



# Designing in an indigenous context: zine-making using designerly activity theory to preserve social and local cultural values in Cikondang traditional village

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the design of zines as a collaborative medium for preserving the social and cultural values of the Cikondang Traditional Village in Bandung Regency, Indonesia, which only depends on oral transmission of knowledge by the customary leader. Using a qualitative study method and framed by Designerly Activity Theory (DAT), the study collected data through field observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The study identifies key elements of the Designerly Activity Theory (DAT), including subjects and collective subjects, objects in context, tools and signs, rules and design criteria, community and imagined community, and division of labor and process. The urgency of this study lies in developing a zine through a collective and collaborative design system within the context of an indigenous community. The findings indicate that designing zines in indigenous contexts requires heightened attention to community collaboration, the active participation of customary leaders, sensitivity to local ethical and cultural norms, and adherence to community-based design criteria. The study's primary contribution is the articulation of a systematic design framework that situates zine-making beyond personal expression, foregrounding collaborative, collective, and sociocultural dimensions in the design process. The study contributes to the discourse on participatory and cultural design by positioning Designerly Activity Theory as a critical, analytical, and methodological framework for understanding design as a collaborative, reflective, and culturally embedded activity.



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## 1. Introduction

Cikondang Traditional Village, located in Lamajang Village, Bandung Regency, West Java, possesses significant artistic and cultural potential and is rooted in strong intergenerational traditions sustained by its social, cultural, ecological, and spiritual values. These values are reflected in its traditional architecture, rituals, and communal customs, which continue to shape everyday life (Fig. 1). The integration of Sundanese culture and Islamic belief forms the philosophical foundation of Cikondang's worldview, manifesting in both spiritual and material dimensions of its culture [1]. The synthesis of Islam and Sundanese culture has long been observed by researchers as a distinctive characteristic of Cikondang's cultural system [2]. These activities are both religious and ecological, maintaining a moral balance with the natural environment and reinforcing collective identity. The worldview of the community is grounded in the philosophy of harmony between humans and nature. The principle that defines the relationship between spiritual practice and environmental stewardship [3]. The example is the spatial organization of the Cikondang traditional house during the Wuku Taun, highlighting its role as a locus of social cohesion and cultural identity [4]. Therefore, Cikondang Traditional

Village possesses a range of intangible cultural heritage that is essential to preserve. However, the community faces a critical challenge. The preservation of Cikondang culture today remains largely dependent on oral transmission by the customary leader. Most of the knowledge is retained by customary leader Abah Anom Juhana and passed down verbally. The customary leader of Cikondang is a figure who consistently upholds local customs and traditions, embodies religious and moral values, remains obedient to ancestral norms, and adheres to Sundanese philosophical principles. This role reflects the social values of a community that is rooted in both Islamic teachings and Sundanese cultural heritage [5]. Although deeply rooted in tradition, the community remains open to interaction with external cultures and technologies. Rather than resisting modernization, they negotiate it through selective adaptation [6]. This dependence on oral practice has resulted in the absence of written or visual media capable of documenting and safeguarding the myths, values, and ritual practices that constitute the cultural heritage of Cikondang Traditional Village. As a result, much of the community's historical, ecological, and philosophical knowledge remains undocumented and is at risk of fading. This condition highlights the need for a medium capable of documenting and disseminating cultural values in accessible and engaging ways.



**Fig. 1.** Traditional house in Cikondang Traditional Village

Previous studies suggest that local wisdom in Cikondang can be effectively preserved through community-based media and participatory documentation [7]. They emphasize that cultural heritage projects must integrate community participation, ecological awareness, and social inclusivity. Meanwhile, cultural preservation in Cikondang requires integration with environmental conservation and contemporary technology [8]. These studies primarily emphasize the importance of community-based participatory methods in supporting cultural preservation efforts in Cikondang that combine traditional wisdom with modern design and communication strategies to safeguard cultural sustainability. However, those studies do not sufficiently address the collaborative dimensions nor the role of values and mediating instruments and tools in advancing cultural preservation in Cikondang Traditional Village.

