# Coffee Culture and Urban Settings: Locating Third Place in the Digital Era. The Cases of About Life Coffee Brewers in Tokyo and Kopi Tuku in Jakarta

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**ABSTRACT**

By moving online to digital platforms, the idea of third place is blurred and, therefore, going through significant redefinition as the physical proximity and spaces for social interactions become less relevant. Historically, coffee shops have been a notable third place in many cultures and societies. Their meanings and roles evolve according to social norms, the need for flexible space, and the urban quality in their respective context. This study aims to illustrate such transformation by particularly looking into the impact of digital technologies on the emergence and existence of local coffee shops in two Asian cities, Tokyo and Jakarta. In less-organized urban settings such as Jakarta, digital platforms generate massive online food and beverage delivery services, including coffee. Meanwhile, in a well-maintained urban quality such as Tokyo, a certain degree of digital adoption helps promote coffee culture to a wider group of consumers and communities. Besides the influence of physical urban settings, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) adoption has also brought critical changes to coffee culture and coffee shop's presence as a third place. From our initial study, we conclude that, by leveraging ICTs and managing their physical arrangement, coffee shops can increase their place-making potential and maintain their third-placeness in the digital era.

*Keywords: Third place, coffee culture, urban settings, digital technologies, Jakarta, Tokyo.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Oldenburg's description of 'third place' was introduced in the early 80s [1], the social use and the meaning of coffeehouses as the primary third place in many cultures have been evolving according to its dynamic social settings. Oldenburg's third place was conceptualized in response to the increasing need for social interaction and a sense of community in America's fragmented post-war suburban society. Such a setting necessitated the localization of informal public spaces such as coffee shops, hair salons, bars, et cetera., as well as highlighted the importance of places for hangout outside of the home (first) and the workplace (second) as a 'neutral ground' [2]. Unlike other public spheres, third place accommodates multiple spheres and is formed by the dynamic appropriation of people's participation. It provides the capacity to celebrate people's communion

regardless of their social qualifications and reveals the dynamics of engaging informal public life experience. It is also a place where people relieve their stress, loneliness, and predicted associations from their daily routine at home and work. Oldenburg emphasizes the importance of conversations within the social interactions as one of the characteristics of third place. Spatially, third place also offers flexibility for irregular activities to take place. Third places allow different types of publics, create experiences and opportunities to build relations, and sustain its regular visitors' unique existence. As referred to Simmel, presenting pure sociability means providing democratic experiences where people can be wholly themselves [2]. Besides providing daily productivity boosters for the working class and emotional support for the lonely [3], coffeehouses also play a role in society's democratic processes. Historically, coffeehouses in the European

context, from British coffee-house, Parisian sidewalk cafe to Viennese *kaffeehaus*, had been important public spheres for political debate and information distribution during the revolution era. They then found their way again in the post-WWII era as coffee bars emerged out of the longing for a sociable environment during repressive dictatorship [2,4].

Although deeply rooted in the Euro-American culture, coffee culture becomes a global phenomenon of the 21st century, especially with the expansion of the transnational coffee chain model that sets a mainstream standard for coffee consumption and the subsequent integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This combination forms a new model of self-indulgent coffeehouses with a semi-self-service system, aesthetic interior, various seating options, music, and WIFI connections. It extends the use of coffeehouse as a multifunctional space for productive means that speaks to a certain clientele. In the coffee shops today, the public occupy the space for coffee and other reasons such as meeting people for business, personal work with their laptops, or just to be visible in an urban space. Innovations from global brands, such as Starbucks, have effectively made coffee a part of people's daily habits and made coffee shops increasingly ubiquitous in our urban fabrics.

Furthermore, Oldenburg's conception of the traditional third place has also been challenged by the rapid invasion of ICTs, particularly its social contributions as a place for conversation and interaction. Some authors reconsider an equivalent of third place in the virtual world [5] to describe ICT-supported communities such as a chatroom, social media, or what Wright [6] put it as 'third space' to diminish the place-based nature of Oldenburg's third place. While they may resemble some traditional third place's attributes (i.e., localization, accessibility, and presence [5]), they do not necessarily make the physical third place (e.g., coffee shops) insignificant. Some people are still favoring physical interaction for its 'realness' [7]. Moreover, Memarovic et al. [8] argue that the virtual-real dichotomy does not apply in contemporary third places. Some cases have shown that some digital technology adoption degrees help promote face-to-face meetings and increase the sense of belonging to the given third place.

