

Laweyan cultural heritage in Surakarta: Conceptual revitalization guidelines

Naniek Widayati Priyomarsono^{*ID}, Samsu Hendra Siwi^{ID}, Rudy Surya



Department of Architecture, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Article history:</i> Received January 28, 2026 Received in revised form Feb. 26, 2026 Accepted April 07, 2026 Available online June 01, 2026 <i>Keywords:</i> Cultural heritage Guidelines Laweyan Revitalization *Corresponding author: Naniek Widayati Priyomarsono Department of Architecture, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta, Indonesia Email: naniekw@ft.untar.ac.id ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8963-993X	The Laweyan district in Surakarta is formally designated as a cultural heritage precinct in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Tourism No. PM.03/PW.007/MKP/2010. Its distinctiveness is articulated through its historical significance, morphological characteristics, and socio-cultural dimensions. Between 1521 and 1546, Laweyan functioned as a perdikan territory, an autonomous enclave exempt from royal taxation, under the leadership of Kyai Ageng Henies. Within this historical framework, the Laweyan community developed a reputation for economic self-sufficiency, particularly as batik entrepreneurs, thereby reinforcing its contemporary identity as a Batik Village. The central issue addressed in this study is the absence of a comprehensive framework to guide the revitalization of the area, a condition that raises serious concerns regarding its sustainable development as a site of considerable historical value. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to formulate a set of revitalization guidelines for heritage areas that can function as a normative reference, ensuring that future interventions remain consistent with the regulatory provisions established in Law No. 11 of 2010. Methodologically, this study adopts a grounded theory approach. The collected data are systematically categorized and coded, followed by interpretative analysis grounded in the theoretical constructs of preservation, conservation, and revitalization. The findings of this research are intended to provide a structured guideline for the revitalization of the Laweyan district, thereby supporting its continued protection and development as a designated cultural heritage site.

Introduction

Laweyan, situated in Surakarta, is prominently acknowledged as the “Batik Village” (N. Widayati 2004); its significance, however, extends well beyond its conventional identification as a textile manufacturing hub. The district embodies an intricate urban morphology that is profoundly interlaced with the historical evolution of Surakarta. Recognized as a provincial cultural heritage zone, Laweyan functions as a “living museum,” accommodating

a rich assemblage of cultural artifacts, including historic religious edifices, heritage landmarks, and opulent residences established by batik entrepreneurs (Nur Awalia, Nurhayati, and Kaswanto 2017). Architecturally, these buildings frequently exhibit a distinctive synthesis of Indisch architectural vocabulary and indigenous Javanese spatial configurations (Renggani and Jhosha 2024). Laweyan is formally acknowledged in the Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Tourism No. PM. 03/PW.007/MKP/2010, which designates the “Laweyan Area as a Provincial

Cultural Heritage” (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia 2010).