Based on that problem, there is a clear need for a medium that can effectively facilitate accessible cultural preservation in Cikondang Traditional Village. The selection of zines as a medium is informed by the needs of the Design Laboratory of the Visual Communication Design Department Telkom University, the requirements of the PKKM program, and the necessity of developing a written visual medium to record local knowledge conveyed by the customary leader in Cikondang Traditional Village. Building upon these insights, the present study introduces the use of zines as an alternative medium for cultural preservation. Zines are self-published and characterized by unique designs, diverse content, and community-based distribution [9]. Zines are alternative media that can function as community archives, helping to strengthen and empower critical narratives that resist dominant histories while offering valuable resources for community building [10]. Zines are typically non-commercial, non-professional publications distributed in limited circulation, often among subcultural communities. They are usually printed in black and white using photocopiers, with varied formats depending on the creator's preferences [9]. The importance of materiality of zines, such as form and design, in fostering intimacy and a sense of solidarity among community members

[11]. Furthermore, zines are often used in participatory activities that encourage community involvement [12].

Historically, zines have functioned as platforms for personal expression, political activism, and community formation [13]. They emerged from subcultural and feminist movements as tools of resistance against dominant media narratives [14]. Another research also highlights zines as vehicles for political and cultural critique, often focusing on issues of identity, trauma, and social resistance [15]. Beyond their activist origins, zines have evolved into archival and pedagogical tools. Previous research identified zines as alternative archives that preserve collective memory and grassroots narratives [16]. Another example is the design of the zine "Satu Darah Juang," which also represents collective memory through a practice-led research approach [17]. Another research discusses zines as their pedagogical potential for feminist education and pedagogy [18]. Another research explores their application in documenting artistic practices and creative identity [19]. Previous research expands the notion further by presenting "ecological zines" as media for environmental storytelling and activism [20]. This research also explains that local culture, such as *Grapyak*, can be transformed into visual zine media [21]. Previous zine studies largely concentrate on urban, subcultural, or feminist contexts. Very few examine how zines might operate within traditional or indigenous communities as instruments for cultural transmission.

This gap motivates the present study to explore how zine-making can become a collaborative and community-driven process for preserving local cultural values in indigenous context. To address this problem, the research applies Activity Theory and its extension, Designerly Activity Theory, as theoretical and methodological frameworks [22]. Activity Theory conceptualizes human action as a dynamic system mediated by tools, social rules, community norms, and shared objectives. It provides a lens to analyze design not merely as a creative act but as a socially embedded process [23], [24], [25]. Within design studies, Activity Theory has been used to investigate how social structures and tools shape creative practices. It reveals how designers operate within networks of collaboration, mediation, and distributed agencies. Designerly Activity Theory extends this framework by introducing analytical dimensions specific to design contexts, such as Subject and Collective Subject, Object and Object in Context, Tools and Signs, Rules and Design Criteria, Community and Imagined Community, and Division of Labor and Process. This model enables a deeper understanding of how designers think, act, and negotiate meaning in collaborative environments. The selection of Activity Theory as a conceptual framework is based on the literature, indicating that it offers a robust foundation for understanding design processes within collaborative and sociocultural contexts.

The research employs a qualitative case study conducted from August to December 2024. Data was gathered through field observation, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD). This methodological approach aligns with Activity Theory's emphasis on contextual inquiry and participatory engagement. Ultimately, this study contributes to expanding the discourse on social and participatory design by integrating Activity Theory into the realm of cultural preservation. It demonstrates how zine-making can act as a medium of mediation between oral tradition and visual communication, transforming local wisdom into accessible cultural documentation. Furthermore, it provides empirical evidence that design, when grounded in values, rules, and community participation, becomes a tool for sustaining cultural continuity and fostering intercultural dialogue. The novelty of this research lies in its shift from viewing zine-making as an urban subcultural practice to recognizing it as a designerly activity system rooted in traditional values and collective creativity in an indigenous context. The study proposes that design for cultural preservation must move beyond aesthetics and technology to embrace shared meaning-making, participatory authorship, and ethical co-creation. The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating a design methodology for zine-making that integrates the sociocultural dimensions of an indigenous community through a collaborative and collective process between designers and customary leaders. While zines have traditionally been associated with personal expression produced by their zinesters, this study shows that zine design within the context of Indigenous and traditional communities requires substantial negotiation with local values and active participation from the local community.

