



IDEALOGY

JOURNAL



IDEALOGY JOURNAL

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2022

Published: 1 April 2022

Published by:
©UiTM Press

e-ISSN 2550-214X

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PUBLICATION HISTORY

Published various field of arts and social sciences' studies since 2016 onwards.

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

Biannual Frequency: Two (2) issues per year (April and September)

e-ISSN

2550-214X

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Designing Development for Rice Agricultural Community in Delanggu Subdistrict, Klaten Regency, Indonesia: Enhancements based on Regional Cultural and Natural Potentials Studies

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Received: 20 November 2021, Accepted: 25 March 2022, Published: 1 April 2022

ABSTRACT

Delanggu district area has many rice-cultural potentials that can be developed. Having emerged from a traditional farming culture, some of these agricultural potentials include farming rituals, festivals, and planting methods, as well as the local rice variety of Rojolele Delanggu. Although traditionally present in the everyday life of the community, they are yet to be considered as real regional potentials. Consequently, they have not been utilized as significant elements for community building. Thus, with designers involved as facilitators, several projects have been carried out in collaboration with the farming community to re-recognize and encourage the revival of this particular living culture centered around traditional farming activity. The main activities include (1) mapping of treasure-and-stakeholders, (2) formulating ideas and making project priority scales, and (3) implementation of local-guest participatory activities. In this project, the main activities relate to re-introducing traditional agriculture, replanting Rojolele rice, and developing straw crafts.

Keywords: design culture, design-participatory learning, village community-building, regional development, straw knowledge



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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the Delanggu district is the most prominent agricultural region. Historically, the region produced the best rice and established its relationship with the Surakarta royal family through rice distribution. Geographically, the quality of rice produce is supported by its location, accessing the Cokro springs whose waters are fed by the nutrient-rich soil of Mount Merapi. In terms of rice variety, Delanggu had traditionally planted a local strain of Rojolele, well-suited with its geo-nutrients. It also influenced healthy farming, earning widespread local praise as the most delicious rice that enhances the taste of any side dish, as opposed to the current cultural mindset that emphasizes how ‘the good taste of side dishes will complement the taste of rice’. Since the government-supported Green Revolution in 1968, this traditional farming method has been forced to change to a modern one. Communal values and activities built around traditional spirituality, mythology, circular economic accessibility, thoughtful natural resource utility as well as societal education are gradually diminished and shifted to commodification processes focused only on the capacity to generate money. This has changed an agricultural society focused on kinship and general welfare to a capitalistic society with an industry-like managerial system as well as relationships of bosses and subordinates.