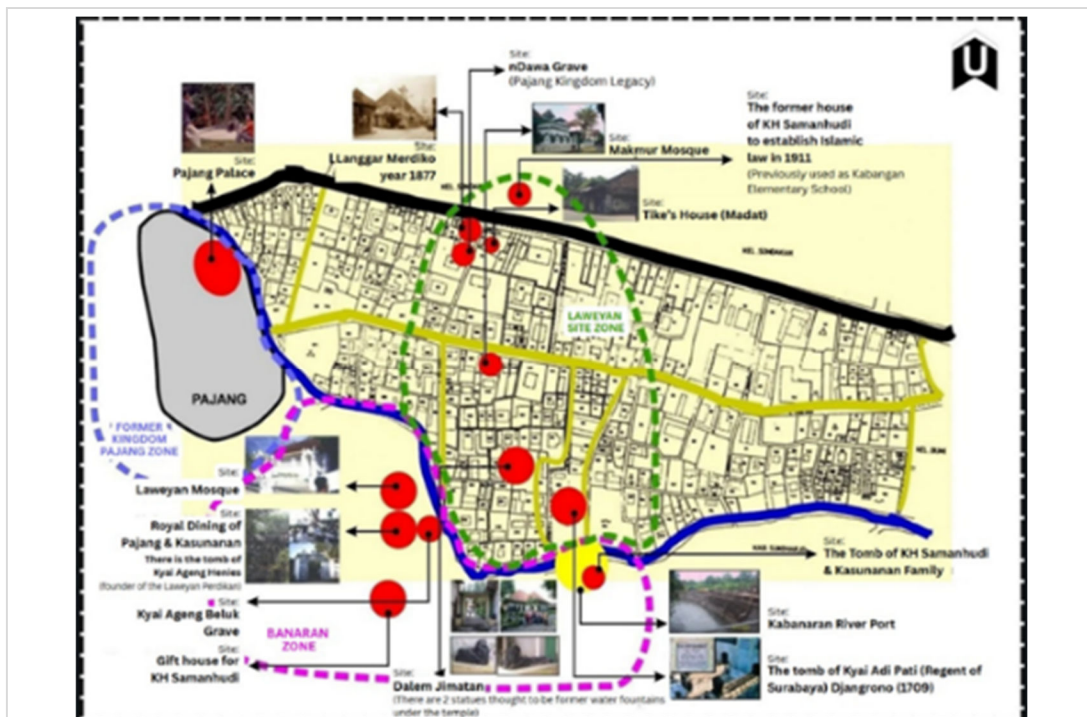


Figure 1. Location of historical sites in Laweyan
Source: (N. Widayati 2004)

The historical genesis of Laweyan can be traced to its designation as perdikan land bestowed upon Kyai Ageng Henies during the शासन of Sultan Trenggono (1521–1546) (N. Widayati and Surya 2021). The role of Kyai Ageng Henies was pivotal in reshaping both the social structure and the religious framework of the community. From a geographical perspective, Laweyan constitutes a clearly defined enclave, demarcated by the Kabanaran River to the south historically functioning as a significant commercial artery and Dr. Radjiman Street to the north. A prominent morphological characteristic of this settlement is the existence of substantial enclosing walls surrounding residential compounds, reaching heights of approximately

6.5 meters. These imposing barriers generate a network of narrow, enclosed alleys that (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024).

Historic urban districts are inevitably subjected to the pressures of modernization and globalization (Sunaryo 2013; UNESCO 2017). The central issue addressed in this research concerns the transformation of the Laweyan corridor, where plots along both sides of the neighborhood streets have been extensively repurposed for commercial use. In many instances, boundary walls have been altered into retail spaces, resulting in a building setback coefficient of GSB=0. This transformation represents a substantial spatial and functional shift, occurring rapidly and without systematic planning.



Figure 2. The change from a 6.5-meter-high wall as a boundary between the plot and the road (as a permanent element) has changed into a batik shop with $GSB=0$

Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)

To respond to these dynamics and to ensure that development proceeds without compromising the area's heritage value, comprehensive regulatory guidelines are essential to direct spatial interventions in accordance with established frameworks (UNESCO 2017; Sunaryo 2013; Sutcliffe, Gault, and Shin 2005). This necessity underpins the formulation of planning guidelines for historic districts, aimed at providing strategic direction to stakeholders while upholding the principles of conservation, preservation, and adaptive revitalization (Page, Gilbert, and Dolan 1998).

Revitalization entails integrated interventions encompassing physical, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions across macro, meso, and micro scales (Cosgrove 1984; Hutter and Rizzo 1997).

The revitalization of historic environments necessitates several key strategies (Doratli 2005): (1) the reorganization of land use and built form to enhance functional efficiency; (2) the rehabilitation and upgrading of existing structures to improve their socio-economic viability; (3) the enhancement of environmental quality to increase attractiveness and reinforce a distinctive local identity; and (4) the implementation of regulatory mechanisms governing socio-economic activities within the area. A fundamental principle in managing historic urban landscapes lies in acknowledging that such environments are not

static relics but are continuously shaped by evolving economic, cultural, and social forces.

Architectural structures and urban settings associated with historical events must be conserved, as they establish a symbolic continuity between past narratives and contemporary life, thereby informing future trajectories (Zhang et al. 2024).