Considering the background, this research explores the extent to which the application of ICTs in coffee shops as a primary third place helps reinforce the third-placeness of such a place based on the criteria developed by Memarovic et al. [8] after Oldenburg [2]. By looking at the transformation of local coffee shops in two Asian cities, this paper also seeks to unpack the 'problem of place' in non-western culture and explore how their desire for third places are linked to the history of their society and their urban living environment, and whether such a desire is still relevant in today's digital era. This paper

provides types of spatial, physical, and/or managerial settings of coffee shops that have been or should be adjusted through some digital technologies adoption without losing its third-placeness.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. This paper starts with a theoretical framework sketched out of Oldenburg's conception of third place, linked to the public-private sphere discourse. Correspondingly, it also highlights the introduction of digital technology that has changed our lives and influenced social space production in cities, including third places. It is where the notion 'third-placeness' is developed to reflect on such transformation [8]. Those theories are applied to analyze the case studies in the following result section. The first part deals with Japan's coffee culture and how modern coffee shops have been considered as third place and great place-makers in a commercial sense. In contrast, the second part explores the social meaning of coffee shops in Indonesia and how the mushrooming of online food delivery plays a key role in redefining coffee shops as a third place. Based on the main findings, the paper concludes with a reflection on the theoretical framework and some recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Literature review

#### 2.1.1. Redefinition of public space in the digital era

Spatial forms are evolving through the dynamics of societies. Today, the spatial definition has transformed along with the invasion of digital technology. The public sphere does not always appear in the physical form, and space becomes merely a product [9]. The conversation in the conventional third space now commonly occurs on social media platforms and in cyberspace. According to Chen, the internet has digitized the connection between individuals and space. It allows the individuals' presence and absence to be engaged and contributes to the creation of space [9]. Online platforms accommodate a new and intangible kind of social space; ICTs offer abundant "e-solutions" in everyday urban life where physical space as a social boundary becomes irrelevant [10]. The internet is defined as the idealized social space that provides great sociability opportunities without limitation. As Richard Sennett cited Hannah Arendt's perspective, the public sphere is a realm where people can discuss freely and equally because they are not bounded by their private circumstances, without dependency on a place [11]. This open spatial concept seems relatable to the production process of social space in the digital era, where open society is emphasized by the extension of social networking as the basic social norm for the new

generations [12]. Thus, digital technology has enabled the redefinition of public space.

According to Gehl, a face-to-face meeting is the real quality of social life in the city [13]. It creates a reliable and self-assuring feeling to experience human values. ICTs connect people with flexibility and bring values in gathering more people in the public space. The social media platforms add digital dimensions to place-making and stimulate senses of belonging to the social space, as mentioned by Abdel-Aziz, et.al. Moreover, these benefits could be reaped through several domains by following the "human information interaction" concept [12]. The installation of wireless connections in social spaces is an example of ICT's contributions to social participation in public space. According to observations, Memarovic et al. argue that today's contemporary third places should incorporate ICT as an essential part, along with their physical design [8]. Instead of having tendencies to bring privatization and "dehumanize" the social life, ICTs enhance and multiply the role of Oldenburg's conventional third place idea. Many authors also argued that such technologies could increase people's sense of belonging to a third place since it was mainly built-up upon conversational affordances. Thus, the place-makers are challenged to adopt ICTs to potentially improve the existing urban life.

### 2.1.2. Third place and the "placelessness" concept

Memarovic et al. show how the digital platform transforms the conventional third place [8]. In general, Oldenburg's third place properties' functions are still relevant; however, ICT's presence has stimulated the emergent properties of third place for better affordances. Through their research, Memarovic et al. suggest four characteristics that contemporary third place should adopt. They are 1) the possibility to observe and be observed by others in the public display; 2) the support to emergent properties of third place and build upon this notion to accommodate appropriate affordance; 3) the extended notion of third place to include digital properties and create bridges between the two, and 4) the incorporation of technology/ ICTs to establish a power relationship between third place and people [8]. In this sense, ICTs benefit and promote the necessity of third-placeness in the pivotal role of 'real' third place in society.

In the Indonesian context, the growth of online delivery platforms has generated a new social form where people get convenience and dependency on others without appearing in social places. These digital platforms transform the existing pattern of Oldenburg's third place into people's "desired third place" in either public or private realm. This motive shows that the existence of a "place" is not necessarily subject to individuals' presence, which correlates with Edward Relph's "placelessness" concept. The concept argues that

we are losing our sense of place by the time we are subjecting ourselves to such force of placelessness [14]. Relph denotes that virtual technology has created a "hybrid space," characterized by the presence of other places in the actual setting [15]. This sense of "hybrid space" attempts to expand and mix a particular place experience with different social values.

### 2.2. Research methods

Our approach in understanding coffee shops as third places was concluded by reading their cultural background and conducting field observations to reveal the coffee shop's relation with its surrounding built environment. While the former uncovers the coffee culture background in each distinct context that makes a coffee shop a third place, the latter allows the authors to observe its spatial experience as a "third place" destination, the social and physical experience of being in a coffee shop, and the infused experience of utilizing ICTs to get the cuppa and feeling the coffee shop ambiance from different contexts. Tokyo and Jakarta have been particularly selected to find the appropriate case studies due to their blooming coffee culture in the past decade. A representative coffee shop was then singled out from each context. They were the About Life Coffee Brewers (ALCB) in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan, and Kopi Tuku (KT) in Cipete, South Jakarta, Indonesia. Both are considered as they sit close to main streets, display some of Oldenburg's third place characteristics despite relatively small in size, seems to function as a local community hub, and have some degree of ICT infusion.

