increasingly maligned and threatened, as authorities and private developers seek to modernise cities and reclaim public spaces through policies and processes that often discriminate against street vending. Not coincidentally, the expanding urban middle classes view street vending—one public manifestation of urban informality—as an undesirable urban phenomenon, especially when compared against their social media feeds, proliferated with visual spectacles of urban modernity from cities in advanced economies and fellow aspirant Global South cities.

Against this backdrop, this article examines the Teras Cihempelas project (also referred to as the “Skywalk”)—a 700 metres-long elevated pedestrian walkway that attempts to formally integrate street vendors into a new Bandung urban infrastructure—as a unique case of formalising informality. In contrast to prevailing vendor eradication strategies, Teras Cihempelas attempts to balance regulation with economic inclusion through a design-driven conception, yet reveals new forms of exclusion and spatial marginalisation.

Methodologically, the research adopts a longitudinal narrative approach (Elliott, 2005; Saldaña, 2003) to capture the project's dynamic trajectory. Evidence includes ethnographic field observations (2015, 2017, 2019, 2025), analysis of municipal policy documents, and a systematic review of local and national media reports, supplemented with user feedback through online platforms. As a high-profile, politically driven public space project, Teras Cihempelas has sustained public attention through both news coverage and social media engagements. Selected cases are employed to situate the Skywalk within broader regional and global discourses on elevated walkways and urban revitalisation, informality management, and the aesthetics of urban design. Ultimately, while Teras Cihempelas has been severely impacted and compromised by the Covid-19 lockdowns, the study interrogates whether formalisation can truly reconcile the competing imperatives of economic survival, aesthetic order, and democratic access to the city's streets.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Urban Informality

Urban informality, as conceptualised by Roy (2005), is not merely a residual category outside formal planning but is produced and regulated by the state itself. Similarly, Bayat (2010) positions informality as an everyday form of urbanism—where survival, resistance, and innovation coexist. In this sense, informality represents a flexible mode of urban production and governance that mediates between exclusion and survival, often compensating for the limits of formal planning and economic systems. Bandung’s persistent efforts to formalise urban informality—whether of housing through the redevelopment of dense, low-income residential neighborhoods (*kampungs*) and economic activities through PKL reorganisation (*penataan*)—culminate in the Teras Cihempelas project, which was offered as a model to address the problems of street vending—reflecting the long, complex entanglement of regulation and informality.

Moreover, urban informality’s socio-spatial entanglement is consistent with the practice of public space as a site of contested claims rather than neutral terrain. Low and Smith (2006) emphasise how public spaces are arenas of social struggle, where inclusion and exclusion are actively produced. Recent scholarship situates these contestations within the infrastructural domain, where the design and regulation of urban systems determine who can access, inhabit, and benefit from the city (Graham & McFarlane, 2015; Lawhon et al., 2014). As later analysis shows, the Teras Cihempelas skywalk reproduces these dynamics: While it was conceived as an inclusionary project, its elevated relocation simultaneously generated new forms of exclusion and spatial marginalisation.

The formalisation and pedestrianisation objectives underpinning Teras Cihempelas resonate with Graham and Marvin’s (2001) concept of “splintering urbanism,” where infrastructural investments create new forms of spatial division even as they promise connectivity. Graham and Marvin argue that neoliberal modes of urban infrastructure tend to fragment cities into premium and residual spaces, privileging those who can access networked systems while marginalising others. Subsequent work in the Global South (Graham & McFarlane, 2015; Guma, 2022; Lawhon et al., 2014; Silver, 2014; Simone, 2018) has expanded this argument, showing that fragmentation is not only imposed but also negotiated through everyday infrastructural practices. In African and Asian cities, infrastructures often operate through improvisation, repair, and social cooperation—forms of what Simone (2018) calls “people as infrastructure.” These perspectives foreground the agency of urban residents in maintaining circulation and functionality despite institutional or material instability. Yet, they also reveal how design-led formalisation projects, when transplanted from Eurocentric logics of order, may disrupt these adaptive networks of informality that sustain urban life. This echoes the dilemmas faced by Teras Cihempelas—shared across rapidly developing Global South cities—where the formalisation of informality risks producing new exclusions.

Furthermore, the project’s aesthetic ambition involves revitalisation and gentrification that commodify diversity while displacing marginal groups. Smith (2002) elaborates on the revanchist urbanism that underpins such interventions, framing them as efforts to reclaim city spaces from informal users in the name of security and order. These critiques align with recent analyses of Southeast Asian “beautification” and “touristification” policies, where aesthetic modernisation becomes a moral and developmental project aimed at disciplining the informal (Datta & Shaban, 2017). In Bandung, this reflects a developmentalist ethos among government agencies and middle-class publics, which positions informality as a temporary stage en route to an aestheticised, “orderly” urban public life. The replacement of vendors’ informal surveillance with

technological monitoring further exemplifies how infrastructure modernisation can substitute social vibrancy with technocratic control, echoing wider concerns about the depoliticisation of public space.

While these theoretical frames illuminate the contradictions of infrastructural modernisation, Teras Cihempelas marks a distinctive place-based design-led formalisation of informality. Unlike many earlier (and ongoing) interventions that relied on eviction or relocation to peripheral sites, the government here invested in a purpose-built elevated structure to accommodate and *rebrand* the vendors within the city's tourism and pedestrian infrastructure. The construction of Teras Cihempelas can thus be interpreted as an attitudinal shift—from tolerating informality to selectively recognising it as a cultural and economic asset. Yet, this recognition is conditional and aestheticised: The design seeks to integrate the PKL into Bandung's aspirational image as a creative and tourism city, aligning with broader regional trends of “worlding urbanism” (Roy & Ong, 2011) in which local authorities selectively adapt global design idioms to signal modernity. The objective is to modernise the PKL sector to bridge with middle-class visual and consumption preferences—especially as Bandung is renowned as a local and regional tourist and culinary destination that attracted 8.4 million tourists in 2019, of which 250,000 are international (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Bandung, n.d.).

In summary, debates on urban informality highlight enduring tensions between regulation and everyday practices, between inclusionary rhetoric and exclusionary outcomes, and between the vitality of informality and the orderliness sought by formal planning. Scholars of Southern urbanism argue that these tensions are not aberrations but constitutive of how cities in the Global South are made and governed—through hybrid arrangements of formal and informal infrastructures that co-produce urban life (Graham & McFarlane, 2015; Lawhon et al., 2014; Simone, 2018). Yet, few studies examine what happens when states move beyond eradication to actively design and build new infrastructures to accommodate street vendors alongside other urban publics. This gap is where the present article intervenes.

Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is to critically examine how formalisation, design interventions, and infrastructural projects are used to mediate access, visibility, and everyday use of streets in rapidly urbanising contexts. In line with the theme of this thematic issue on Streets as Platforms of Public Life, the study further situates design-led infrastructural interventions as attempts to reconfigure congested commercial streets into new types of public platforms.

This aim is pursued through the following research questions:

1. How are design and infrastructural interventions used to formalise informality and mediate street-level order?
2. How do different stakeholders—including street vendors, visitors, and city officials—experience and respond to changed infrastructural conditions?
3. How do changes to street infrastructure influence the dynamics of public life, access, and visibility?
4. What broader opportunities and pitfalls do design-led approaches present for managing urban informality through public space interventions?

By addressing these questions, the article contributes not only to debates on public space and informality management, but also to the critical reassessment of design as an infrastructural mode of governance in the

Global South. Teras Cihempelas in Bandung serves as an illustrative case through which these broader dynamics are empirically explored.

To unpack these dynamics, namely the persistent tension between state-led formalisation policies and the everyday resilience of urban informality, this study adopts a longitudinal, mixed-method approach that traces how Teras Cihempelas evolved across design, governance, and everyday use between 2015 and 2025.