The primary objective of this research is to formulate a set of revitalization guidelines for historic areas, which will serve as a foundational framework for the regeneration of Laweyan. The study employs a grounded theory approach (Strauss 1990; Creswell and Creswell 2018), complemented by focus group discussions involving multiple stakeholders. The collected data were systematically classified, coded, and analyzed through the lens of preservation, conservation, and revitalization theories. The anticipated outcome is a comprehensive guideline framework for the revitalization of Laweyan as a cultural heritage district.

The novelty of this study resides in the development of a context-specific guideline framework for the revitalization of Laweyan, offering strategic direction for its spatial development while ensuring sustainability and accommodating contemporary urban demands.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative methodological framework utilizing grounded theory (Strauss 1990; Creswell and Creswell 2018). This approach was deliberately selected to ensure that the resulting conceptual framework emerges directly from empirical field data and reflects the lived realities of the Laweyan community. In addition to extensive on-site observations, data collection was conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving community leaders, property owners, and relevant stakeholders within Laweyan (Shabina, Amit, and Eram 2024). The collected data were subsequently categorized and subjected to a systematic coding process. Analytical interpretation was undertaken using theoretical perspectives on adaptive reuse (Triratma et al. 2023) and historical landscape heritage (Doratti 2005). The outcome of this process is the formulation of conceptual guidelines for the revitalization of the Laweyan area.

Results and discussion

The historical importance of Laweyan is reflected in a prolonged and multifaceted chronology spanning several significant periods in Indonesian history, including the Demak Sultanate, the Pajang era, the colonial period, the independence movement, and the contemporary era (Priyomarsono et al. 2025). This historical identity is not solely documented but is tangibly manifested in the diverse cultural heritage elements preserved within the area (UNESCO 2017). One notable example is the Laweyan Mosque, situated within the same compound as the tomb of Kyai Ageng Henies, the founder of the Laweyan perdikan. The burial site of Pakubuwono II was also once located here prior to its relocation to Imogiri. Additionally, Langgar Merdeka, established in 1877, serves as a significant religious landmark within the area.



Figure 3. The old mosque in Laweyan, it is Laweyan Mosque
Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)



Figure 4. Langgar Merdiko, which was founded in 1877
Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)

The toponym “Laweyan” originates from the term “Lawe,” meaning woven thread (Harsanto and Permana 2021), reflecting the area’s longstanding identity as a prominent center of batik production. The period of prosperity for Laweyan’s batik merchants began during the Pajang era and reached its peak in the 1980s. During this era of economic flourishing, architectural expression became a medium for demonstrating wealth and status. Merchants

constructed grand residences characterized by Indisch architectural styles integrated with traditional Javanese spatial principles. A defining feature of these dwellings is the presence of substantial perimeter walls, reaching heights of up to 6.5 meters. These walls served both as protective enclosures ensuring privacy and as symbolic representations of the owners’ socio-economic standing.



Figure 5. Front view of the Laweyan batik merchant's house, with a non-Javanese room pattern
Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)