The empirical data were primarily collected through spatial and unobtrusive observation analyses based on our experiences as the customers during our visit to ALCB in March 2018 and to KT in December 2019. Those are combined with secondary data obtained from the literature review and digital platforms, such as social media (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) and crowd-sourced datasets (e.g., Google Maps' review ratings). Roger Trancik's Urban Design theory: Figure-ground, Linkage, and Place [16] is utilized to conduct the spatial analysis before and during our field observations. The figure-ground layer generates a sense of space as the medium of urban experience and accentuates the sequence of public, semi-public, and private domains. The linkage theory focuses on streets, lanes, pedestrian ways, and/or open spaces as the connecting element. Meanwhile, place theory lies in understanding the cultural and human characteristics of physical space as Trancik believes that urban architecture should be understood at various levels, from "small shops and coffee pots" to the "whole city where illusion and reality come into play" [16].

# 3. FINDINGS

## 3.1. Tokyo

### 3.1.1 Japan's coffee culture.

Be Being one of the world's top three coffee importers, Japan's coffee consumption for the past few decades has doubled the number of its consumption of green tea as the predominant beverage [17]. Japanese coffee shops have also been a vital part of society for their capacities to generate and showcase new ideas and aesthetics, which reflect the changing of personal, social, and spatial needs of their time [18, p.3]. Although it originated from and is heavily influenced by the West, Japanese coffee culture differs and even surpasses its western counterparts through its selections of beans, brewing techniques that are hand-poured and filtered, and even its café design. Nevertheless, in contrast with White's claim that the Japanese coffee culture has completely removed any western 'odor' they might have [18, p.4], Grinshpun rather sees this global-local interplay as ongoing reciprocity of cultural borrowing and code-switching [17].

The fact that there is no singular model in history that shapes Japanese coffee shops today makes them long-lasting and inherently interesting. It is also the malleability and the versatility of Japanese coffee shops that simply place them in the heart of Japanese people's everyday lives and quintessential urban fabric. Historically, coffee was introduced in the perfect timing when social modernization of Japanese people took place in the late-nineteenth-century, which was marked by the changing gender relations, family, and work lives as well as the use of spaces. With the flow of people coming from rural or provincial areas of Japan to the city to work, coffeehouses quickly became an important locus for rural migrants to learn about city life, mingle with existing communities, or create new ones. Nevertheless, coffee shops in Japan are more likely to be refugees from the intense social life or situation at home, rather than alternative communities, where a loose connection with the coffee master might be the only social relation made [18, p.127-128]. Japanese coffee shops have since been diversified in response to the ever-changing social structure, from an ordinary neighborhood 'kissaten', nightclub-like Ginza café, gallery-style café, to today's third-wave café.

### 3.1.2 Tokyo roji

In most of Japan's urban areas, living spaces are typically very small; people constantly need social space outside of their confined and private spaces, such as shopping streets, parks, or public facilities [18, p.39]. In Tokyo, where gridded streets and lanes largely define the urban landscape, impromptu or anticipated social meetings often occur in the small and narrow alleyways of 'roji', instead of on the main streets [18, p.131]. These labyrinth-like structures allow people to stumble upon each other, greet, or have a short conversation on the way to reach an array of commercial facilities and public[1] where cafes are also there for a more voluntary social encounter. Furthermore, in the wake of the aging and shrinking urban population of Tokyo, roji is increasingly reckoned as a traditional model of 'compact city' that is liveable and aging-friendly and appears to be fostering sustainable urban development [19]. Some recent studies support such an idea by offering new perspectives on roji as an 'alternative landscape of reminiscence' that can thrive during redevelopment and gentrification due to its versatility [20] and community spirit [21]. To this end, it is argued that cafes' existence in this very grain of Japan's urban form helps to stimulate social encounters and community revitalization and generate revenue,



**Figure 1.** The urban character of the Dogenzaka area where ALCB is located.
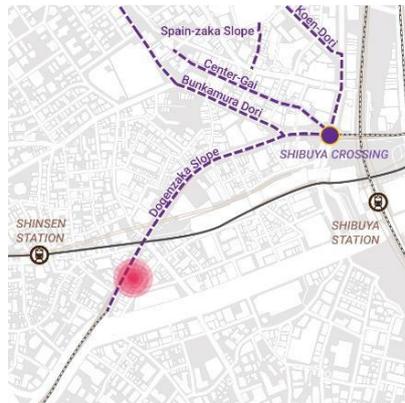
**Figure 2.** Multiple pedestrian linkages in the Dogenzaka area. The ALCB can be reached through one of them (Dogenzaka Slope).
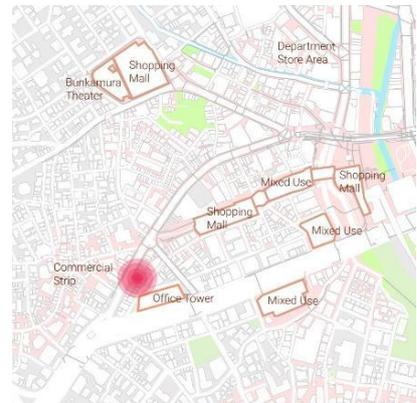
**Figure 3.** The location of ALCB is in the middle of the commercial area of Dogenzaka.

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[1] Usually in the form of 'shotengai' or the Japanese low-rise, small-scale, traditional shopping streets

especially from the flow of tourists that find their way through GPS and online maps.