## 2. Method

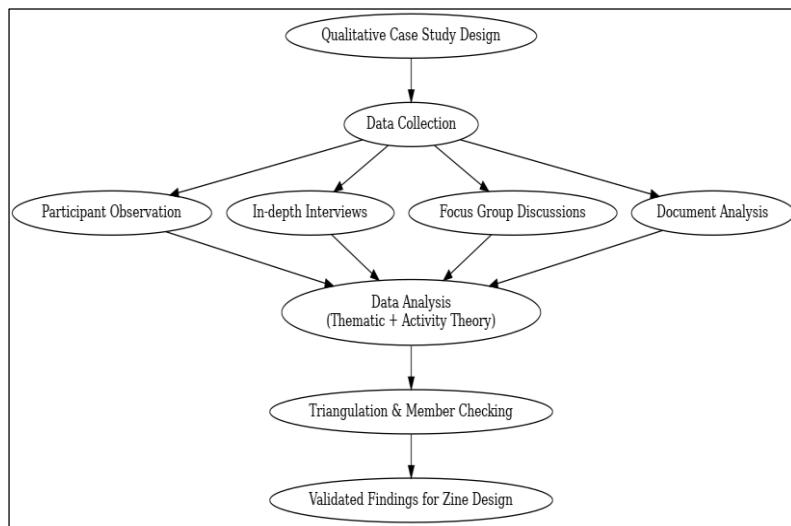
### 2.1. Research Method

This study employs qualitative research for generating an in-depth understanding of the dynamics occurring within a bounded cultural setting, enabling a holistic analysis of practices, traditions, and symbolic expressions specific to the Cikondang Traditional Village. Qualitative orientation is essential because this research seeks to explore a complex sociocultural environment in which meanings, interactions, and local knowledge are collectively produced and negotiated [26], [27]. The qualitative paradigm allows the researcher to examine contextual nuances, subjective experiences, and community-driven priorities that inform the design of zines as a cultural mediation tool. Data were gathered to capture multiple perspectives from relevant stakeholders whose interactions contribute to heritage continuity. The research was conducted directly in Cikondang Traditional Village, where the community continues to uphold Islamic-influenced Sundanese customs and cultural rituals. The selection of this site is based on its strong cultural identity and the urgency to create sustainable media capable of documenting intangible cultural knowledge that has predominantly been preserved through oral transmission. Within this context, the researcher positions zine-making not only as a design activity but also as a participatory cultural process, where the voices of the community, particularly those of the customary leader and local stakeholders, become central to informing the design outcomes.

To ensure data richness and reliability, multiple data collection techniques were employed, including field observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and documentation review. These methods were used complementarily, enabling data triangulation across diverse sources and actors. Observation was conducted throughout community activities, allowing the researcher to develop a deep contextual understanding of cultural practices, symbolic expressions, and social interactions that persist within daily life. Interviews were conducted with customary leader Abah Anom Juhana in cultural preservation initiatives. This approach enabled the researcher to explore personal experience, aspiration, concern, and expectation regarding heritage continuity and the potential role of zines as a mediating artefact. The interview questions were structured based on Activity Theory's conceptual elements, directing attention toward how zines may operate as cultural tools that facilitate intergenerational knowledge exchange. Through these conversations, the researcher explored how information is currently transmitted, which cultural values the community believes must be preserved, and how community members envision the future of their cultural identity. The findings from the field observations and in-depth interviews will play a crucial role in determining the curation of the zine content, including the selection of themes, written materials, and visual assets. The zine content presented in the zine is derived directly from the observations and interviews conducted with the customary leader of Cikondang.

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held on October 8, 2024, as part of the PKKM Grant activities conducted by the Visual Communication Design Program at Telkom University. This FGD aimed to identify information needs related to the Cikondang Traditional village. Participants included the customary leader of Cikondang, representatives of the Cikondang indigenous community, representatives from the Cultural Preservation Center (*Balai Pelestarian Budaya*) Region IX, faculty members of the Visual Communication Design program, and students participating in the PKKM initiative. Focus group discussions were conducted to gain insights into collective perspectives on the design of zines, particularly regarding content prioritization, narrative tone, and formats that would be culturally and socially acceptable. Document analysis served to complement primary data collection by examining historical archives, customary records, cultural references, visual documentation, and other secondary sources relevant to Cikondang heritage. These documents offered factual grounding for the design content, validating descriptive elements derived from observation and oral narratives. This stage ensured that the zine incorporated accurate cultural information while also reflecting continuity with documented historical contexts. Data analysis followed thematic procedures informed by the conceptual framework of Activity Theory. All data collected from observation notes, interview transcripts, FGD recordings, and documentation were systematically organized and coded based on emergent themes associated with cultural values, transmission challenges,

community roles, and the mediating potential of zines. Activity Theory guided the structuring of these codes by operationalizing analytical components, including subject, object, mediating tools, rules, community, and division of labor. The analytical process seeks to uncover how these elements interact dynamically to either support or hinder the cultural preservation goals, see [Fig. 2](#).