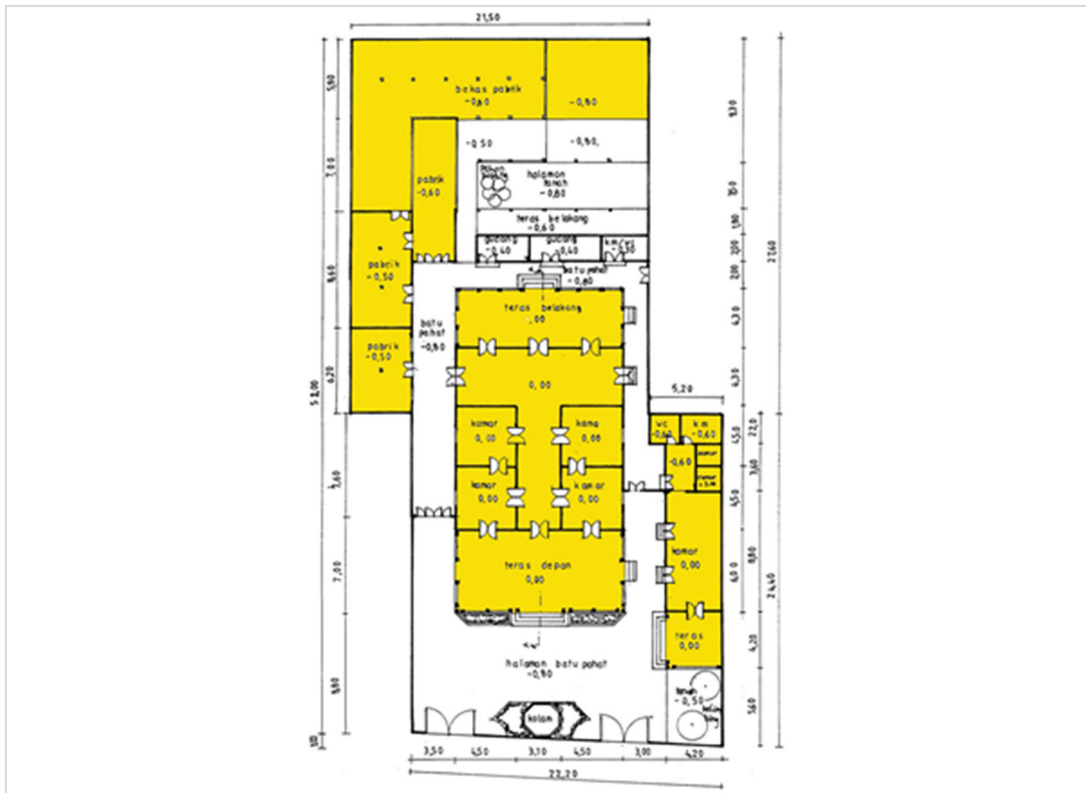


Figure 6. Floor plan of a batik merchant's house with a modern room pattern (not a Javanese room pattern)
Source: (N. Widayati 2004)



Figure 7. Dalem Djimatan is an example of a batik merchant's house with Javanese spatial patterns
Source: (N. Widayati 2004)

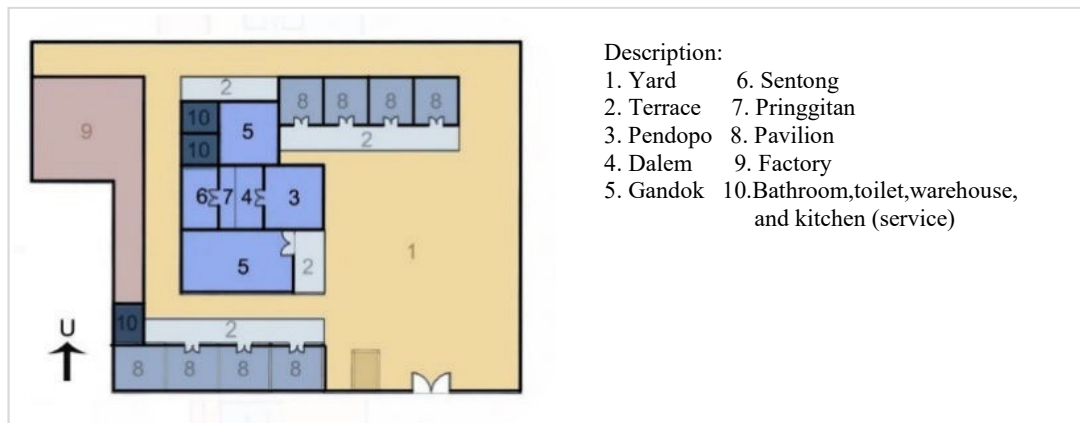


Figure 8. Djimatan floor plan, an example of a batik merchant's house with Javanese spatial patterns Jawa
Source: (N. Widayati 2004)

Regional profile and socio-demographic attributes

Laweyan Village constitutes a 21-hectare heritage district in Surakarta, situated within a lowland area characterized by an average temperature of approximately 26°C. The area is bordered by Sondakan Village to the north, Pajang Village to the west, Bumi Village to the east, and the Banaran River to the south. Based on data from 2024, the population comprises 2,105 residents across 677 households, with a gender distribution of 1,036 males and 1,069 females. The majority of inhabitants are Muslim, totaling 1,961 individuals (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024). From an economic standpoint, the community participates in both formal employment and self-employment sectors, predominantly as batik traders. The distinctive character of Laweyan is embodied in the integration of residential and commercial functions, which sustains the cultural landscape as a productive and living heritage environment (Lubis and Zamharir 2022).