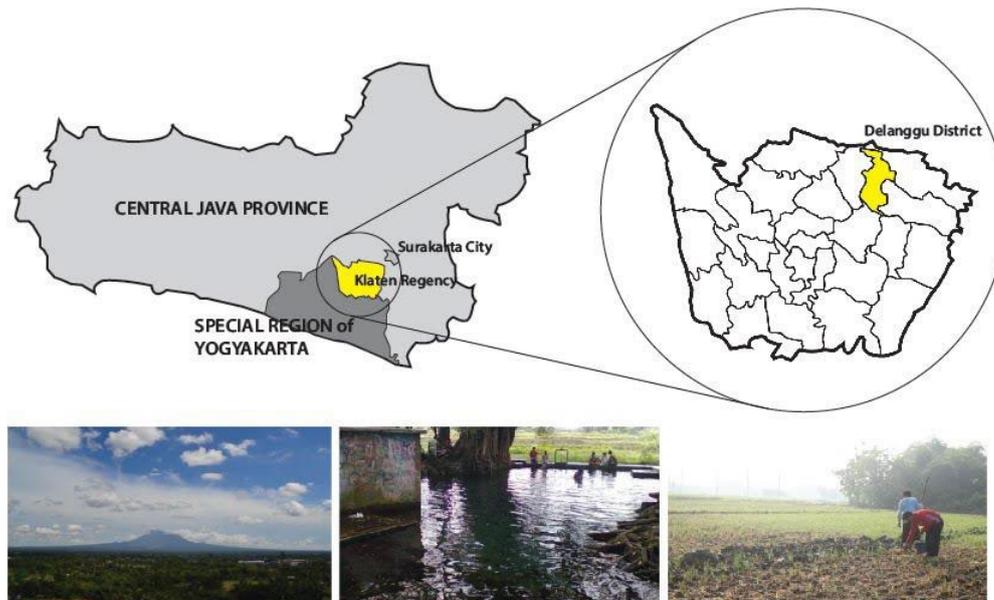


Figure 1: Delanggu District location and geographical supports
(Source: Pandu, 2021, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

The traditional farming process of a pure Rojolele rice strain (Rojolele Delanggu) has lost its charm when compared with fast capital generation promised by modern farming technology. Since the start-to-finish process of traditional farming requires manual and communal approaches, the period required to yield one harvest usually takes five to six months. Traditional farming also involves ritual stages at the prior to, and at the beginning of, harvest, as well as soil-resting stages maintained between the community and nature as well as a level of knowledge acquisition concerning the natural nutrient cycle within the ecosystem. Meanwhile, modern farming uses machines and fast-growing rice strains, usually harvested at three to four months and wherein any associated rituals are completely torn from the system. This eliminates an entire cultural, ecological pattern and associated values embodied in farming rituals, festivals and the local farming method, while gearing the community to adopt a market system centered around profit and labor efficiency. Thus, modern farming generalizes agricultural work throughout Indonesia, which means that it homogenizes the cultural diversity between agricultural regions.

Another problem faced by the rice farming community in Delanggu is the reduced area of agricultural lands. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, Delanggu is one of three sub-districts that experienced significant portion of agricultural land conversion. From 2004 to 2014, Delanggu district experienced a 2.39% land conversion of the total area dedicated for rice farming, which is 1,568 hectares. The converted lands were to become residential areas, commercial buildings, orchards, and vacant lands. To combat this problem, Delanggu could actually have a certain attractiveness in terms of rice farming culture. Based on its strategic location, flanked by the special region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta City, Delanggu has the potential to become a bountiful area endogenously rich in traditional culture, arts and crafts and thereby, eco-tourism. Simultaneously, to sustain their own circular economy, local communities need to be encouraged to become the "main actors" in any development process carried out within their living area. Therefore, with this research, we created an initial project to raise community and public awareness at large towards accepting Delanggu farming culture as a local treasure with the possibility of re-implementing traditional farming methods to revive environmental awareness.

1.1 Literature Reviews

In developing rural areas, there must be an understanding of the totality of life within which a human being aspires to exist, act and achieve. Inspired by the simplicity of Japanese rural life and traditions, the technology and practices for this project were developed from an awareness in which the environmental elements and approaches to livelihood should form an ecosystem. One in which the capacity of being a human as tool-user and object-maker is polished and improved to sustain the welfare of all beings. This understanding, known as "*Jinshin no Hana* (人心の華)" or "Flowering of the Total Person", was a design principle and method for regional development advocated by Professor Kiyoshi Miyazaki, and is currently practiced in various design activities of Chiba University's Design Culture Unit. Several community development projects in Japan by the Design Culture Unit have implemented this approach include participatory design through various event creations at the Komatsuji temple in the southern part of Chiba peninsula, the development of the agricultural community in Chiba prefecture Narukitamura region, the initiation of a 'straw community' in Aomori prefecture Inagaki village, and the revitalization of the Bamboo basket-making culture in Chiba prefecture, Isumi city, among others.