### 3.1.3 About Life Coffee Brewers (ALCB): Coffee stand in a commercial district.

For most Japanese coffee goers, the *'funiki'* or the aura or ambiance of a place is what they look for in a café other than the coffee itself. It keeps people coming back to a cafe, be it the ambiance of the place, the sense of community, or the personality of the place that resonates with them [22]. About-Life Coffee Brewers (ALCB) is one of the many modern Japanese cafés that provides a coffee experience in a grab-and-go stand, which is the focus of this study. The head barista of ALCB is the owner of Onibus coffee roaster and café, the first among the mushrooming third-wave coffee shops in Japan, which is meant to foster a sense of community, the owner states on their website.

The ALCB is strategically located in the middle of a bustling commercial, F&B, and night-time entertainment district of Shibuya at Dogenzaka Slope. This nine-square meter coffee stand is within 5-minutes' walking distance (±400 meters) from the Shibuya Station, where several mass transit lines intersect. As a neighborhood, this area has a well-defined urban character on account of its denser building coverage. It gives identity to the exterior space and creates a pedestrian scale spatial continuity (see Figure 1, 2, and 3). While big commercial parcels are toned down with lined-up vegetation around their edges, the smaller ones interface with the pedestrians by extending their activities to the street. The physical sequence and the visual orientation around ALCB generate an active public life where the nearby streets become 'desirable places to spend time' [16, p.103].
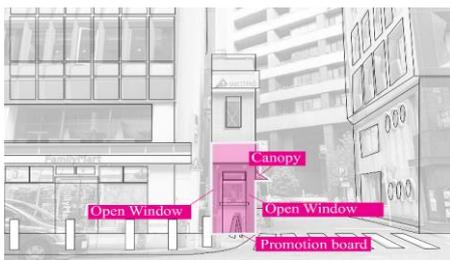


**Figure 4.** About Life Coffee Brewers, a street-corner coffee stands in Dogenzaka, Shibuya.



**Figure 5.** The extension of third place features and activities to the street.

With window openings on two sides of its shop and a glass sliding door facing the street, this tiny street-corner coffee stand allows customers to interact with the baristas and get a full view of every coffee preparation process inside the stand (see Figure 4 and 5). While a bench for four is provided inside the shop for customers to sit while waiting for their cups of coffee, movable benches are placed outside, and bike racks are mounted on the shop's exterior for cycling customers and staff to hang their bikes. Such seating placement that extends to the alleyway seems to soften the public-private distinction (see Figure 5). Conversations are still the main events, although in standing position and only for an hour at the longest. Wi-Fi is also provided, though mainly used by tourists.

### 3.1.4. Fostering coffee learners and art communities.

Another interesting finding is that the crowd who sits and stands around ALCB creates a scene and attracts passers-by, including tourists with luggage or cyclists, to stop, take a look at the menu list displayed outside, and eventually order a cup of coffee. Such connection can be perceived online by reading the customer reviews or comments on their social media platforms or other individual blog sites. Knowing that a certain place has a high rating and is recommended by other people is essential to support customers' preferences and decisions. For instance, a tourist would search on ALCB's Facebook page first to get detailed information (e.g., location, opening hours, photo gallery) and the attractiveness of the coffee shop through rating or customer reviews, as well as recommendations from mutual friends that visited the place before (see Figure 6). On the other side, the social media presence helps the coffee shop owners to engage with their regulars or attract potential customers. It also gives an idea of the customers' shopping satisfaction and what needs to be improved in the future [23].

Besides, ALCB uses its social media to develop its brand personality and foster the community by hosting and promoting art and coffee-related programs on Instagram as their primary social media platform, which is also synced to their Facebook Page (Figure 6). Thus, people from art communities or those caught up by their online announcement will congregate for the event. Whenever there is an art exhibition, their tiny indoor space, from the wall up to the ceiling, will be transformed into an exhibition gallery (see Figure 7) with event signboards on the exterior (consult Figure 5). The ALCB also uses social media platforms to keep memories or support their brand identity for any future engagements by sharing the event documentation on them (Figure 7). Moreover, as Onibus Coffee Roaster's subsidiary, ALCB was also set up for coffee-related educational programs that are substantial and unique to third-wave coffee shops
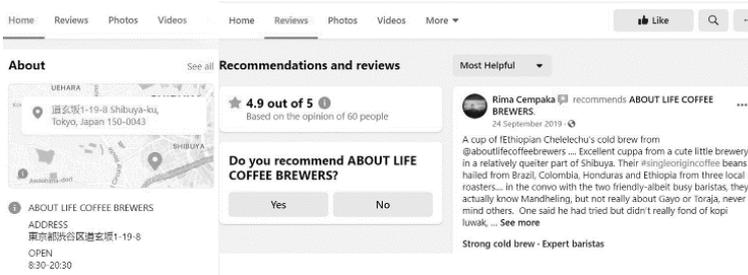
**Figure 6.** ALCB's Facebook Page is showing essential information about their coffee shop and customer reviews. Source: [24]



**Figure 7.** One of the ALCB's Instagram posts was documenting an art event held in their coffee shop. Source: [25]

[22]. Events such as public cupping (tasting) or brewing classes that invite local and international guest baristas or other progressive coffee roasters generate a greater appreciation of quality coffee.