Social and cultural conditions of society

Historically, the batik production system in Laweyan cultivated a distinctive gender-based division of labor that differentiated it from other Javanese communities: Laweyan society demonstrated a form of gender egalitarianism in which women played a dominant role in economic activities (Massey 2001). Within this socio-economic structure, the batik enterprise was typically administered by a female proprietor known as *mbokmase*, while the husband, recognized as the head of the household, held the title *masnganten* (N. Widayati and Surya 2021)

. Although male involvement in commercial operations was relatively limited, men retained authoritative control over domestic decision-making processes, thereby sustaining a balance between economic agency and traditional familial hierarchies (Connell 2009).

Changes and development of the Laweyan Area

At present, the Laweyan community is experiencing a profound phase of transformation, largely driven by generational transition as ownership of properties shifts from the older generation to their descendants (Cahyono, Farkhan, and Nugroho 2020). This process has generated three dominant patterns of spatial and functional change: the sale of properties to external parties, the leasing of buildings due to the diversification of heirs' professional engagements, and long-term rental arrangements extending up to 30 years. As a consequence, a considerable number of buildings have undergone functional conversion into homestays, non-batik commercial establishments, alternative production facilities, and even star-rated hospitality infrastructures (Priyomarsono et al. 2025). The ongoing transformation and development of Laweyan are closely associated with the application of adaptive reuse strategies within the built environment. Alterations have occurred not only in building functions but also in façade articulation and vertical expansion. Such transformations necessitate a critical negotiation between processes of change, urban development, and heritage preservation.

The implications of these functional transformations extend beyond the built fabric to include environmental and infrastructural aspects

such as accessibility, parking provision, transportation systems, and the overall spatial quality of the area. Moreover, the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded within residential spaces have undergone significant degradation, particularly within inner zones (*ndalem*), which were traditionally regarded as sacred domains. Spaces historically utilized for ceremonial purposes, including weddings, funerary rites, and family gatherings have increasingly been repurposed for utilitarian functions such as storage or commercial display areas for batik products. Additionally, shifts in lifestyle practices, such as the transition from *lesehan* (floor-seated activities) to the use of chairs have contributed to the erosion of the cultural and spiritual significance of these spaces for subsequent generations (N. Widayati 2004).

It is essential to recognize that adaptive reuse does not necessitate unrestricted transformation. Certain intrinsic attributes of cultural heritage structures (particularly those associated with sacred spatial values) must remain immutable. Alterations affecting such elements risk eroding their cultural significance. Consequently, the inner core space (*ndalem*) should be preserved without modification due to its sacred status, whereas other spatial components may accommodate functional adaptation. In this

regard, adaptive reuse is considered acceptable within public and semi-public domains but remains inappropriate for private and sacred spaces such as *ndalem* and *sentong*. Overall, the interplay between historical continuity and contemporary demands continues to challenge the preservation of symbolic authenticity within this heritage landscape.

Spatially, Laweyan is organized into eleven delineated blocks (Blocks A–K), each currently undergoing varying degrees of transformation in terms of function, façade treatment, and physical condition. The shift is particularly evident in structures formerly serving as residences and batik production facilities, which have been reconfigured into commercial entities such as retail shops, cafés, restaurants, galleries, and mixed-use shophouses. Along Jalan Radjiman, substantial modernization is apparent, including the construction of contemporary multi-story buildings such as the ten-story Solia Zigna Hotel. Despite these developments, traditional morphological elements, including neighborhood pathways and boundary walls approximately 6.5 meters in height, remain, although in some cases they are inadequately maintained. The existing street hierarchy continues to be categorized into primary roads, neighborhood streets, and narrow alleyways.