In a paper published by Professor Naoto Suzuki and Professor Kiyoshi Miyazaki entitled "Flowering of the Total Person" (2008), it is explained that this approach is developed as a way of designing living wherein the target of the design process is the "living" community. That is, the design output should focus on living enhancements that are to be based on local wisdom that traditional ways of living have generated organically. This paper also explains that to achieve this level of endogenous development, a valid approach is to encourage local communities to actively participate by positioning designers as part of the community. The ultimate goal of this approach is to form a community whose social climate, practices and activities are created to support the sustainability of economic activity, social acceptability, and environmental soundness. In terms of implementing the approach described above, a journal written by Professor Naoto Suzuki entitled "Becoming a Hometown Designer" (2010) explains that the 'tools' used in the approach are none other than mindful observation techniques and design process incorporating Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) from both designers and the local community as an all-hands-on-deck approach. This design principle and associated 'tools' have therefore become the basis for developing research and practices in the Delanggu district rice farming community.

1.2 Problem Statements

As a case study for the development of a rice farming community, Sabrang Village of Delanggu District has yet to create clear activities in terms of agricultural development. At the central organizing body in terms of farming activities, the Sedyo Makmur Farmers Association, none of the improvements are facilitated to secure even the quality and productivity of rice plants. As a result, no farming activities are run consistently with local customs and the community only relies on government agriculture services for activities that are often not in accordance with the needs of the local community. Therefore, most of these activities do not provide any sustainable impact. The local rice variety of Rojolele Delanggu, which is the natural potential of the area, have also not been planted for 30 years. Therefore, the rice produced has no taste character that differentiates it from those grown in other regions. Ironically, the name of Rojolele Delanggu, was made into a branding stamped on rice sacks with the aim of market segmentation even though the content is not that type of rice. Various traditional activities that are in nature formed as a way to appreciate and celebrate agricultural activities have not been practiced for twenty-five years, and thus no agricultural-based social platforms exist to promote community cooperation and comradeship (*gotong royong*) like traditional farmers have done for generations. The current young generation does not continue rice farming activities and mostly prefers to work as factory workers. Thus, in terms of what kind of activities are to be initiated and socialized, the most important step is to get all involved parties to know the "treasures" around them and to understand the various opportunities they offer.

2. METHODOLOGY

From the literature study discussed earlier, the implementation of this project incorporated techniques within the Participatory Learning and Action method. In the process of data collection and idea formulation, certain activities were carried out by encouraging local communities to be vocal and actively provide their opinions. In the initial stage, we used a technique called "treasures" mapping, done by walking around the area, and mapped the natural, ecological and cultural potentials of the Sabrang Village to determine which potential stakeholders would become "main actors" in the activities to be developed. The next stage was to discuss potential activities followed by the pairwise-ranking analysis to find out what activities are to be prioritized. The consideration for determining the ranking was carried out with an agreement on the aspects of ideation results, pandemic conditions, human resources, and financial support.

3. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

There are three main activities implemented in this design of agricultural community development, including treasures mapping, idea formulation and pairwise-ranking, and implementation with detailed explanations as follows:

3.1 Treasures Mapping

The initial process was carried out by directly communicating with the elements of local stakeholders consisting of farmers, local educational institutions, communities, and the government. Discussions were held informally by representatives of the design team in order to provide a comfortable space where locals could express their opinions in a relaxed atmosphere. Because of the pandemic, the meeting was held by a facilitator representative, the team leader of this study. From the discussion, several mapping works were identified from Sabrang Village such as the potentials of traditional farming previously practiced in the village and others coming from revitalized farming activities.

3.1.1 Potentials of traditional farming practice

In terms of agriculture, traditional farming practice can be understood from traditional methods of farming and how these are seen as a way for people to understand the connection that they have with surrounding natural environments and the natural nutrient cycle it contains. This is a way to fit their living activities into the already established natural ecosystem so as to engage and form symbiotic relationship with other beings, as well as form a man-made landscape that blends well with nature. Methods such as backward-planting, soil-resting, observing rice plants from huts and using ropes to repel birds were invented and practiced because the previous mindset considered birds to be a part of the natural balance and need not be killed. A traditional harvesting technique done communally used a cutting tool called *ani-ani*, a type of small knife (usually well-hidden in the palms when used), to only cut the ripe rice stalks. This way, the unripe stalks could be left to ripen for a later harvest. This meticulous and time-consuming harvest actually shows the care farmers have for rice since in traditional belief, the rice plant is the embodiment of the rice goddess, hence it needs to be treated with respect and gentleness. This technique also yields longer straw and is thought to protect the straw from becoming brittle, whereas uses of a sickle that roughly chops the whole plant reduces the moisture and causes the straw to be brittle. Furthermore, traditional harvesting can only be done by women because traditional beliefs regard the rice plant as a woman and since this plant is pregnant with rice, harvesting women act as midwives who gently help them to 'deliver'.