### 3.2. Jakarta

#### 3.2.1. Indonesia's coffee culture.

Indonesia's coffee culture might be the perfect example of the 'coffee paradox' [26]. Booming global coffee consumption does not necessarily bring equality to the producing countries in terms of value captured and the coffee culture development itself. As the fourth world's largest coffee exporter, Indonesian coffee growers are still unequally benefited from the market share [27]. The processing techniques and the service variations of coffee are still underdeveloped [28], despite the many varieties of coffee that the country has across its diverse geographical locations and cultures. On top of the equally diverse quality attributes that entail [27], such phenomenon is believed to be the colonial legacy of commodity exploitation and domination in the value chain [29]. Introduced by the Dutch in Java Island in the early seventeenth century through the cultivation system, Indonesia quickly became a significant coffee supplier for the European market at that time, especially for its Arabica variant. Along with the withdrawal of the Dutch administration in 1905, coffee continued to be produced by small-scale plantations, private or cooperative, in many parts of the country with the best environmental conditions to grow coffee, or what is often referred to as the Indonesian 'bean belt', including Sumatra, Java, Lesser Sunda Islands, and Sulawesi [30].

The coffee culture itself started in the rural hinterland area where coffee plantations are located nearby a humble, small shop, or warung in Indonesian, that became a popular site for coffee hangouts among the agrarian people. As more and more people migrated to urban centers, coffee found its way to the city through the roadside warung, which resembles its rural equivalent, and the early coffee shop or warung kopi with a diverse range of coffee-serving methods. Most Indonesians drink Robusta, ground or instant, as the cheapest and easiest to grow that is typically poured over and unfiltered, or locally called *kopi tubruk*, to complement their lunch meal, snack, or cigarette. Apart from being a place for socialization, coffee shops in that era also served as the spots for political discussion among industrial workers. Information was circulated more quickly there than in the newspapers.

#### 3.2.2. Jakarta's shopping malls and traffic problems.

Although coffee-drinking is still identified with old men's habit or those from lower social class who consume it at roadside *warung* or coffee in-bike[2], it increasingly gains popularity as a lifestyle beverage among the young clientele groups with the proliferation of the American coffee-chain Starbucks and the like (e.g., The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf or the home-grown coffee chain, Excelso), which began in the 1990s and set a new standard of coffee drinking experience and service-scape after that. Those coffee corporations often locate themselves inside a mall or shopping center that is mushrooming in Jakarta. More than 170 shopping malls have become the city's new 'public space' that entices the young and the middle class who seek comfort and safety against the tropical climate and humidity and the feeling of insecurity in outdoor public space [see 31]. Nevertheless, unlike the pattern of coffee culture-shaping in Japan that tends to participate and interact with the global value chain [17], the development of coffee culture in Indonesia seems to be more protective with its local value and 'autonomous' against the influence of the global coffee value chain [28], although the formation of both might take some inspiration from each other. Moreover, the fact that Indonesia produces its own coffee

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[2] In Jakarta, this is commonly known as 'starling', an abbreviation of *Starbucks Keliling* that literally means 'roving Starbucks'. This phenomenon flourished in the beginning of 2000s as a way to get around street-vendor restriction around the National Monument and has since become ordinary scenery in the midst of hustle and bustle Jakarta, especially in front of mosques or near construction sites. The majority of the sellers come from the same community.

bean enables the local actors to choose their selection from specific geographical locations and farmers, as well as develop their coffee learning community and connoisseurship towards ethical and social responsibilities [28; see also 27 for the top-down driving forces), not to mention the invasion of digital technologies into our lives that helps stimulate the coffee culture formation. Social media and the recent boom of multi-service platforms that provide app-based food delivery and payment have allowed customers to access caffeine supplies in one click, notwithstanding location. This phenomenon is largely due to the poor transport systems in Jakarta's splintering urban landscape. Application-based motorbike taxis or locally known as *'ojek'*, has become a popular option to fill in the gap [32]. Nevertheless, in the advent of ride-hailing and food delivery apps that grow rapidly and disrupt the conventional transport pattern, concerns emerge regarding the unplanned or 'informal' urban spaces generated by ojek drivers and customer behaviors in parking space or waiting space [33]. On top of that, this paper puts forward the notion of creating a third place that might be further hampered as more people replace going out for coffee with delivery services.