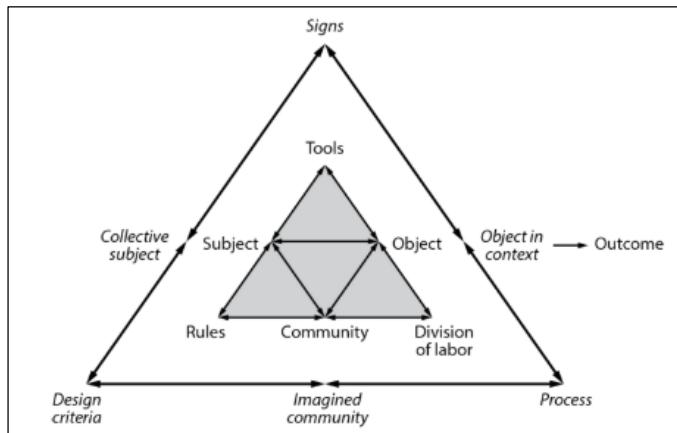
**Fig. 2.** Research method process diagram

## 2.2. Designerly Activity Theory as an Ontological and Methodological Framework

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how zine design can support the preservation of social and cultural values in Cikondang Traditional Village. A qualitative approach in Activity Theory is particularly appropriate because cultural preservation concerns deeply embedded socio-historical practices and collective meaning-making that must be understood holistically and contextually [28]. The study allows the exploration of real-world interactions among local actors, cultural practices, and design processes. Activity Theory (AT) was positioned as the primary analytical and design framework to examine the mediated relationships between individuals, tools, and sociocultural structures within community activities. Consistent with AT's principle of contextual grounding, the design process considers cultural norms, shared community practices, and long-standing engagements among villagers as central components shaping how zines may be designed, produced, and utilized within the cultural ecosystem. Activity Theory provides a lens to analyze human activity as socially situated, historically mediated, and oriented toward achieving a shared objective. Originating from Vygotsky's sociocultural psychology, AT rejects reductionist behavioral and purely cognitive theories by emphasizing that thinking and action co-exist within mediated activity systems embedded in sociocultural contexts. Engeström's expansion of Vygotsky's triangle incorporates collective dynamics such as rules, community, and division of labor to conceptualize contradictions and transformations within collaborative activities [23].

Within design research, AT has evolved into a systemic, holistic analytical tool capable of examining complex sociotechnical design activities [29], [30], [31]. Designerly Activity Theory (DAT) advances Engeström's model by integrating dual-layer dimensions that explicitly account for designers' cognitive and behavioral processes during collaborative design [22]. DAT introduces paired analytical constructs such as subject and collective subject, object and object in context, tools and signs, rules and design criteria that situate design decisions within culturally and organizationally mediated environments. This perspective is essential for understanding how designers embed collective cultural values into artifacts such as zines. In line with arguments that design is shaped by goal orientation, mediation tools, and sociocultural context [32]. This study operationalizes DAT not only as a framework for data analysis but also as a methodological guide for the zine design process. Design mediation significantly influences artifact outcomes, such as tools, whether analog or digital, shape representational possibilities, user interpretation, and cultural meaning [33]. The zine design process using the Designerly

Activity Theory (DAT) emphasizes the components of "Subject and Collective Subject," "Object and Object in Context," "Tools and Signs," "Rules and Design Criteria," "Community and Imagined Community," and "Division of Labor and Process" (Fig. 3). The resulting dataset is then used to examine how the zine design process unfolds through the lens of DAT. The design process emerges from the interconnected relationships among all elements within the DAT framework that collectively shape the zine design process. Therefore, the AT framework helps identify how zines serve as mediating artifacts in cultural transmission, which is formed from sociotechnical relations between collective subjects, signs, objects in context, design criteria, imagined community, and process.



**Fig. 3.** Expanded Activity Triangle or Designerly Activity Triangle

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Designing Through Collective Activity: Applying Designerly Activity Theory

This research applies Designerly Activity Theory (DAT) as its analytical framework to understand how the zine design process functions as a collective activity system [22]. Building upon Engeström's (1987) foundational model of Activity Theory, this approach situates design as a socio-cultural practice characterized by interrelated components: subject, object, tools, rules, community, and division of labor [23]. Within the context of Cikondang, this framework captures how design activities are mediated by cultural norms, institutional goals, and interpersonal negotiations between designers and local stakeholders. Activity Theory offers a holistic and systemic lens for analyzing design processes influenced by social and cultural contexts [34]. It enables researchers to explore how the creation of design artifacts such as zines extends beyond individual creativity, encompassing collective cognition, contextual constraints, and technological mediation. In this sense, zine-making in Cikondang is not merely a visual exercise but an activity system that transforms cultural knowledge into accessible communicative forms through negotiation and shared understanding.