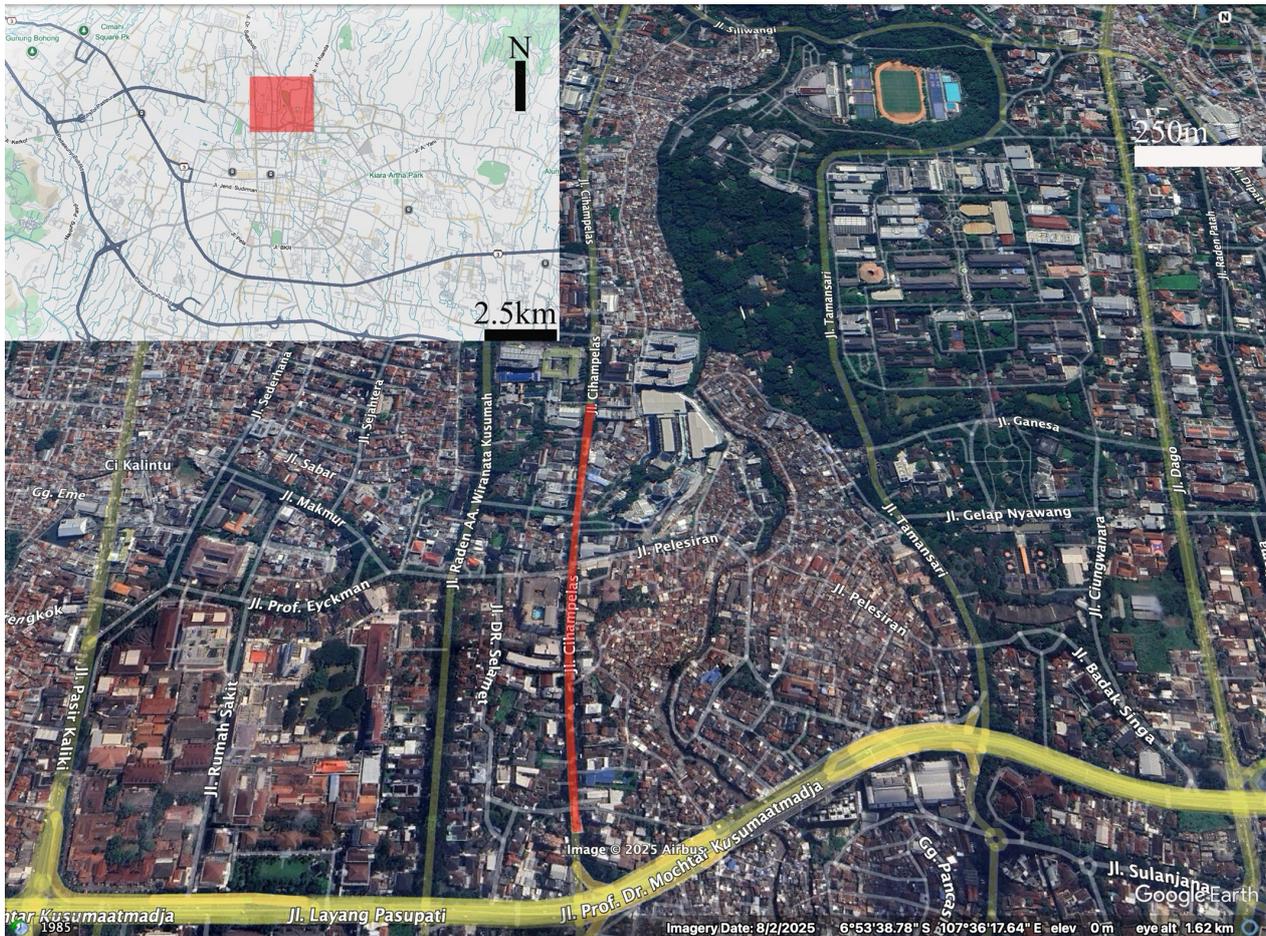
Three interlinked methods were employed:

1. Ethnographic field observations (2015, 2017, 2019, and 2025): Combination of participant observation, systematic photographic transects, informal dialogues with vendors and visitors, and a formal interview with city planning staff. Each round covered both weekday and weekend periods to capture temporal variations in use and activity. Limitations include the episodic nature of fieldwork and the researcher's positionality as both observer and participant, which may shape the interpretation of observed practices.
2. Documents and media analysis: Review of planning documents, city reports, and a longitudinal corpus of Indonesian news articles (*Kompas*, *Liputan6*, *Detik*) from 2015 to 2025. These materials provided official rationales, policy framings, and evolving narratives of success and failure but were limited by institutional and journalistic biases toward formal perspectives.
3. Online visitor reviews from Google Maps and TripAdvisor: Following precedents in urban and tourism studies (Girardin et al., 2008; Mkono & Tribe, 2017; Zukin et al., 2015), these digital traces were treated not as representative samples but as situated, performative commentaries that reveal how non-expert users articulate affective and spatial responses to design interventions. Reviews were screened for relevance, coded inductively, and cross-referenced against field and media data to identify recurring spatial and perceptual patterns.

Coding and analysis followed an inductive thematic approach (Saldaña, 2003), producing five cross-cutting themes: aestheticisation and spectacle, vendor and economic challenges, accessibility and usage concerns, political symbolism and policy instruments, and material decline and re-informalisation. These themes emerged through iterative triangulation across methods, ensuring that interpretive claims were grounded in multiple sources rather than single accounts. The synthesis privileges convergence and contradiction alike, recognising that contested narratives are themselves diagnostic of how formality and informality co-produce urban space.

### 3. Context: Bandung and the Politics of Design

Bandung's urban form exemplifies the *desakota* condition, a dense blending of urban and rural characteristics (McGee, 1991), where *kampung* settlements, informal economies, and planned infrastructure coexist in a dynamic but often conflicted landscape (Sintusingha et al., 2025). This hybrid morphology typifies many rapidly urbanising Asian contexts, where rural-based solidarities and informal economies persist within expanding metropolitan cores. These in-between conditions underpin dense social networks and forms of mutual support associated with rural villages, constituting what Simone (2018) calls "people as infrastructure." Such dynamics manifest as visible public life even within Bandung's highly commercialised tourism precincts, such as Jalan Cihempelas, which directly border huge *kampung* settlements that spill down the steep valleys of the Cikapundung River to the east (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Teras Cihempelas (highlighted red line of Phases 1 and 2) and surrounding urban context. The Skywalk is elevated over Jalan Cihempelas, a popular commercial hub in the foothills of northern Bandung (inset map; shaded rectangle marks enlarged area). Source: adapted from Google Earth aerial and base maps.

In contrast to this phenomenon, the city’s colonial legacy—rooted in the Dutch-era planning and its conception as a potential new colonial capital—privileged European-style boulevards and zoning. This left a persistent tension between modernist visions of order and vernacular urbanism. These colonial logics of segregation and visibility can be understood, following Roy (2005) and Graham and McFarlane (2015), as early forms of infrastructural formalisation that sought to discipline the informal city. Their legacies continue through postcolonial governance, shaping the enduring top-down and bottom-up tensions that define Bandung’s infrastructural politics of informality.

As Indonesia’s second largest city (by population in built-up area), Bandung has long struggled to meet the demands of a rapidly growing city, facing multitudes of recurring urban social, economic, and environmental challenges: pervasive informality in housing and livelihoods, chronic traffic congestion, lack of a mass-transit system, shortages of accessible public spaces, and frequent floodings. Within this context, under the leadership of Ridwan Kamil—an architect turned mayor (in office 2013–2018)—Bandung pursued an ambitious agenda of urban beautification, creative city branding, and design-led governance, positioning itself within global networks of “innovative cities.” Kamil initiated new urban spaces, proposed mass-transit solutions to alleviate congestion, and, importantly, introduced design-led interventions to incorporate the

PKL into the formal city fabric. Alongside Teras Cihempelas, these included the renewal and rebranding of traditional markets as part of a broader strategy to formalise and legitimise informality through aesthetics (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2018, p. 78).

The elevated walkway at Teras Cihempelas was explicitly designed to resolve conflicts between multiple street activities on Jalan Cihempelas: vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and the dense cluster of PKL stalls that had spilt onto the street (Figure 2). By raising vendors above ground level, the project sought to free the street for circulation while still preserving livelihoods. Infrastructurally, the walkway embodies a strategy of spatial segregation—typical of infrastructural formalisation—physically separating conflicting functions while simultaneously rebranding vending as part of Bandung’s urban spectacle.