### 3.2.3. Kopi Tuku (KT): Coffee shop in a neighborhood setting.

One renowned coffee shop in Jakarta that can be an appropriate example of how the local coffee actors respond to the hegemonic influence of global coffee chains, the symbolic image of coffee as a class-based beverage, and the invasion of ICTs, is Kopi Tuku (KT). Located in the main (commercial) street of Cipete, one of the residential neighborhoods in South Jakarta, KT owners aim to shape and popularize local coffee culture as a part of people's everyday routines accessible daily. Therefore, they brand their product as *'kopi tetangga'* (*neighbor's coffee*) and select their stores' location adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Kopi Tuku is located on Jl. Cipete Raya, a tertiary road that connects the many residential developments in South Jakarta with the business district in Central Jakarta, not to mention the newly established MRT line along Jl. Fatmawati Raya on the west side (see Figure 8, 9, and 10). However, KT sits in the middle of a commercial corridor, as shown in the figure-ground image, which gives a weak spatial orientation and obscures KT in the area's physical sequences. Regardless, this linkage is busy enough, with the traffic and congestion from people heading to the central area, to make KT more observable at such a slower speed. In our spatial analysis, we noticed a series of activity nodes that happened around the commercial corridor, with most activities are food and beverages related. KT's surrounding area is also a low-density housing area with a mix of public facilities such as schools and other public amenities. The typical approach from each commercial facility by putting parking space in front of the building creates less connection between activities inside the building and the street where people pass by.

### 3.2.4. Popularizing local coffee through online delivery.

As a grab-and-go coffee shop, KT is relatively small with a 16-square meters' area packed with service counters, a narrow seating area, and a coffee roaster. The distance between the service counter and a single long wooden bench is only 1.5 meters, which fits only for queuing. On the outside, there is a 20-cm wide floating wooden table and some moveable chairs that serve as hanging out areas or waiting areas during peak hours. Otherwise, people use the service corridor on the side of the store as the seating area. Despite its service's quick and fast nature, KT still presents some traditional third-place characteristics, such as accessibility and accommodation, given its strategic location and proximity to residential neighborhoods. Those are emphasized with a low-profile exterior and 'homey'



**Figure 8**. The urban character of the Cipete area where KT is located.



**Figure 9**. KT is located in the commercial strip of Jl. Cipete Raya connects with the major road of Jl. Fatmawati Raya.
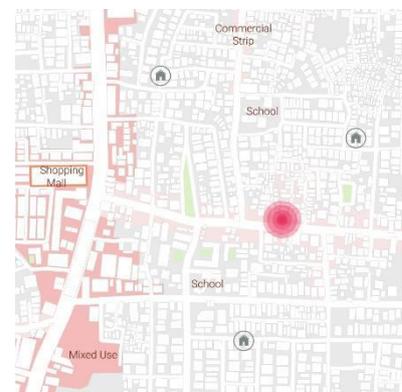


**Figure 10**. KT is surrounded by a landed residential area, with several commercial and school facilities.

interior ambiance that evoke the familiar or' home away from home' feelings for its customers. In its earlier time, KT's owner admitted that the shop was more engaged with the surrounding neighbors as they often hung out at the shop or even helped out with the rush at the store.
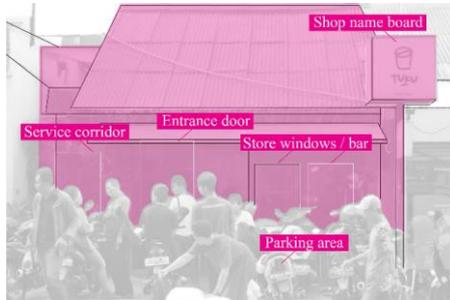


**Figure 11**. The façade of KT, barely seen due to the crowded parking area in front of it.



**Figure 12.** KT's interior area is full of customers and online delivery services waiting for their orders to be made.

Along with incorporating ICTs in their marketing strategy, e.g., social media and online delivery, the sale of their coffee has reached beyond the neighborhood. Their signature iced latte in brown sugar has been an instant phenomenon, especially after President Joko Widodo paid a visit to their store in 2017. More than a thousand cups are sold every day ever since, most of which make their way to customers through multi-service online platforms that often offer promotions (Figure 13). Despite its notable success in popularizing good quality
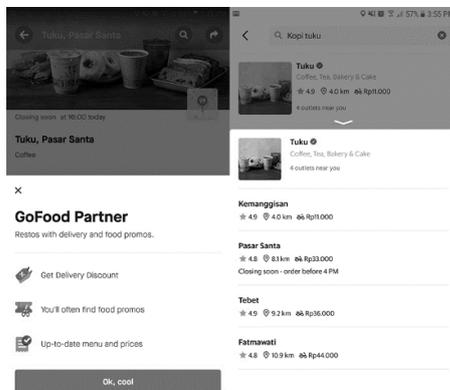
local coffee and creating new coffee culture, the implementation of ICTs in KT impacts its physical coffee shops' third-placeness. With a significant amount of online delivery drivers occupy the parking area in the front of the shop with their motorbikes and crowd the interior area while waiting for their orders to be made, the coffee shop is unlikely to attract passers-by to stop by and linger (see Figure 11 and 12). To respond to their online service's rapid development and keep its offline stores comfortable for the neighbors, KT opened up another shop only for online pick-ups, rostering places, and 24-hours service in multiple locations.

Regarding the digital technologies' adoptions, we noticed that KT utilizes Instagram more often than Facebook, especially Instagram Stories (Figure 14). The recent social media development allows users to quickly create and share their content, which lasts only 24 hours. Some studies suggest that Instagram Stories appears to be more engaging, especially for the young millennials and non-millennials women, due to its ephemeral, dynamic, and interactive features. Thus, it becomes an effective marketing tool targeting the groups mentioned above [34]. Kopi Tuku usually posts information regarding the sale and occasional promotions. Meanwhile, the Facebook Page created earlier serves as an introductory or destination guidance for their customers, including rating and customer review, which is not linked to their Instagram and less updated.