##### 3.1.1. Subject and Collective Subject

The "subject and collective subject" in this element refer to the individuals or groups involved in the activity system of zine design. The identification of subjects is associated with their respective expertise, personal experience, or specific areas of interest. The design process was conducted collectively by a team of lecturers, design students, and local communities, including the customary leader Abah Anom Juhana. The primary actors of the system consist of design students and Abah Anom Juhana as the knowledge holder. While students executed most production tasks, the community's role as cultural authority shaped the authenticity of the content. This intersubjective configuration exemplifies DAT's view that design is never an individual activity but a collective cognitive system. The design process begins with a series of discussions, negotiations, and interactions among the subjects involved in the creation of the zine. The objective of this collective subject is to develop a shared understanding and a mental model that will guide the zine's development. Through these interactions, the subjects collaboratively construct a collective mental model that informs the design direction. In this project, the lecturers serve as supervisors and coordinators, the PKKM student team is

responsible for collecting visual assets, producing content, and executing the design, and the customary leader of Cikondang plays a central role as the primary informant for the zine's content. This process highlights the distributed yet interconnected roles within the collective activity.

All content development begins with the customary leader of Cikondang Traditional Village, who provides information related to myths, rituals, and local cultural practices in Cikondang, including various prohibitions and traditional narratives to be included in the zine (Fig.4). The student team subsequently gathers this information through interviews and additional written sources, while the supervising lecturers ensure that the curated material aligns with the thematic and contextual requirements of the project. Through this process, the study demonstrates that zines are not solely media for personal expression; when approached through the lens of Activity Theory, they can also serve as collaborative media, particularly in Indigenous contexts where active participation from customary leaders or the community is essential. The collective nature of this process aligns with the idea that collaborative design is an inherently complex activity shaped by shared cognition and negotiated meaning among diverse actors to a shared meaning collectively. Each participant brought distinct expertise and perspective. Lecturers facilitated theoretical guidance, students executed design and research tasks, and Abah Anom Juhana provided cultural content. Through discussion, reflection, and field observation, the team co-constructed a shared understanding of how zines could serve as tools for cultural continuity.



**Fig. 4.** Interviewing Abah Anom Juhana (customary leader of Cikondang Traditional Village) for zine contents

### **3.1.2. Object and Object in Context**

The object of this activity system was the preservation of Cikondang's sociocultural heritage through the creation of a zine. Design objects must be analyzed in their social and cultural contexts, as they embody collective intentions, value systems, and negotiations. Thus, zines become a communicative tool that can document local cultural values in the Cikondang Traditional Village through various textual and visual elements. The purpose of designing this zine originated from the "design challenge" and "design brief" provided by the PKKM Coordinator of the Visual Communication Design Program at Telkom University. The "design challenge" and "the design brief" constitute a set of issues faced by Cikondang Traditional Village, identified through the research and studies conducted during the previous year's PKKM program (Fig. 5). The study identified a critical gap. Despite its cultural richness, the village lacked accessible documentation and visual media that could effectively communicate its traditions to broader audiences. Most information about rituals and myths was only preserved orally by the customary leader Abah Anom Juhana, posing risks of knowledge loss. Responding to this, the PKKM team concluded that a creative and culturally sensitive medium, specifically, a zine, would serve as an effective means of documentation and information. The zine was thus conceived as both a visual artifact and a tool of cultural mediation, connecting the traditional oral culture with modern communication design practices. In this case, the design team worked to transform intangible heritage such as rituals, myths, Islamic values, and ecological taboos into visual and textual narratives comprehensible to contemporary audiences.



**Fig. 5.** The design brief

### 3.1.3. Tools and Signs

In Activity Theory, tools mediate the relationship between subject and object, serving as both cognitive and material instruments. The design team internalized local narratives through interviews and fieldwork and externalized them into tangible visual outputs. This hybridization of tools and meanings positioned the zine as a mediating artifact that facilitated cultural learning, bridging generational and technological divides. Tools do not merely serve production efficiency but shape how cultural values are represented and interpreted. At first, the team documented material culture, social interactions, rituals, and other expressions of intangible heritage through digital recordings, photography, videography, field notes, and graphic design software. The collected texts and visuals were compiled and reviewed to produce a research-based content draft serving as the blueprint for subsequent visual development. During the content development stage, all findings were analyzed and transformed into accessible article-style texts, adopting a storytelling strategy to maintain audience engagement while preserving cultural authenticity.