**Figure 2.** Jalan Cihempelas in November 2015, before the imposition of the Skywalk, was a bustling and chaotic platform for public life, characterised by layered practices of informal—ranging from mobile to semi-permanent businesses—and formal commerce. Local academics branded the presence of the PKL as “slum-like” (“*kumuh*”; Tasya et al., 2022) while pedestrians suffered through the poor footpath condition, street vending, disorganised vehicle traffic and parking, and deluges that accompany tropical rains.

Kamil’s dual identity as a designer and politician facilitated projects like Teras Cihempelas, which sought not only infrastructural improvement but also a reimagination of Bandung’s urban identity (World Cities Summit, 2015). Yet, this design-led approach, while celebrated internationally, has also been criticised for privileging aesthetic and touristic values over the everyday needs of local populations. In this sense, Bandung’s infrastructure politics resonates with global debates on the aestheticisation of informality (Datta & Shaban, 2017; Silver, 2014).

In Bandung’s politicised urban context, infrastructure becomes a tool not merely of service delivery but of governance, visibility, and legitimacy. Projects like Teras Cihempelas thus operate at the intersection of symbolic modernisation, spatial regulation, and electoral strategy—securing visibility for city leaders while introducing new exclusions and vulnerabilities for vendors. As Graham and McFarlane (2015) suggest, infrastructure in such contexts is both material and representational—an assemblage through which governance and citizenship are negotiated. A persistent challenge has been policy and implementation continuity across political cycles. Since Kamil became governor of West Java in late 2018 (to 2023), his urban visions, including Teras Cihempelas, have been reinterpreted and unevenly implemented, particularly during the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, design, as both an aesthetic and regulatory practice, functions as an instrument of control—formalising without necessarily empowering.

Importantly, Bandung’s design speculation of an elevated pedestrian corridor (Figure 3) must be situated within a longer global history of elevated walkways as urban design strategies. Since the early 20th century,

cities have experimented with raised pedestrian networks to relieve congestion, protect from poor weather, improve safety, and modernise urban circulation. Examples include the Minneapolis Skyway System constructed from the 1960s (Corbett et al., 2009; WCCO – CBS Minnesota, 2019), Hong Kong’s Central–Mid-Levels Escalator, and Bangkok’s BTS Skywalk network (Cuthbert, 2006). Earlier proposals by architects such as Antonio Sant’Elia and Le Corbusier also imagined multi-level circulation as part of the modernist dream of efficiency and order (Banister, 2008). Scholars note that while these infrastructures promise efficiency and order, they frequently reproduce vertical segregation, privileging commercial and middle-class users while marginalising street-level informality and public life (Cuthbert, 2006; Loughran, 2014). The celebrated High Line in New York City further exemplifies this tendency, functioning primarily as a site of aesthetic spectacle and gentrification rather than everyday accessibility (Loughran, 2014). In Southeast Asia, Bangkok’s extensive skywalk network represents an exclusionary archetype (see video: *In The Moment*, 2025), explicitly displacing vendors from the street level in favour of elevated, privatised pedestrian-commercial networks.



**Figure 3.** The northern main entry to Teras Cihempelas in September 2017, seven months after opening to the public. One can observe street vendors’ opportunistic clustering at the base of the stairs. The space next to the entry served as a tourist bus parking node for visitors and shoppers to Jalan Cihempelas. One can witness the design-driven street imposition that attempts to reorganise and aestheticise the pre-existing messy public life.

Seen against this backdrop, Bandung’s Teras Cihempelas offers an alternative, though equally fraught, place-based design-led formalisation. Rather than pursuing Bangkok-style eradication (although this is practised on other main streets in the city), the project attempted to spatially integrate street vendors into elevated public infrastructure. It thus reflects shared regional rationales—public order, pedestrianisation, and aesthetic upgrading—but implements them through a design-led and ostensibly inclusive strategy. The outcome, however, underscores enduring tensions. Vendors at Teras Cihempelas, despite being offered permanent stalls, reported declining sales and economic fragility. Their relocation severed them from the dense social and commercial flows that sustained their livelihoods, revealing the socio-spatial contradictions of infrastructural formalisation (Thongnoi, 2024).

The design drew on regional and global inspirations, including local night market traditions and Singapore’s hawker centres, yet misread the adaptive, flexible, and low-cost ecology of Bandung’s street vending.

By adopting the elevated corridor typology—celebrated in New York’s High Line and institutionalised in Bangkok’s skywalks—the project prioritised aesthetic spectacle over embedded economic viability. Unlike Bangkok’s integration with transit hubs and malls, Bandung’s walkway remained relatively isolated, limiting footfall and undermining its intended inclusivity.

Ultimately, Teras Cihempelas demonstrates the paradox of infrastructural formalisation: Vendors are accommodated in form but displaced in function. While the project symbolises Bandung’s aspiration for world-class status, its lived outcomes reveal the fragility of formalisation when divorced from the everyday ecologies of informality. In line with the theoretical arguments of Section 2, the case highlights how infrastructures, as material and political assemblages, simultaneously mediate modernisation and reproduce inequality (Guma, 2022; Simone, 2018).

Crucially, informal urbanism remains a prevailing urban condition in Bandung’s public life and attempts at clearance or spatial reorganisation are unsustainable without parallel social and infrastructural commitments. In this sense, the experiences of Teras Cihempelas provide a critical precedent: They highlight both the possibilities and limits of design-led formalisation, and the ways in which political cycles, regulatory gaps, and street-level spatio-temporal practices reshape urban infrastructure over time (Bruzzese, 2019).

#### **4. Teras Cihempelas: Making Space for Formalising Informality and Informalising Formality 2015–2025**

Teras Cihempelas was conceived as a municipal place-based design-led formalisation—a “Skywalk” to elevate Bandung’s iconic jeans vendors from the congested sidewalks of Jalan Cihempelas (Figure 2) to a sleek, pedestrian-friendly platform 4.5 metres above the street (Figure 3). Opened in February 2017, the 450-metre walkway—later extended to 700 metres in 2023—provided shaded walkways, scenic views, and purpose-built kiosks for 192 registered vendors relocated from street level, aiming to improve both vendor livelihoods and pedestrian experiences. The hard infrastructure was complemented with coaching activity (*bimtek*), conducted by the Bandung City Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs (Dinas Koperasi UMKM Kota Bandung), “to arrange and coach PKL to become independent and creative, and subsequently transition them from non-formal vendors to formal vendors so that a safe, clean, and orderly Bandung City can be created” (Tasya et al., 2022, p. 374). The vendors’ completion of training was requisite to securing stalls on the Skywalk. The project was framed as an infrastructural innovation and a symbolic modernisation effort under Mayor Ridwan Kamil’s creative city agenda (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2018). Designed to reflect the area’s topography, the terrace structure stepped downwards from north to south, weaving around mature rain trees, whose canopies provide partial shade (Figures 4 and 5), and symbolically reasserting the image of Bandung as a green, walkable city.



**Figure 4.** The Skywalk combines zones for the relocated street vendors and public open spaces—a pedestrian promenade running the full north–south length with integrated areas for passive recreation. However, seven months after the Skywalk’s inauguration, it was already apparent that the required daily footfall to economically sustain the vendors had not materialised (photo from September 2017).



**Figure 5.** The southern end of Phase 1 offers landscaped passive recreation space with spectacular panoramic views of the iconic Pasupati Bridge and *kampungs* of the Cikapundung River valley (to the left of the image; photo from September 2017).

However, the relocation also revealed unforeseen challenges as vendors experienced a sharp decline in customer traffic once the initial novelty faded, as most pedestrians remained at street level. Accessibility issues, including the limited stairs and absence of functioning lift access, compounded the problem of vendor isolation from passing footfall and from the dense socio-spatial life that had previously sustained their trade (Figure 2). While subsequent efforts promoted the Skywalk as an urban tourist attraction—with curated events and programmed zones—momentum was further disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and inconsistent municipal revitalisation and maintenance regimes.

The design of Teras Cihempelas, with its clean lines, controlled vendor layouts, and social-media-ready views, mirrored global precedents such as New York’s High Line, Seoul’s Seoulo 7017, and Bangkok’s BTS Skywalk, each exemplifying the use of elevated corridors as aestheticised infrastructures of modernity. This created performative civic pride for the globalised visuals of the design (detikJabar, 2024; Priyadi, 2025). Yet, as with similar projects, the walkway’s isolation from the surrounding pedestrian network revealed the fragility of aesthetic-led regeneration in contexts where informality underpins everyday accessibility. Re-informalisation soon followed: Vendors extended beyond assigned kiosks, and installed informal signage,

while informal trade persisted at ground level (Figure 6), underscoring the cyclical relationship between formalisation and informality noted by Simone (2018) and Graham and McFarlane (2015).