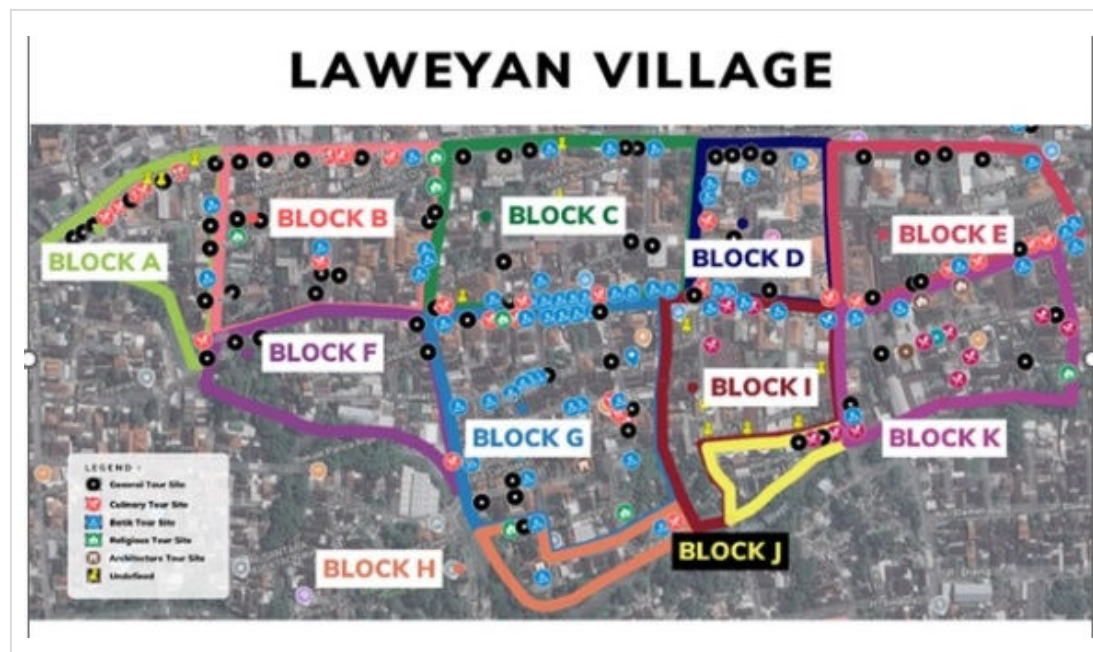


Figure 9. Block division coding in research implementation, coding of building functions in Laweyan village
Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)



Figure 10. The road patterns in Laweyan are classified into three, namely main roads, neighborhood roads, small roads, or alleys

Source: (N. P. Widayati et al. 2024)



Figure 11. Solia Zigna Hotel at Jl. Dr. Radjiman with 10 floors (a precedent)

Laweyan area conservation concept

Preservation extends beyond the safeguarding of tangible artifacts to encompass ecological systems, architectural structures, spatial configurations, and human activities that sustain local cultural practices and traditions. Within this framework, revitalization emerges as a strategic approach to reactivating areas that have experienced physical deterioration or functional obsolescence (Pillai 2020).

Revitalization within heritage contexts aims to enhance both economic and social value through four principal strategies: the reorganization of land use, the rehabilitation of existing building stock, the improvement of environmental quality, and the intensification of asset utilization (Small 2010). The implementation process involves five critical stages, including physical intervention, economic regeneration, and social restructuring,

alongside improvements to building conditions, green infrastructure, connectivity networks, and public open spaces (Harsanto and Permana 2021).

It is crucial to acknowledge that urban environments are inherently dynamic systems; thus, the preservation of heritage cities necessitates collaborative engagement among governmental bodies, private developers, and local entrepreneurs. According to the Organization of World Heritage Cities (UNESCO 2017), five strategic principles underpin effective heritage management: maintaining the vitality of urban life, ensuring active public participation in safeguarding heritage quality, integrating conservation within broader urban development agendas, adopting constructive approaches to conflict resolution, and reinforcing traditional cultural practices to sustain resilience.

In response to the rapid dissemination of information and accelerating urban change, the formulation of a Heritage City Action Plan becomes imperative. This framework encompasses eight primary instruments: institutional frameworks, documentation systems, educational and promotional initiatives, economic strategies, risk management mechanisms, cultural community development, spatial planning, and urban design (Page, Gilbert, and Dolan 1998). These instruments facilitate the sustainable development and utilization of urban heritage assets, whether expressed through culinary traditions, artistic practices, or broader cultural landscapes (*saujana*).