The content team structured narrative flow and information hierarchy to ensure clarity, coherence, and thematic relevance. Meanwhile, the visual design team translated field documentation into a variety of visual outputs, including photography, illustrations, infographics, pop-up illustrations, and short comics. Design decisions were guided by visual communication principles such as typographic consistency, emphasis, and culturally informed color palettes that reflect Sundanese aesthetic identity and the essence of Cikondang heritage. The final stage integrated textual and visual elements into a cohesive publication. According to the PKKM Coordinator, the use of zines and risograph printing reflects contemporary design trends and responds to industry demands, thereby enhancing the practical learning opportunities available to students in the Visual Communication Design Program. Furthermore, the integration of risograph and digital printing techniques demonstrated adaptive decision-making within the tools and signs in the zine's output (Fig.6). Each choice, whether analog or digital, reflected the designers' negotiation between functionality, aesthetics, and experimental intent, thereby reinforcing the iterative and situated nature of design as an activity system.



**Fig. 6.** Zine cover using risograph printing

### 3.1.4. Rules and Design Criteria

The design process of this zine was not solely driven by aesthetic considerations. Rather, it was shaped by a combination of formal institutional regulations and the customary rules of Cikondang Traditional Village. Two layers of rules guided the design activity, such as institutional regulations from the PKKM program and cultural norms from Cikondang's traditional system. The PKKM regulations that serve as the design criteria encompass the project timeline, the objectives and contextual parameters of the design process, and the required use of the risograph printing machine in accordance with the approved proposal. The design must also align with the initial brief regarding cultural preservation in the Cikondang Traditional Village. The integration of sociocultural rules within design processes ensures ethical sensitivity and contextual validity in designing a zine. During the FGD and interview, Abah Anom Juhana (Cikondang customary leader) shared fundamental cultural values, beliefs, and customary rules that the community continues to uphold. Representatives from BPK IX additionally emphasized the historical spread of Islam in Southern Bandung as a key driver of cultural identity and noted the need for more widely accessible media formats beyond conventional educational publications, which tend to reach only limited audiences. Formal and informal constraints shaped the design process, such as traditional laws of Cikondang conveyed by the customary leader. Preservation ethics like understanding the indigenous context issue and respect for sacred knowledge, helped to avoid cultural misrepresentation while defining design boundaries. For instance, visuals and contents were carefully curated to reflect Islamic philosophical values and local traditional values in Cikondang. Thus, the zine's design respected spiritual values while communicating cultural knowledge. These rules did not constrain creativity but instead functioned as ethical frameworks, reinforcing the integration of local wisdom into the design process. These cultural norms became the implicit design criteria shaping decisions regarding language use, imagery, and tone in zine making process. [Fig. 7](#) is the Zine layout process.



**Fig. 7.** Zine layout process

### 3.1.5. Community and Imagined Community

In brief, community is an amalgam of knowledgeable sources of information and data feeding the design decisions. The zine design process involved significant engagement with multiple stakeholders and the Cikondang Traditional Village community. Stakeholders such as the Bandung Regency Office of Culture and Tourism (Disbudpar) and the Cultural Preservation Center (Balai Pelestarian Budaya/BPK) Region IX played an important role in providing regulatory guidance and preliminary information necessary to address the initial brief of the PKKM grant program. The Cikondang Traditional Village community, meanwhile, served as the primary source of knowledge, offering culturally grounded insights essential for the development of the zine's content. At this stage, the designers must also envision an "imagined community," representing the anticipated users who will engage with the zine. This process clarifies that the zine is intended to serve as an informational medium about Cikondang Traditional Village. Currently, visitors receive information primarily through oral explanations and a limited amount of information displayed at the entrance of the village (Fig. 8). Thus, the zine can function as a more comprehensive and accessible informational resource for visitors. Beyond the immediate participants, the team also addressed an imagined community, like future readers, visitors, and youth audiences, who would engage with the zine. By envisioning these readers, designers constructed a symbolic network of cultural engagement that extends beyond the Cikondang's traditional village. The zine thereby functions as both a documentation medium and a bridge between the traditional and imagined publics. Within Activity Theory, community represents the social structure that sustains the activity system. The design community becomes a socio-cultural knowledge network rather than a single user group.