**Figure 6.** Visitors can take photos with a cut-out of Mayor Kamil demonstrating how the project is intertwined with politics and political campaigning (left image). Ironically but—in hindsight—unsurprisingly, the iconic Teras Cihempelas and upgrade of footpaths have attracted vendors to the street below, where every space is prime commercial real estate (middle and right images; photos from September 2017).

The following subsections elaborate on the five themes derived from the triangulated methodology (Section 2) that collectively illustrate how design both mediates and destabilises the politics of informality in Bandung. This enables a systematic reconstruction of Teras Cihempelas as both a designed infrastructure and a lived socio-spatial process—where formalisation, adaptation, and decline coexist over time.

#### 4.1. Aestheticisation and Spectacle: Design as Urban Performance

Field observations in 2017 highlighted the project’s ambitious architectural intent and novelty: a steel structure pedestrian bridge lined with uniform vendor kiosks and planters (Figures 3, 4, and 5). Launched in February 2017 following the Bandung City Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2011 concerning the management and development of PKL, the Skywalk was conceived to alleviate street-level congestion, accommodate informal vendors, and offer recreational pedestrian space. It was the city’s first design-led attempt to spatially formalise informal vending with a purpose-built elevated platform. Media accounts at the time frequently benchmarked it to international precedents (Ramdhani, 2017), presenting it as a symbol of Bandung’s modernising aspiration and creative city branding.

Then-Mayor Ridwan Kamil explicitly positioned Teras Cihempelas within a citywide pedestrianisation strategy, envisioning a continuous skywalk network linking Cihempelas to Dago (see Figure 1 map), another major commercial precinct (Nugraha, 2018; Perdana & Assifa, 2019). A phased plan prioritised vending in Phase 1 and explicit pedestrian circulation in later stages (Nugraha, 2018). Phase 2, begun in 2018, was only completed in 2023. While Phase 1 initially thrived as a civic showcase, Phase 2’s delay and reduced funding exposed the dependency of such projects on leadership cycles.

Media coverage from 2017 to 2021 consistently framed the Skywalk as a “Bandung icon,” prioritising its spectacle value over long-term usability (Permadi & Ika, 2021). Local media such as *Detik* and *Jabar Ekspres* praised the project as “Instagrammable,” aligning with Mayor Kamil’s vision of aesthetic urbanism (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2018). Early TripAdvisor (n.d.) and Google Maps (n.d.) entries likewise applauded its design and views. From Google Maps (n.d.), U ART kids (in 2018) described the Skywalk as “Suitable for relieving fatigue from busy city traffic, suitable for bringing the family and the cheapest tour,” while Adi Hadiansyah (in 2020) quipped: “This is a wonderful, creative spot that adds to the allure of Bandung. It also offers pedestrians

more freedom, as they aren't crowded on the sidewalks of Cihampelas Street." FachryMyID (in 2024) recalled that "the first skywalk in Indonesia...is an open space with an inclusive concept...various venues for shows, meetings and children's play...is also friendly for people with disabilities...toilets and a prayer room." These early testimonials underscored how civic rhetoric and public reception converged around an imagery of modernity, accessibility, and creative identity, even as economic integration remained secondary.

Field and online data converge, showing that the Skywalk's spectacle value exceeded its everyday function. Several online reviewers described Teras Cihampelas as a photo spot or an Instagrammable place rather than a vibrant everyday space. Such perceptions affirm the primacy of consumption-oriented visibility in Bandung's design governance. Damels Channel, a frequent photo contributor to Google Reviews, wrote in 2019: "Great place for photos...many sellers weren't selling anymore" (Google Maps, n.d.). In 2020, Dedi Sopandi Sofwan confirmed: "The vendors have returned to the lower levels" (Google Maps, n.d.).

A reflective *Jabar Ekspres* article, marking the eighth anniversary of the Skywalk, highlighted enduring tensions between top-down design and grassroots needs (Priyadi, 2025). While celebrating its ambition and visual appeal, the article critiqued Teras Cihampelas as emblematic of a broader trend in Indonesian cities that prioritises aesthetics over usability and sustainability. To counter this perception, later revitalising strategies—such as the 2025 Sundanese Cultural Festival—sought to re-embed the Skywalk within local cultural narratives that, according to the deputy mayor, showcased "the community's creative wealth...where empowerment of local business actors and cultural preservation go hand in hand" (Priyadi, 2025). These successive framing efforts underscored the municipality's reliance on events to reactivate an otherwise underused structure. Despite attempts at diversification, the Skywalk's function remained episodic—thriving during festivals but dormant otherwise.

After experiencing cycles of decline and renewal, Perdana and Putri (2023) reported that street vendors became cautious and ambivalent to new revitalisation plans. A seller of Sundanese accessories hoped that Teras Cihampelas would not only be busy at the beginning, like before. Another trader desired "more activities so that people want to visit here" while another disclosed that "we only rely on holidays. Most of the buyers are tourists from outside the city" (Perdana & Putri, 2023). These accounts confirm dependence on episodic consumption rather than daily trade.

This tension between image and use reflects Simone's (2018) reading of urban vitality as sustained by informal improvisation rather than fixed form. By constraining such improvisation, Teras Cihampelas prioritised visibility over viability, reinforcing Roy's (2005) critique of planning that codifies but cannot sustain urban life's informal energies. The project's aesthetic framing privileges middle-class spectacle over inclusivity, and exemplifies Graham and Marvin's (2001) notion of "splintering urbanism," promising connection while producing new vertical separations between "displaced" vendors above and those that remained below. Together, media celebration, civic rhetoric, and user commentary demonstrate how design became both a performative instrument of modernity and a mechanism of spatial exclusion.

#### 4.2. Vendor and Economic Challenges

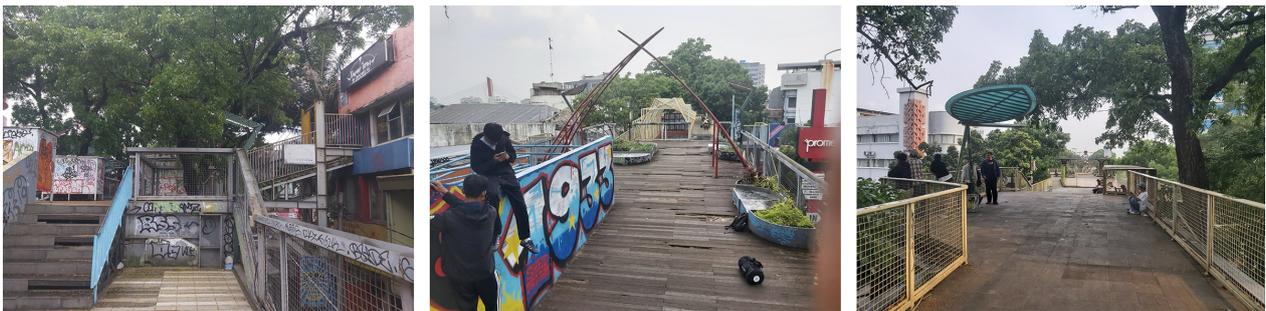
Crucially, the accounts in Section 4.1 point to a structural mismatch between the designed programme of creative, leisure consumption and the informal economy's need for routine, local footfall. Relocation and trade

policies under the Bandung City Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs offered limited rent incentives and vendor training in formal finance, marketing, and legality, but these were short-term and insufficient to sustain relocated traders (Perdana & Putri, 2023; Tasya et al., 2022). Without continuous programming or economic integration, the elevated market's viability faltered.

From the outset, interviews reported in *Kompas* and *Detik* revealed declining sales among relocated vendors, as elevation reduced visibility and footfall, while street-level traders outside the official enclosure continued to attract customers. Field observations in 2019 (see Figure 7) confirmed widespread kiosk vacancies and low activity levels, with further decline observed in 2025 (see Figure 8).