The practice of appreciation and celebration permeated traditional farming culture in the form of several ritual activities that were also recorded in treasures-mapping. These included ritual performances during the planting period by placing bananas and other 'uborampe' elements (ritual requirements) in the irrigation stream, ritual performance on the day before harvest called 'Wiwitan' as a form of gratitude and a request for permission to Dewi Sri (Goddess of Rice plant), and 'Slametan',

which is performance of cooking and eating with farmers for the success of the harvest, as well as playing Gejok Lesung (mortar) while pounding rice grain which is usually done by hitting wooden sticks or pestles in a ship-shaped mortar.

3.1.2 Potentials of revitalized farming activities

What has been lost in Delanggu is the *Rojolele Delanggu Murni*, the local pure rice strain—the natural potential of Delanggu that tied the community to the ecosystem and to royal commissions, and is currently being "missed" by farmers in Sabrang Village because of the long history and stories connecting this local variety with the agricultural community in Delanggu. From the revitalized farming activities, straw becomes the agricultural potential which is not fully utilized. Until now straw is still considered as waste and is sold at a very cheap price (100, 000 Rupiahs per rice field or about 7 U.S. dollars at the time of writing) or is burned post-harvest.

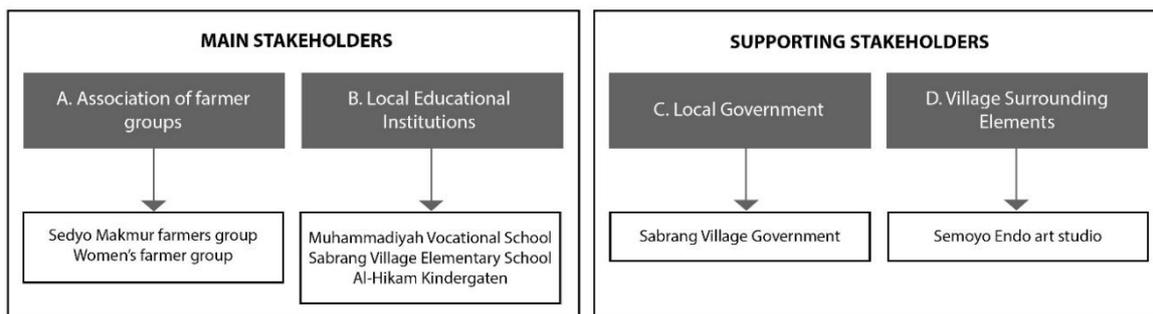


Figure 2: Stakeholders mapping for rice agricultural community development project (Source: Pandu, 2021, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

In terms of the formal education facility in Sabrang Village, there are three schools with different levels of education including the vocational school. the SMK Muhammadiyah Delanggu (senior vocational school), SDN Sabrang (primary school), and TK Al-Hikam (kindergarten). Until now, these educational institutions run a formal curriculum provided by the central government and do not yet have a program that increases students' sensitivity to local potentials. Therefore, no connection is formed between internal stakeholders such as Gapoktan and educational institutions. As a supporting stakeholder element, the village government, represented by the *kelurahan* (urban village) has a role in providing facilities for carrying out activities as well as the legality of activities in the form of permits. Another supporting element is the Sedyo Makmur Art Studio from Gatak Village which is located right next to Sabrang Village. The studio has art activities in the fields of dance and fine arts that incorporate local-traditional themes. The studio is active in providing entertainment and communal activities in several other village communities of the Klaten Regency.