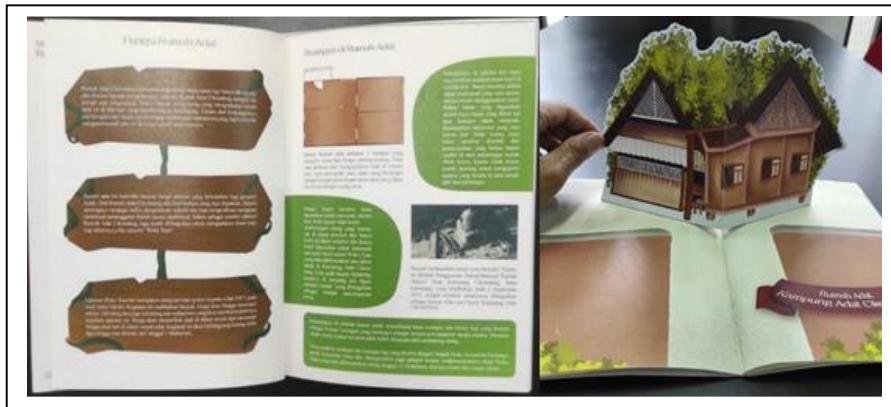
**Fig. 8.** Information board in Cikondang Traditional Village

### 3.1.6. Division of Labor and Process

The division of labor in this project was explicitly collaborative and dynamic. Lecturers acted as facilitators, students as design practitioners, and the customary leader as cultural informant. The student team separated into content and visual teams that reflect structured collaboration. A customary leader provides cultural information and validation. The Content team creates narrative formation and ethnographic interpretation, and the Visual team designing translating cultural experience into visual language. This division enabled iterative negotiation and was a hallmark of collaborative design complexity in Activity Theory. The design team's activities began with an initial project briefing involving the PKKM coordinator, supervising lecturers, and the student team. This briefing was intended to outline the project concept, scope of work, and expected output. Subsequently, the student team initiated data collection and preliminary observation to understand the local community's needs and to establish a foundation for content development. Following this stage, the design team carried out on-site observation in Cikondang Traditional Village. These visual assets were compiled in the form of photographs and illustrations, intended to serve as supporting visuals for the written content as well as for informational graphics such as infographics and comics.

After gathering the visual materials, the design team engaged in internal discussions with group members and supervising lecturers to formulate the zine's content, including the title and page-by-page conceptual structure. Discussions addressed the thematic direction, visual style, and narrative elements to be incorporated. The supervising team then translated these concepts

into initial design drafts, including sketches, layouts, typography selections, and necessary illustration components. They also developed a prototype for a pop-up representation of the Cikondang traditional house (Fig. 9). Progress presentations were held regularly with supervising lecturers to obtain feedback on the developing design work. Based on the feedback received, the design team refined and improved the drafts. Finalization included color adjustments and layout refinement, ensuring consistency and coherence across all elements. The final production stage involved printing the zine using a combination of risograph and digital printing techniques. Risograph was used for the cover and posters to allow for experimental and varied visual results, while digital printing was selected for the interior pages to enable faster production and the use of a wider color range. This hybrid printing strategy was chosen to balance functional needs with aesthetic experimentation.



**Fig. 9.** Zine content

Based on the mapping presented in Table 1, it can be analyzed that the process of designing cultural zines in Cikondang conceptually follows the Activity Theory framework, which positions design practice as a collective, mediated, and goal-oriented activity. Subjects are understood not only as individuals, but as a network of actors across roles, academics, students, researchers, and traditional leaders who jointly direct the object of the activity, namely the preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge. The use of mediating tools and artifacts, ranging from traditional printing techniques to digital technology, demonstrates the integration of local practices and contemporary design approaches. This activity is governed by a set of religious-cultural rules, narrative ethics, and institutional regulations that ensure cultural and academic legitimacy. In the broader community context, a clear division of labor between the content team, the visual team, and cultural authorities demonstrates structured social coordination. All of these relationships culminate in the output of a zine that is not only visually appealing but also culturally validated, confirming that design functions as a knowledge practice and a medium for cultural inheritance.