**Figure 7.** Evidence of vendor re-informalisation appears with the suspension of tarps over kiosks and sitting areas to shield from the elements (left image), compromising the global design image. A link to an upper-level restaurant (middle image) offered a clue on how to reactivate the Skywalk and attract more people—vertical intensification and replication of the layers of commerce that characterise the street level. The (then) abandoned Phase 2 southwards extension to Jalan Pasupati contributed to a sense of decline (right image). Kamil's cut-out has been coincidentally removed from the photo frame (compared to Figure 6, left image), reflecting political changes (photos from September 2019).



**Figure 8.** Apart from the food vending terraces, in 2025 the Skywalk's physical conditions have broadly deteriorated since the previous visit in 2019. The restaurant in Figure 7's middle image has closed, and all non-food vendors have abandoned their graffiti-covered stalls (left image). Yet, the graffiti-ridden space signifies appropriation by another neglected group—youth, who are prominent on the Skywalk (middle [Phases 1 and 2 interface] and right images [southern end of Phase 2]). In response and to convey a sense of safety, the Skywalk is now policed—for 24-hours—by security personnel. The terrace's dilapidated and deserted condition produced new, unintended affordances for youth's alternative appropriation (Bruzzeze, 2019)—including skateboarding on the long, smooth surfaces (right image; photos from September 2025).

Online reviews confirmed accounts of kiosks' closure and fewer customers due to the convenience of shopping below. The Skywalk was described as empty or devoid of activity, and with few vendors operating, made the

shopping experience less appealing. From Google Maps (n.d.), Dedi Sopandi Sofwan (in 2020) observed: “At the beginning it was very busy, now it looks quiet and the vendors have gone back downstairs.” More recently, Yayat Ruhiyat (in 2024) commented: “Some street vendors...complained that because their merchandise is quiet, they end up wanting to sell their goods downstairs.” Febryana Febryan (in 2024) added: “Nice place but quiet, even though it’s close to busy places like Ciwalk etc. There needs to be promotions and more interesting food tenants.” Conversely, during curated events the Skywalk becomes lively, substantiating the episodic nature of foot traffic. Mahdi Syahbana A (in 2024) noted: “When I came here there was an event...it was busy and lots of people were selling.”

The Covid-19 pandemic amplified these difficulties. Visitor traffic collapsed, and only 12 of 192 traders—mainly culinary—remained (Ramadhan, 2021). Media headlines described the Skywalk as “empty and lifeless” with a vendor labelling the period as a “disaster” (Permadi & Ika, 2021). Local vendors and citizens interviewed across various news reports voiced frustration, expressing that the project, while innovative in theory, failed to deliver long-term benefits due to inconsistent oversight and lack of inclusive planning. By 2024, one of the eight traders still operating on the Skywalk—all selling food and drinks—lamented: “Previously, I could earn IDR 4–5 million per day (~ USD 245–300; May 2025 exchange rate). During the day my sales were almost gone, now it’s at most IDR 300,000 (~ USD 18), it’s quiet” (detikJabar, 2024).

From late 2021, the municipality responded with reactivation and revitalisation plans, vandalised infrastructure repair, vendor re-engagement, and coordination with PKL leaders to control street-level trade (Ramadhan, 2021). To project a “cool” image, the municipality collaborated with Rotor, a youth creative group. However, progress was compromised by technical issues such as drainage and structural wear (Susanti, 2022). Another revitalisation cycle followed the completion of Phase 2 in October 2023, which introduced themed zones—a fashion show space, RC circuit, historical gallery, and outdoor classrooms—to attract a wider range of publics, diversify visitor experiences, and rebrand the Skywalk as a creative hub (Perdana & Putri, 2023). Acting Mayor Ema Sumarna framed the initiative as an effort “to change the behaviour of consumers who come to Cihampelas to be interested in visiting the street vendors up here” (Perdana & Putri, 2023). These overlapping, but fragmented—and at times conflicting—efforts illustrate the challenge of coordinating diverse objectives: sustaining the Skywalk as public space while also supporting PKL livelihoods.

Taken together, these dynamics reveal how promises of empowerment were undermined by economic exclusion, declining visibility, and pandemic disruption. Vendors adapted by relocating or informally returning to the street, exemplifying Bayat’s (2010) “quiet encroachment.” The Teras Cihempelas experience thus reinforces Roy’s (2005) argument that the state produces and manages informality even while claiming to regulate and empower it.

### 4.3. Accessibility and Usage Concerns

Despite being promoted as a pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, the walkway was poorly connected to the surrounding street network. Field notes recorded multiple entry points accessible only by steep stairs and a non-functioning lift, the lack of shade structures, and a general lack of maintenance. In the 2025 site visit, it was observed that the ramps linking the terraces from Phase 2 had collapsed. On the other hand, heeding vendors’ request, permanent roof structures were erected over the two food vendor terraces—enabling all-weather utility but not access (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Along the full length of the Skywalk, there's a single (inoperative) lift access (left image). Phase 2 is wracked with substandard construction that, for instance, renders ramps between terraces unusable (middle image). Heeding food vendors' demands, the city government added a permanent roof over the two food vending terraces (right image; photos from September 2025).

Unsurprisingly, online reviewers frequently raised accessibility and usage concerns that make it hard for young families, the elderly, and disabled visitors to comfortably use the facility. Others criticised it for being underwhelming or poorly maintained, noting broken infrastructure and a lack of vibrancy. In 2019, Setyaadi Yonggiawan mentioned: "There are various products here, culinary delights are also fun if it's not raining, it's a shame the lift doesn't work" (Google Maps, n.d.; and, indeed, heavy rain disrupted the users of the Skywalk during the 2025 observation). In 2019, Fernandes Mandasella noted the inaccessibility for those coming by car: "Vehicle parking arrangements need to be improved, and environmental cleanliness issues" (Google Maps, n.d.). These physical access problems undermine the intended inclusivity of the space.

Apart from the construction of the roof structures to improve usability, the municipality addressed accessibility and safety concerns by implementing 24-hours security patrol of the Skywalk, managed by Satpol PP (the vendor enforcement unit). Furthermore, current Mayor Farhan outlined several infrastructural solutions, including routine maintenance, enhancing night lighting, installing escalators for better street connection, and negotiating parking access with private businesses ("Nasib pedagang Teras Cihampelas," 2025; Pramananda, 2025).

Conversely, the evolved conditions enhance accessibility for and afford appropriations by youth users of both genders—whether alone, as couples, or in groups—who were prominent during the 2025 visit relative to other demographic groups (Figure 9). These observations underscore the notion of the "right to the city," where the Skywalk's vertical separation translated aesthetic spectacle into functional exclusion that favoured youth users, revealing how infrastructural form can subtly delimit everyday citizenship in public space.

#### 4.4. Political Symbolism and Policy Instruments

Teras Cihampelas is deeply embedded in Bandung's political iconography. The project served as an urban landmark legacy of then-Mayor Ridwan Kamil, who showcased Teras Cihampelas as proof of design-oriented governance. President Joko Widodo's 2017 visit further legitimised it as a national model for micro, small, and medium enterprises that enhanced Bandung's city brand (Kuwado, 2017). Teras Cihampelas thus functioned as a visual and policy instrument through which leadership sought to link aesthetic modernisation with small-enterprise empowerment.

Online responses (Google Maps, n.d.) captured this symbolic attachment. Marlina Seusilawati (in 2020) expressed gratitude: “Thank you Mr Ridwan Kamil”; whereas Pasir Laut (in 2024), a frequent reviewer, was unflattering: “The RK project actually made Jl. Cihampelas a slum.” Wildan Akbar (late 2024) drew parallels between the uncertainty around Kamil’s political career and Teras Cihampelas.

During the first phase of the project, the Bandung government introduced vendor relocation and support measures—including training programmes for marketing and hygiene, and facilitation of kiosks for 192 traders (“Nasib pedagang Teras Cihampelas,” 2025; Tasya et al., 2022). However, media and vendor reports indicate that these supports were not sustained: Vendors later reported sharp income declines, and many returned to sidewalk trade after infrastructure maintenance and promotional budgets were reduced (“Nasib Teras Cihampelas Bandung,” 2024; Romadhan, 2025). This suggests that relocation was treated more as an administrative repositioning of vendors rather than a sustained economic investment. In their evaluation of the Skywalk, Tasya et al. (2022, p. 378) observed that “changing the mindset and perspective of these street vendors is indeed very difficult, with their low level of education being one contributing factor,” compared to “Small and Medium Enterprises (UKM), who typically produce their own goods, are already independent, and are creative”—openly reflecting formal institutional and socio-economic bias.