### 3.3 Summary

The case studies reveal the connection between coffee culture and urban settings. The literature study and site visits show how urban settings such as positive-negative urban space, connections, land uses, destinations, and transport modes define how a coffee shop operates. Those qualities can be seen from both coffee shops'
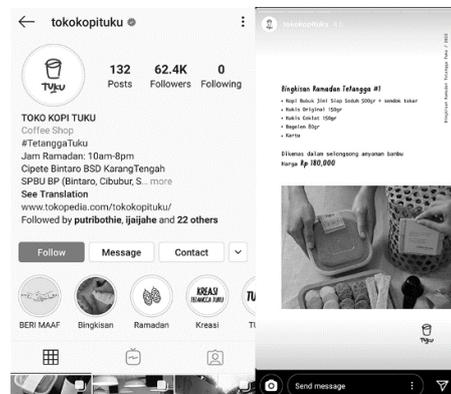


**Figure 13.** KT in two different online delivery apps showing menu and price list as well as promotions. Source: [35]



**Figure 14.** KT's Instagram account and capture on one of its Stories showing a promotional post for KT's seasonal hampers. Source: [36]

relationship with the adjacent streets and the space created in front of them (see Figure 15 and 16).
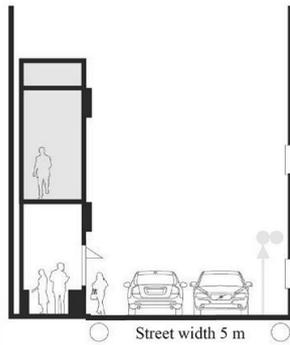


**Figure 15.** ALCB's cross-section shows the extended interior activities on the street. Streets around this coffee shop are also part of an indoor program collectively, creating a friendlier atmosphere for pedestrians.
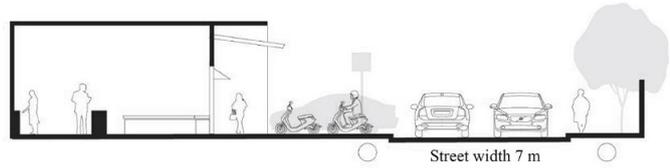


**Figure 16.** KT's cross-section exhibits the online delivery drivers' behaviors using the pedestrian pathway and the parking area to extend its interior space to wait for their orders (during peak hour). Such space is occupied for motorbike parking rather than for customers.

In terms of third-placeness, our observations also discover the social and physical transformation brought by the ICTs infusion to the coffee-drinking culture and the coffee shop as a prominent third place, as presented below:

**Table 1.** Oldenburg's third place's original characteristics and its revisit in the digital era; adapted from Memarovic et al. [8].

| Attributes | Oldenburg's third place | Modern coffee shops with ICT integration | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | About Life Coffee Brewers, Tokyo | Kopi Tuku, Jakarta |
| Neutral ground | For people to socialize, the third-place provides a neutral ground where people from different opinions and life views feel welcomed. | The barista and the coffee preparation process become the point of interest. Customers come for the coffee, watch the barista preparing the coffee, and start a conversation. The place is neutral ground, particularly for the coffee-making process appreciation. | To get the coffee is the main interest in KT. The place is a neutral ground for customers waiting for the coffee-making process. During the waiting time, they mostly talk to their companions or play with their mobile phones. |
| Leveller | The place advocates the abolition of social inequalities. Social distinctions are not important in third places. | Social equalities are achieved in two forms: free Wi-Fi and particular conversations between the barista and customers. Wi-Fi connection allows inclusive interactions in the digital platform, while the discussions are mostly rounded in coffee beans and the coffee-making process. The free Wi-Fi does not have a significant effect on the conversations. | The place gives a little experience of inclusivity since most transactions are for take-away or delivery orders. The provision of Wi-Fi is majorly used to help online delivery drivers contact the customers and link them to the cashier or barista. |
| Conversation | The conversation is the main activity and the major tool to display and appreciate the human personality. | Conversation between barista and customers is the main dialogue activity while the barista prepares the coffee. Other conversations happen between the customers while waiting in the queue and interacting online. | The cashier becomes the main person who greets and welcomes the customers, while the barista only produces coffee. |
| Accessibility and accommo-dation | Places are easy to access, both geographically and socially. | For the 'regulars' or surrounding residents, the place is easy to reach. It is located on the major street of Shibuya. For foreigners, the connection to GPS maps is important to help them to reach the coffee shop. | The location of KT is on a prime commercial street in a residential neighborhood. |
| Regulars' presence | Regulars shape the 'tone' of a place. | Barista and coffee beans set the tone by inviting the regulars. Customers create the tone by expanding to the alley (extended third place). | KT has regular customers due to its location and affordability. |