Furthermore, UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach conceptualizes cultural heritage as a form of social capital and a catalyst for innovation. Through this integrative paradigm, the Laweyan area is envisioned as a dynamic urban space that not only preserves its historical legacy but also actively contributes to contemporary urban development without compromising its intrinsic identity (Yuliani and Setyaningsih 2023). By harmonizing tangible and intangible dimensions, this conservation effort represents a long-term investment in the sustainability of local civilization within an increasingly globalized context.

Formulation of directions for revitalization of the Laweyan Area

The conservation framework for the Laweyan area must be grounded in the preservation principles articulated in Law Number 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage, along with its derivative regulatory instruments (Kementerian Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Indonesia 2010). Prior to the implementation of revitalization initiatives, it is essential to develop comprehensive Revitalization Guidelines as a foundational step (Papageorgiou 1971). Laweyan's distinctiveness lies in its status as a living monument situated within an urban core, endowed with substantial tourism potential.

Determining priority zones for revitalization requires detailed micro-level observation employing grounded theory to examine physiographic relationships between spatial functions and community activities. Preservation efforts must account for multiple dimensions, including historical context, architectural typologies, road networks, public open spaces, demographic characteristics, and the geographical

and geometric configuration of the area (SARJIYANTO et al. 2023). The future direction emphasizes the creation of new vitality while preserving historical identity, maintaining Laweyan's character as a living monument (Saha et al. 2017). An appropriate revitalization strategy involves maintaining the continuity of existing elements, such as everyday life patterns, traditional cultural symbols, and distinctive local attributes, while enhancing the quality of cultural expression. This strategy also includes regulating building density and height through both physical and non-physical measures. Improvements in accessibility are achieved through widening circulation paths, upgrading paving materials and lighting systems, and introducing urban street furniture such as pedestrian seating. Additional interventions include the preservation of characteristic vegetation, restoration of deteriorated boundary walls, and the installation of coherent signage systems.

From a non-physical perspective, emphasis is placed on strengthening institutional frameworks that support capacity building in management, design, financing, cooperative savings systems, as well as marketing and promotional activities.

Conclusions

This study has generated a set of guidelines applicable to the Laweyan area, particularly focusing on residential structures integrated with commercial functions and their associated street environments. This focus reflects the primary residential character of the Laweyan district. The following provisions are established: (1) The building setback line (GSB) is defined as 6 meters from the boundary wall for structures along the main road (Dr. Radjiman), and 3 meters for buildings along neighborhood streets; (2) The core structure of the building must remain unaltered; however, the *lojen* (pavilion) may be adapted for commercial use; (3) Spaces within the core structure may accommodate business activities, but the *ndalem* (inner chamber) must remain unchanged due to its sacred significance within the Laweyan community; (4) The boundary wall separating the plot from the street, approximately 6.5 meters in height, must be preserved as a defining characteristic of the Laweyan environment; (5) The *regol* (entrance gateway) must remain intact, as it constitutes a

key architectural feature of merchant houses in Laweyan; (6) The original coloration of timber elements and wall surfaces must be maintained; (7) Replacement building materials should replicate the visual and material characteristics, such as color, texture, and specificity, of original materials where these are no longer available; (8) Functional adaptation is permitted, allowing conversion from residential use to gallery, café, craft workshop, indoor or outdoor attraction, or homestay; however, the overarching spatial identity of the building must be retained; (9) As a designated tourism area, adequate parking infrastructure is required. A proposed parking zone is identified at the Kabangan Lama market site, which lies within a different administrative district, thereby necessitating integrated planning at the broader urban scale beyond Laweyan itself; (10) The vertical expansion of buildings for hotel functions represents a precedent that has already occurred; therefore, the establishment of comprehensive regional guidelines is urgently required to effectively regulate future development and transformation within the area.

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Author(s) contribution

Naniek Widayati Priyomarsono contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Samsu Hendra Siwi contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

Rudy Surya contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.