As leadership cycles changed, so did interpretations of the Skywalk’s meaning. The current West Java governor, critical of Ridwan Kamil’s legacy project, proposed the extreme option of demolition (Alhamidi, 2025; Romadhan, 2025). By contrast, the current Mayor Muhammad Farhan is committed to renewal plans and has alleviated security concerns with 24-hour policing (“Teras Cihampelas bakal direvitalisasi,” 2025). These were affirmed in the 2025 interview with the Bandung city planners, who mentioned that the Skywalk will be extended—although there are no clear timelines. These divergent stances illustrate how urban infrastructure becomes a medium of political differentiation—both an inherited burden and an opportunity for rebranding.

Recent controversies over the project’s fate illustrate how physical infrastructures become political terrains for contesting leadership legacies (Alhamidi, 2025). While early narratives framed the Skywalk as an economic empowerment corridor, later discourse re-inscribed it as a liability demanding fiscal discipline and security control. Such cycles of appropriation align with Smith’s (2002) “revanchist urbanism,” where urban form is mobilised to perform civic order and leadership visibility rather than inclusivity. The Skywalk thus served simultaneously as infrastructural trial, symbolic legacy, and administrative policy tool—its design inseparable from the political economy of its governance.

#### **4.5. Material Decline and Re-Informalisations**

By the 2019 site visit, signs of decline were evident. Maintenance lapses, vandalism, graffiti, and vacant kiosks coincided with the suspension of Phase 2 construction due to budgetary issues (Perdana & Assifa, 2019), weakening momentum and creating a sense of neglect (Figure 7). An administrator of the Teras Cihampelas Management Board (Badan Pengelola Teras Cihampelas) and PKL representative linked the Skywalk’s quiet condition to the presence of new street vendors under the structure, implicating the city government’s lax enforcement. He opined: “If there are still street vendors below, it’s better for us to go down” (Perdana & Ika, 2020; Figure 6, middle and right images).

The relocation and formalisation programme for the elevated walkway lacked ongoing fiscal and operational backing. A 2024 evaluation by Universitas Padjadjaran found that the programme failed on criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, and equity—including inadequate maintenance and reinforcement of the vendor support system (Tasya et al., 2022). Municipal statements in 2025 acknowledged that the project required major funding just to repair damage from vandalism and structure wear (Anshory, 2025; Primananda, 2025).

DetikJabar (2024) lamented:

The charm of Teras Cihampelas, which was once one of the icons of Bandung City, is now fading. The condition...is now truly concerning. In addition to being deserted by traders, various graffiti and the smell of urine emanate from this place.

User reviews from 2024–2025 (Google Maps, n.d.) echoed this deterioration: Complaints of rubbish, graffiti, and broken lights proliferated. Faruq Erfianto “regret[s] going all the way to Bandung to come here...It’s dirty and covered in mold like a horror film.” Such imagery marked a reversal of the project’s original aesthetic promise. Field observations in 2025 confirmed re-occupation of surrounding streets by informal vendors, while the elevated space was quiet apart from new youth “informalising” (Figure 8).

The recurring graffiti, skateboarding, and loitering transformed the Skywalk into an unregulated youth space. This “afterlife” of the infrastructure, though unintended, re-activated it through informal cultural practices rather than trade. Bagus Ari Prihandiyo Utomo (May 2024) lamented:

It’s a shame....Skywalk...used to be an icon of Bandung...a lot of rubbish...which reduces the beauty and comfort of this place. Damaged facilities and vandalism. Hopefully the management can immediately take action to restore the cleanliness and aesthetics of this charming skywalk. (Google, n.d.)

In June 2024, Rumii, a frequent reviewer and photo contributor, penned a long list of grievances, including “the walls and all surfaces are covered in graffiti, vandalism, gang names and sex” (Google, n.d.), signalling the re-informalisation of space. These accounts suggest that informality is not merely economic but social—a response to infrastructural neglect that reclaims abandoned visibility for marginal groups.

This cycle illustrates Roy’s (2005) claim that informality is not eradicated but re-produced through state interventions. Rather than signalling failure, re-informalisation reveals a pragmatic adaptation to shifting regulatory and spatial conditions—as vendors informally reclaim more viable ground-level spaces and youths appropriate the elevated terrain. The attempt to modernise and formalise thus generated renewed and new informalities, demonstrating that spatial order is always provisional.

Taken together, the five themes trace Teras Cihampelas’s evolution from a celebrated design icon to a contested urban platform. They clarify that the state’s capacity to manage informality rests less on design than on continuous economic and administrative engagement. By triangulating ethnographic observation, media discourse, and online visitor commentary, the analysis demonstrates how top-down efforts to formalise informality are continually re-interpreted through everyday practice. Applying Graham and Marvin’s, and Roy’s frameworks clarifies that formalisation is not a linear transition but an ongoing

negotiation between visibility, viability, and power—where the design intervention simultaneously spotlights and reproduces the social contradictions of the urban public realm.

## 5. Reflections on Design, Participation, and Governance

To tackle the issues stemming from Bandung's PKL occupying city streets—including traffic congestion, conflicts with pedestrian flow, and a negative urban image—Mayor Kamil conceptualised a design-driven vision. He envisaged that urban design and aestheticisation could function not only as infrastructure but as a civic spectacle that rebranded the street as a platform for modern, pedestrianised public life. However, while the implemented design demonstrated a clear focus on urban aesthetics, image management, and tourism-led redevelopment, it simultaneously highlighted the dangers of neglecting the dynamics of urban informality, the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and the importance of long-term maintenance and regulation.

Despite the construction of new infrastructure, the design and implementation process was top-down—taking a carrot and stick approach to co-opting vendors, who were included as beneficiaries rather than co-designers. Decisions prioritised tourism and image enhancement over everyday vendor and visitor needs, such as shade, operational lifts, carparks, and sanitation. In effect, some stakeholder needs and agendas (middle-class consumers, tourists, municipal authorities) were privileged, while others (street vendors, daily local users) were suppressed. This lack of inclusive planning (Irawati et al., 2025; “Kata pengamat soal pembangunan Teras Cihempelas,” 2024) compounded systemic barriers, notably accessibility challenges, vendor marginalisation, and a notable resurgence of informal activities around the Skywalk. Moreover, observations in September 2025 reveal the Skywalk's appropriation by youth as a platform for their public life. Based on these narratives and user feedback, various solutions have been proffered. The aspiration for convenient carparks, inspired by the nearby Ciwalk Mall, exposes systemic obstacles such as the exorbitant land values, high-capital investments, and the inability of the city to offer viable public transportation alternatives.

Equally, weak maintenance and enforcement capacity undermined the project's long-term functionality. As municipal attention shifted to new flagship projects, Teras Cihempelas suffered from disrepair, underutilised facilities, and inconsistent enforcement of vendor placement rules. These governance gaps amplified the contradictions between design ambition and lived experience.

Ultimately, Teras Cihempelas exemplifies the gap between ambitious urban design and the realities of governance, community needs, and informal resilience. As Graham and Marvin (2001) and Simone (2018) suggest, such projects in the Global South must go beyond aesthetics, engaging in participatory, adaptive governance that recognises the hybridity of formal and informal practices. The case shows both the potentials and contradictions of reconfiguring streets as public platforms: While the Skywalk promised integration and visibility, it generated new exclusions and vulnerabilities. Whether the Skywalk evolves into a sustainable civic asset or continues its cycle of neglect, even leading to its possible demolition, remains an open question—one that resonates across many rapidly transforming and aspirational cities.