| Attributes | Oldenburg's third place | Modern coffee shops with ICT integration | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | About Life Coffee Brewers, Tokyo | Kopi Tuku, Jakarta |
| Low profile | Third places have a moderate style where 'pretentiousness' is avoided. The design is simple, allowing comfort and relaxation for the occupants. | The coffee stand engages the public physically through its open concept. The barista is warm to any visitors who want to try their coffee. Concurrently, the advertisement on online platforms set the coffee shop as a coffee-lover destination. | The coffee shop presence is low profile and modest, considering it was made for the surrounding neighborhood in the first place. Continuously, it welcomes anyone who comes to their coffee shop. |
| The mood is playful | The conversation in the third place is light and flowing depending on occupants' interest and conformity. | At first, the conversation is mainly about the coffee beans that customers prefer to try. After that, the conversation heavily revolves around coffee knowledge. | The occurred ambiance is playful enough because of the crowd of customers. |
| A home away from home | Third places should provide an out-of-home environment with the same feeling as 'home'. | The coffee shop setting feels like an outdoor extension of a home, and the simplicity of the space makes it more like a hobby space. | The location, which is in a residential neighborhood, has made KT's vibe is a home away from home. |
| New ICT induced characteristics: | | | |
| Discovering the third place in advance | - | Sometimes the updated situation can be accessed online through Instagram Story. Their Instagram and Facebook feed allow people to peek and discover the place without entering it. Simultaneously, the essence of drinking coffee still needs the customers' physical presence at the coffee shop. | KT is mostly using Instagram Story to update and inform the customers, while their Facebook and Instagram feeds are not updated regularly. |
| Declaring type of supported social activity | - | Through Instagram and Facebook, specific topics like coffee and art are seen as their promoted programs. | The coffee shop is involved in any activities that support their neighborhood. |
| Extending engagement with/within third place | - | Through their social media platforms, ALCB can engage people. | The tag and repost features/ pictures from customers/ others via Instagram Story create further engagement to the public audience. |
| Place dependency | - | Both their Instagram and Facebook pages give opportunities for people to 'enjoy' the experience in the coffee shop through pictures and videos | The online platforms enable customers to get the coffee easily without necessarily being present at the coffee shop. |

## 4. CONCLUSION

As a primary third place, coffee shops have provided a universal public setting and brought pivotal public life experience over time. In many cultures, coffee shops play a role in the democratic processes as a medium to express oneself-existence in society and stimulate social interaction. However, with the increasing commodification of coffee since the expansion of coffee chains-model triggers counter-movements, coffee shops lose their characteristics as a traditional third place, such as leveler and accessibility, especially when attached to a certain signifier (i.e., luxury). Moreover, the recent intrusion of ICTs and the emergence of the sharing economy in the later phase have also rendered Oldenburg's third place obsolete with the changing communication pattern and how people interact and create community. Nonetheless, instead of abolishing the conventional third-place concept, some scholars believe that ICTs could promote better public and social attachment to the third place in certain manners, hence retain its fundamental characteristics. Correspondingly, our initial study on coffee trends in two Asian cities reveals that the conditions are also subject to the urban and cultural contexts where the contemporary third-place belongs.

In a well-maintained urban quality such as in Tokyo, coffee shops are potential place-makers. Many have been integrated with other public facilities to generate more visitors or stand independently to rejuvenate a depleted neighborhood. ALCB is one of the many contemporary coffee shops in Japan that promotes its products and community activities through social media to attract a wider group of consumers and maintain regulars. Although small in size, the placement of simple furniture

and the pedestrian-friendly environment of the surrounding area still can afford the customers a comfortable conversation over a cup of coffee in front of the shop. Meanwhile, in less-organized urban settings such as in Jakarta, people are highly dependent on informal services and digital platforms to navigate the city and satisfy their social needs. Integrating ICTs in traditional coffee shops has gone beyond promotional or marketing since the massive growth of online delivery. More food retailers are going online to embrace the increasing demands, including coffee shops. Such development changes people's behavior in consuming coffee. It challenges the relevance of café as a primary third place, not to mention the transportation problems that come with food delivery services that affect the immediate surrounding neighborhood (e.g., traffic congestion and unregulated parking). Nevertheless, KT has tried to address such issues through differentiation of stores for dine-in and online pick-up to cater for both purposes.

Through ALCB and KT, we found different scenarios that occurred in practical realities. The multi-dimensional, socio-cultural and regional urban context plays an essential role in defining the new sense of contemporary third place. The new attributes come with the imposition of ICTs, which are the advanced discovery of place, declared and supported social activities, extended engagement to the public market or audience, and place dependency as the ICTs bring in the "placelessness" concept to the discourse. Simultaneously, a digital platform also enables the presence of a place in other places through virtual clouds. This virtual place may present a different social experience of a coffee shop as a third-place where different spheres may converge.

Nevertheless, drinking coffee in a coffee shop as a social activity still needs its 'realness' in which the online coffee delivery stands as an alternative to transfer the third-place location to another 'preferred third space' according to the customers' desires. In this respect, third place in the digital era is expanded to be more than a location-based community site. Its essence, pure sociability, and non-discursive symbolism is transferrable and getting more accessible. Meanwhile, coffee shops can still maintain their third-placeness by leveraging ICTs and managing their physical arrangement to increase their consumer or community engagement and the quality of their conversational affordances.

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