



# LET'S INVADE THE SIDEWALKS?<sup>1</sup>

Firmansyah, ST  
Balai Diklat Tambang Bawah Tanah  
fmn.syah21@gmail.com

Esther Deyanara. ST, MSc  
Urban Planner  
estherdeyanara@gmail.com

## Using The Sidewalks

When someone asks you about the sidewalks, the first sentence that will be stated is a space for walking. Isn't it? However, if we go to the next questions, that statement becomes more complex coming from various experiences. Sidewalks have existed for thousands years and they are a dedicated space for pedestrians to walk within the roadway. While sidewalks are designed primarily to allow safe pedestrian movement separated from moving traffic, they have always been about much more. They are not only a place that allows pedestrians to negotiate their way to be safe from moving vehicles, they can also be places of personal interaction and engagement, social spaces to see and be seen places of economic trade, and platforms for collective speech and gathering.

Observing the relationship between the sidewalk and its users shows how the invasion of sidewalk occurred in many cities in various land uses. In residential areas, inhabitants can modify the practice of using sidewalks during their leisure time. For example, inhabitants do playing, relaxing, gathering, or chatting in the sidewalk in front of their house. Regarding commercial activities, the use of sidewalks is important not only for the movement of pedestrians to reach them but also sidewalks support the commercial activity itself, becoming the space in which it actually takes place. Often, the activities along the sidewalks in the commercial areas become tourist's attractions as they not only provide typical goods but also give various experience for pedestrians and users of the sidewalks. Another case is represented by the sidewalks in central business districts. Mostly in the cities of Asia, the sidewalk is also used as a temporary shop responding to the needs of people who work there.

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<sup>1</sup> Us = the pedestrians



Children play on the sidewalks of Brooklyn (citylab.com)



Street vendors on the sidewalks of Yogyakarta (ramanews.com)

Going back to different experiences in the sidewalks, it is undeniable that the expansion in using the sidewalks has been taking place in the cities around the world and it gave both positive and negative effects to the city. For example, the presence of street vendors in the sidewalks that can impact the local value economically (increasing exchanges and incomes) and esthetically (chaotic sidewalk, folkloristic, pleasant sidewalks).

The regulations at state and local level<sup>2</sup> in Indonesia, defined pedestrian as a person who is walking on the street room. These regulations also describe the facilities for pedestrian (such as the sidewalk, the crossing bridge, and street furniture), placed the pedestrian in priority in the transportation system, and confirmed that the sidewalks as the right of the pedestrians. So now the main question is when the pedestrians (re)invade the sidewalks?

### Walking On The Sidewalks

Walking is known as the oldest form of human transportation. It is undeniable that walking can give more positive changes to us. In the phase of human growth, a baby who starts to walk is a sign of "maturity". In daily life, walking is also a start for people to know their neighbors. One step going outside the house door is the beginning to see others. Then continue to greet them, have a small chat, and sometime get an inspiration unconsciously.

A new study by Stanford researchers find that walking indeed boosts creative inspiration. "Many people anecdotally claim they do their best thinking when walking. We finally may be taking a step, or two, toward discovering why," Oppezzo and



Schwartz wrote in the Journal of *Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*. Benchmarking Report (2012) from the alliance of biking and walking also notes that where bicycling and walking levels are higher, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes levels are lower.

Aside from the weather condition, the design of the sidewalks, or the presence of street vendors, believe it or not, those sidewalks give the experience that we only can get by walking. The pedestrians in Barcelona or Vienna fell comfortable and safe as the adequate room to walk and the presence of trees and light on the sidewalks, meanwhile in Bangkok and Yogyakarta give a unique ambience and experience since the social activities between the street vendors/local people and the pedestrians are created easily on the sidewalks.

The encouragements coming from many sources to motivate us to act as a pedestrian on the sidewalks may bore us, still, if we (the pedestrians) don't use our right to the sidewalks, other users will do. We are not required to have a license to walk. Thus, When do we (the pedestrians) invade the sidewalks? Let's do it now.

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2 Indonesia Law No.22 (2009), Ministry of Public Work Regulation No.3 (2014), Ministerial Decree of Transportation No.65 (1993), Decree of Highway Board No.76 (1999)