## 6. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Teras Cihempelas offers a compelling, if cautionary, case study of the complexities inherent in formalising urban informality. While ambitious in design and progressive in intent, the project underscores the challenges of balancing economic inclusion, aesthetic order, and democratic access to public space—not to mention electoral contests on the issue. Key findings highlight the five interrelated empirical themes: (a) the aestheticisation of informality through design-driven spectacle that elevated visibility over everyday function; (b) shifting patterns of pedestrian circulation, uneven consumption, and pandemic disruption that compromised the Skywalk's economic base; (c) significant accessibility and usage constraints—stemming from poor vertical connections, dysfunctional infrastructure, limited weather protection, and uneven maintenance—that undermined intended inclusivity and shaped who could meaningfully use the Skywalk; (d) political associations and leadership cycles that produced fluctuating priorities in maintenance, enforcement, and programme continuity; and (e) material decline, re-informalisation, and the adaptive practices adopted by different publics when formal infrastructure fail to sustain routine trade and public life.

Future research could further explore and draw lessons from the longitudinal narrative and outcomes of formalisation efforts, vendor agency in negotiating formalised environments, re- and new informalisations, and comparative studies across other Global South cities undergoing similar transformations. Future studies of streets as platforms of public life in rapidly urbanising Global South contexts could explore these issues by comparing cases with more sustained regimes of maintenance and regulatory enforcement. More importantly, they could investigate how participatory planning approaches—where vendors, visitors, and residents are substantively involved from conception to operation—reshape outcomes. Ultimately, the right to the city must encompass not only the right to appropriate space as part of public life but also the right to sustain livelihoods within it—a principle that remains elusive in current models of urban regeneration.

Governance of public space, as Low and Smith (2006) emphasise, is deeply political, and interventions like Teras Cihempelas must grapple with the competing claims of different urban publics. On the other hand, it is observed that the PKL are acknowledged as urban stakeholders and have been supported by both government and non-government agencies. Their status is best understood as semi-formal, characterised by a negotiated degree of rights and urban access. Consequently, the central issue shifts from the PKL's absolute exclusion to the quality of inclusion—specifically, the terms and conditions under which vendors are integrated into public life. Although largely unsuccessful so far in the quest to balance street vending and public recreation, the Teras Cihempelas case demonstrates that alternative possibilities for public street life exist if local governance adopts an inclusive mindset towards the PKL. Crucially, there is promise when city administrators, planners, and other publics culturally perceive and acknowledge the PKL as a local urban vernacular (albeit in need of modernisation).

In this respect, participatory planning approaches hold promise (Irawati et al., 2025; Yasmeen & Nirathron, 2014). By involving vendors and local publics meaningfully, future projects could produce infrastructures that are more flexible, better connected, and responsive to informal patterns of use. Such engagement could also help build collective responsibility for ongoing maintenance and enforcement, mitigating the cycle of neglect. Finer-scale design engagements and interventions—that accommodate informal adaptations and enhance connectivity with surrounding urban flows—can improve inclusivity without sacrificing the desired urban order and public life. Design has an important role to play in experimenting with platforms for

public life that facilitate and balance the PKL's and pedestrians' access to the street, and Teras Cihempelas can be viewed as one such experimentation. However, design must be employed with a robust understanding and in the service of informal vendors' and other publics' patterns of use, requirements, and needs. The Skywalk's design and subsequent revitalisations could be far more participatory, and have been less effective when utilised to engineer prescribed outcomes.

Finally, the case illustrates both the opportunities and pitfalls of positioning streets as platforms of public life in the Global South. Streets can be reimagined as civic stages that integrate commerce, mobility, and sociability, but only if design is allied to robust governance and genuine participation. A consistent and continuous policy, implementation, and management regime is fundamental. Longitudinal lessons from Teras Cihempelas can be incorporated into future iterations and expansions of the pedestrian skywalk. The Skywalk should not be judged by its current predicaments, since it is a relatively permanent and novel urban infrastructure and public open space. With political and stakeholders' will, there will be creative/innovative appropriations of the space. It is hoped that future revitalisations will heed public criticisms aptly echoed in a reader's post on a *Kompas.com* article that "maintaining is indeed more difficult than creating" (Susanti, 2022).

### Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the academic editors and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback, which significantly improved the manuscript's structure, clarity, and depth. The research benefited from discussions with colleagues at the Institut Teknologi Bandung: Endang Triningsih, Widjaja Martokusumo, and Roro Damar. Any remaining errors are solely the responsibility of the author.

### Funding

Publication of this article in open access was made possible through the institutional membership agreement between The University of Melbourne and Cogitatio Press.

### Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

### LLMs Disclosure

ChatGPT and Google Gemini were utilised to assist in the language editing of the article and identify supplementary literature during the manuscript revision process.

### References

- Alhamidi, R. (2025, July 8). Suara pasrah pedagang hadapi wacana pembongkaran Teras Cihampelas. *Detik*. <https://www.detik.com/jabar/berita/d-7999515/suara-pasrah-pedagang-hadapi-wacana-pembongkaran-teras-cihampelas>
- Anshory, W. W. (2025, July 4). Tolak ide pembongkaran Dedi Mulyadi, pedagang Teras Cihampelas minta penataan bukan penggusuran. *Kompas.com*. <https://www.kompas.com/jawa-barat/read/2025/07/04/053000288/tolak-ide-pembongkaran-dedi-mulyadi-pedagang-teras-cihampelas-minta>
- Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Bandung. (n.d.). *Estimated of tourist visits to Bandung City based on entrance Bandung City (people), 2021*. <https://bandungkota.bps.go.id/en/statistics-table/2/Njlylzl=/estimated-of-tourist-visits-to-bandung-city-based-on-entrance-bandung-city.html>
- Banister, D. (2008). The sustainable mobility paradigm. *Transport Policy*, 15(2), 73–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2007.10.005>

- Bayat, A. (2010). *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East*. Stanford University Press.
- Bruzzese, A. (2019). The spatial features and temporality of urban alternatives. In J. Fisker, L. Chiappini, L. Pugalis, & A. Bruzzese (Eds.), *Enabling urban alternatives* (pp. 201–222). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1531-2\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1531-2_10)
- Centre for Liveable Cities. (2018). *Urban solutions: Issue 12—Inclusive urban regeneration*. <https://isomer-user-content.by.gov.sg/50/f5212876-9c2c-4f7d-9155-ae2aaa8bea5e/urban-solutions-12-full.pdf>
- Corbett, M. J., Xie, F., & Levinson, D. (2009). Evolution of the second-story city: The Minneapolis Skyway System. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 36(4), 711–724. <https://doi.org/10.1068/b34066>
- Cuthbert, A. R. (2006). *The form of cities: Political economy and urban design*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Datta, A., & Shaban, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Mega-urbanization in the Global South: Fast cities and new urban utopias of the postcolonial state*. Routledge.
- detikJabar, T. (2024, October 23). Kisah sepi di tengah kenangan Teras Cihampelas. *Detik*. <https://www.detik.com/jabar/wisata/d-7601448/kisah-sepi-di-tengah-kenangan-teras-cihampelas>
- Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage.
- Girardin, F., Blat, J., Calabrese, F., Dal Fiore, F., & Ratti, C. (2008). Digital footprinting: Uncovering tourists with user-generated content. *IEEE Pervasive Computing*, 7(4), 36–43.
- Google Maps. (n.d.). *Teras Cihampelas (Skywalk Cihampelas)*. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ykzBns2qtpudpZ558>
- Graham, S., & Marvin, S. (2001). *Splintering urbanism: Networked infrastructures, technological mobilities and the urban condition*. Routledge.
- Graham, S., & McFarlane, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Infrastructural lives: Urban infrastructure in context*. Routledge.
- Guma, P. K. (2022). The temporal incompleteness of infrastructure and the urban. *Journal of Urban Technology*, 29(1), 59–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10630732.2021.2004068>
- In The Moment. (2025, May 27). *Skywalking above Bangkok's Sukhumvit like it's 2050* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gER6Xdvvqw>
- Irawati, D., Ashari, D., Sandirano, Y., Mareta, R., Evangelistha, S., Firmansyah, A., & Rizal, S. (2025). Adopting the 5P framework to enhance revitalization policy: Lessons from Cihampelas Terrace as a public space. *Jurnal Manajemen Pelayanan Publik*, 9(1), 168–192. <https://jurnal.unpad.ac.id/jmpp/article/view/59508>
- Kata pengamat soal pembangunan Teras Cihampelas yang belum juga rampung. (2024, April 25). *Liputan6*. <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/5783125/kata-pengamat-soal-pembangunan-teras-cihampelas-yang-belum-juga-rampung>
- Kuwado, F. J. (2017, April 12). 20 menit “Blusukan” di Teras Cihampelas, Jokowi puji Ridwan Kamil. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/04/12/14572921/20.menit.blusukan.di.teras.cihampelas.jokowi.puji.ridwan.kamil>
- Lawhon, M., Ernstson, H., & Silver, J. (2014). Provincializing urban political ecology: Towards a situated UPE through African urbanism. *Antipode*, 46(2), 497–516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12051>
- Loughran, K. (2014). Parks for profit: The high line, growth machines, and the uneven development of urban public spaces. *City & Community*, 13(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12050>
- Low, S., & Smith, N. (Eds.). (2006). *The politics of public space*. Routledge.
- McGee, T. G. (1991). The emergence of desakota regions in Asia: Expanding a hypothesis. In N. Ginsburg, B. Koppel, & T. G. McGee (Eds.), *The extended metropolis: Settlement transition in Asia* (pp. 3–25). University of Hawaii Press.
- Mkono, M., & Tribe, J. (2017). Beyond reviewing: Uncovering the multiple roles of tourism social media users. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(3), 287–298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516636236>