**Table 1.** Mapping of Activity Theory components in the process of designing a zine as a medium for preserving Cikondang culture

Activity Theory Component	Empirical Mapping in the Design Process
Subject	PKKM Coordinator, Lecturers, design students, and researchers as co-creators with the customary leader of Cikondang Traditional Village
Object	Preservation and dissemination of Cikondang cultural knowledge
Tools/Mediating Artifacts	Zines, risograph printing, digital printing, graphic design software, and documentation technologies
Rules	Religious-cultural norms, ethical storytelling, the design brief, and institutional regulations from the PKKM program.
Community	Customary leaders, local stakeholders, cultural institutions, zine community
Division of Labor	Content team, visual team, cultural authorities
Outcome	Zines are a culturally validated and visually engaging heritage media.

### 3.2. The Transformation of Object: From Traditional Values into Cultural Mediation

The main findings derived from employing Designerly Activity Theory as the analytical framework for the zine design process indicate that the development of the zine was significantly shaped by a collective workflow involving the Cikondang customary leader as the primary informant. His contributions encompassing extensive knowledge of local rituals, myths, and customary practices served as the core foundation of the content. Consequently, the design process did not emerge solely from the designer's subjective or individual creative concerns. Rather, it constituted a co-creative and participatory endeavor that actively engaged the Cikondang indigenous community. Furthermore, the application of Activity Theory reveals that the design process was strongly influenced by the "Tools and Signs" element. A range of media and fieldwork instruments, such as digital audio recorders, photography and videography equipment, field notes, graphic design software, and the combined use of risograph and digital printing technologies, played a substantial role in shaping the visual outcomes of the zine. The component of "Rules and Design Criteria" likewise exerted a major influence. Formal institutional guidelines from the PKKM grant, along with ethical principles and local customary values in the Cikondang community, informed and constrained decisions related to the zine's content and presentation. Through the lens of Activity Theory, it becomes evident that the zine design process is not driven solely by user needs or the designer's personal intentions. Rather, it is situated within a broader constellation of collective processes, regulations, cultural norms, and design criteria factors that are often overlooked in conventional design processes. The integration of Designerly Activity Theory (DAT) demonstrates how design processes can be examined beyond functional outcomes, considering ethical, collective process, and sociocultural dimensions. Practically, the findings suggest that cultural heritage preservation can benefit from adopting DAT-based frameworks to encourage the design process in indigenous context. The zine's production served as both an educational exercise and a heritage preservation strategy, bridging the gap between academic inquiry and community empowerment. This study's main limitation lies in its specific ethnographic scope, focusing exclusively on Cikondang Traditional Village. While the findings reveal deep contextual insights, they may not fully generalize to other cultural communities with different governance and ritual systems. Future research should employ longitudinal methods to assess the zine's long-term impact on cultural awareness and visitor engagement. Additionally, expanding the medium into digital or interactive formats could enhance accessibility and sustainability, supporting broader community participation.

## 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that zine design, when analyzed through the lens of Designerly Activity Theory, can serve as a powerful mediating tool for cultural preservation with engaged in sociocultural and systemic activity in indigenous or traditional village contexts. The collaborative process among lecturers, students, customary leaders, and the local community in Cikondang Traditional Village highlights how design operates as a socially situated and value-driven activity rather than a purely aesthetic or individual endeavor. Traditionally, zine-making processes have been closely associated with personal expression within the domains of social activism, feminism, and music subcultures in urban contexts. However, this study demonstrates that zine production can also be conducted in non-urban settings and applied to issues related to cultural preservation in traditional villages. Through the application of Designerly Activity Theory (DAT), this research concludes that zine-making processes involving cultural heritage preservation within Indigenous communities must be conducted collectively and collaboratively. Such processes require heightened sensitivity to ethical considerations and local value systems that inform and guide design decisions, stronger involvement of community members and stakeholders, the ability to adapt in using various tools and signs that are appropriate to local symbols, and a dynamic, collaborative design workflow that enables shared responsibilities among participants. Practically, this study contributes to the expanding discourse on Designerly Activity Theory by providing an applied model of collective, context-sensitive design for heritage communication in an indigenous context. Theoretically, this study also encourages further research on participatory and co-design practices in other indigenous or marginalized communities to explore how design can foster continuity between tradition and modernity while reinforcing community identity in an era of cultural transformation.

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## Declarations

<b>Author contribution</b>	: IR designed and implemented the research, wrote the initial draft, developed the theory and methodology, and conducted the analysis. LM searched for literature, collected secondary data, and conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) and field interviews. NEN collected the literature and conducted the FGDs.
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