- Nasib pedagang Teras Cihampelas: Dulu ramai pembeli, kini menanti pembongkaran. (2025, July 4). *Kumparan*. <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/nasib-pedagang-teras-cihampelas-dulu-ramai-pembeli-kini-menanti-pembongkaran-25OUS8o49vA>
- Nasib Teras Cihampelas Bandung: Dulu dibanggakan, kini memalukan. (2024, December 25). *Pikiran Rakyat*. <https://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/bandung-raya/pr-018907828/nasib-teras-cihampelas-bandung-dulu-dibanggakan-kini-memalukan>
- Nugraha, A. (2018, August 22). Jejak Ridwan Kamil di Teras Cihampelas bertambah panjang. *Liputan6*. <https://www.liputan6.com/regional/read/3624732/jejak-ridwan-kamil-di-teras-cihampelas-bertambah-panjang>
- Perdana, P. P., & Assifa, F. (2019, July 26). Skywalk Cihampelas mulai kumuh dan pembangunan tahap 2 mangkrak. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2019/07/26/17263261/skywalk-cihampelas-mulai-kumuh-dan-pembangunan-tahap-2-mangkrak>
- Perdana, P. P., & Ika, A. (2020, June 11). Nasib Teras Cihampelas Bandung, makin hancur ditinggal pedagang selama PSBB. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/06/11/06300091/nasib-teras-cihampelas-bandung-makin-hancur-ditinggal-pedagang-selama-psbb>
- Perdana, P. P., & Putri, G. S. (2023, September 19). Skywalk tahap 2 diresmikan, harapan baru PKL Teras Cihampelas. *Kompas.com*. <https://bandung.kompas.com/read/2023/09/19/223832378/skywalk-tahap-2-diresmikan-harapan-baru-pkl-teras-cihampelas>
- Permadi, A., & Ika, A. (2021, August 7). Kondisi Teras Cihampelas, proyek Rp 48 M, sepi di tengah pandemi, nasib pedagangnya pun getir. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2021/08/07/080000778/kondisi-teras-cihampelas-proyek-rp-48-m-sepi-di-tengah-pandemi-nasib>
- Primananda, R. J. (2025, April 9). Pemkot Bandung tata ulang Teras Cihampelas untuk dongkrak kunjungan. *Antara News*. <https://www.antarane.ws.com/berita/4760669/pemkot-bandung-tata-ulang-teras-cihampelas-untuk-dongkrak-kunjungan>
- Priyadi, H. (2025, May 4). Delapan tahun Teras Cihampelas, antara tradisi dan inovasi Kota Bandung. *Jabar Ekspres*. <https://jabarekspres.com/berita/2025/05/04/delapan-tahun-teras-cihampelas-antara-tradisi-dan-inovasi-kota-bandung>
- Ramadhan, D. I. (2021, October 21). Teras Cihampelas mati suri, Pemkot Bandung: Kita reaktivasi. *Detik*. <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-barat/d-5777623/teras-cihampelas-mati-suri-pemkot-bandung-kita-reaktivasi>
- Ramdhani, D. (2017, February 8). Jalan-jalan di Teras Cihampelas, ikon baru Kota Bandung. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2017/02/08/07000021/jalan-jalan.di.teras.cihampelas.ikon.baru.kota.bandung>
- Romadhan, G. F. (2025, July 15). Pengunjung menurun bikin cuan seret, pedagang Teras Cihampelas tagih janji. *Ayobandung.id*. <https://www.ayobandung.id/beranda/01524/15072025/dulu-dijanji-ramai-kini-dibiarkan-sepi-nasib-pedagang-teras-cihampelas-yang-makin-tak-jelas>
- Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158.
- Roy, A., & Ong, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Worlding cities: Asian experiments and the art of being global*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Saldaña, J. (2003). *Longitudinal qualitative research: Analyzing change through time*. AltaMira Press.
- Silver, J. (2014). Incremental infrastructures: Material improvisation and social collaboration across post-colonial Accra. *Urban Geography*, 35(6), 788–804. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2014.933605>
- Simone, A. (2018). *Improvised lives: Rhythms of endurance in an urban south*. Polity Press.
- Sintusingha, S., Rosmarin, T., & Connor, J. (2025). Accessing the city via informal urbanism: Kampung,

- multiculturalism, and kebabs. In L. P. Rajendran, N. Odeleye, & A. Can (Eds.), *Resilient cities in the Global South: Rethinking informality in urban planning and design* (pp. 31–47). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003336709-4>
- Smith, N. (2002). New globalism, new urbanism: Gentrification as global urban strategy. *Antipode*, 34(3), 427–450.
- Susanti, R. (2022, April 1). Teras Cihampelas, wajahmu kini... *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2022/04/01/204821978/teras-cihampelas-wajahmu-kini>
- Tasya, N. K., Nurasa, H., & Isnawaty, N. W. (2022). Evaluasi program relokasi penataan dan pembinaan pedagang kaki lima di Teras Cihampelas Kota Bandung. *JANE: Jurnal Administrasi Publik*, 13(2), 372–383. <https://jurnal.unpad.ac.id/jane/article/viewFile/38232/17067>
- Teras Cihampelas bakal direvitalisasi, Pemkot Bandung siap hidupkan lagi ekonomi pedagang. (2025, June 26). *Ulasbandung*. <https://www.ulasbandung.com/bewara/1441375834/teras-cihampelas-bakal-direvitalisasi-pemkot-bandung-siap-hidupkan-lagi-ekonomi-pedagang>
- Thongnoi, J. (2024, February 22). Bangkok faces uphill task of removing street food stalls from sidewalks. *BenarNews*. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/thai/street-food-02222024085116.html>
- TripAdvisor. (n.d.). *Teras Cihampelas*. [https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction\\_Review-g297704-d12196148-Reviews-Teras\\_Cihampelas-Bandung\\_West\\_Java\\_Java.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g297704-d12196148-Reviews-Teras_Cihampelas-Bandung_West_Java_Java.html)
- WCCO – CBS Minnesota. (2019, February 27). *Good question: How did Minneapolis' skyway system start?* [Video]. YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8BwZxOZD-Y>
- World Cities Summit. (2015, January 15). *Interview: His Excellency Ridwan Kamil on Bandung Urban Mobility Project* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkH\\_FUYB-c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkH_FUYB-c)
- Yasmeen, G., & Nirathron, N. (2014). *Vending in public space: The case of Bangkok* (WIEGO Policy Brief [Urban Policies] No. 16). Women in Informal Employment—Globalizing and Organizing. <https://www.wiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Yasmeen-Vending-Public-Space-Bangkok-WIEGO-PB16.pdf>
- Zukin, S., Lindeman, S., & Hurson, L. (2015). The omnivore's neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17(3), 459–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540515611203>

## About the Author



**Sidh Sintusingha** is a senior lecturer in landscape architecture at the Melbourne School of Design of the University of Melbourne. He researches on temporal, socio-cultural, environmental, and scalar issues relating to urbanisation and retrofits towards urban sustainability in Global South cities.