3.2 Idea Formulation and Pairwise Ranking

Community development activities are carried out by providing suggestions for activities related to the theme of traditional farming practice and revitalized farming activities by making relevant stakeholders as the implementers. In relation to traditional farming practice, the proposed ideas are more about how to re-elevate abandoned traditions and reintroduce them to society. The proposed activities include (1) re-organizing the pre-harvest ritual performance of Wiwitan, which used to be an icon of local community festivals for celebrating the harvest, (2) organizing traditional harvesting technique using the *ani-ani* knife, (3) organizing post-harvest communal Slametan performance with farmer associations, (4) re-making some of the agricultural artifacts, (5) traditional art performance to celebrate farming with Gejok Lesung, (6) dance activities by students of Muhammadiyah Delanggu Vocational School, (7) other agricultural workshops with students in Delanggu schools.

Meanwhile, related to revitalized farming activities, potentials are to be discovered from the proposed activities related to planting crops, as well as the utilization of local possibilities which has

not been explored at this time. The details of the activities discussed included (1) replanting pure strain of Rojolele Delanggu rice, (2) developing handicrafts made of rice straw, (3) improving the natural environment for agricultural activities, (4) organizing a bazaar for agricultural produce and products. From the proposed ideas, the next stage was discussing which ideas are prioritized to be organized through the pairwise ranking method. In addition to consideration of interesting ideas related to farming culture and revitalized agricultural potential, the team also considered how to organize it during the pandemic. The process was concluded in eight activities that were to be performed. Some of the activities were not held due to pandemic constraints, especially for school students who were still not allowed to participate in communal activities.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	Total	Rank
A	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	9	2
B	0	-	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	6	4
C	0	0	-	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	6	5
D	0	1	0	-	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	8
E	0	0	0	1	-	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	7
F	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
G	0	0	0	0	0	1	-	0	0	0	1	2	9
H	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	10	1
I	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	-	1	1	8	3
J	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	-	1	5	6
K	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	2	10

ACTIVITIES	
A: Wiwitan pre-harvest ritual	F: Muhammadiyah Delanggu Vocational School traditional dance
B: Ngani-ani traditional harvest	G: Farming workshop with students
C: Slametan celebration performance	H: re-planting pure strain of Rojolele Delanggu rice
D: Re-making farming traditional artifacts	I: Developing rice straw handicrafts
E: Gejok lesung pounding rice performance	J: improving the natural environment
	K: organizing a bazaar for agricultural products

Figure 3: Pairwise ranking screening ideas of project implementation
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3.3 Project Implementation

The activity was carried out with the aim of practicing and conserving traditional farming culture, developing high quality rice farming, straw-yielding and crafts from straw as the main material. In its implementation, activities have been carried out since August 2020, following the time of the rice harvest. The beginning of the activity started with rebuilding the straw and bamboo hut, and traditional bird repellent. This activity aimed to rebuild posts that are used by farmers to rest, discuss, and protect rice fields from avian disturbances. The next activity was during the pre-harvest time, where Wiwitan ritual was re-incorporated as an appreciative act for blessings, attended, on a limited basis, by members of farmer associations and children in the village. This ritual is making a come-back and may be considered as part of the communal identity of Sabrang village. When actually performed in August 2020, it has regenerated various values, such as mutual cooperation, by collectively preparing for festival activities, showing respect for nature in the form of "asking permission" from the rice before harvesting the next day, reintroducing values related to communal celebration by the act of eating together, and creating educational value by bringing young people to experience the entire traditional farming-related act of appreciation. Farming activities were continued with rice harvesting using the *ani-ani* knife which was collectively performed by members of the Women Farmers Association. This activity was then continued with Slametan festival as a celebratory follow-up and offering of gratitude for the success of their rice harvest. As a continuation of these celebratory acts, a Lesung Jumengglung rice-pounding performance was conducted by the arts group Sanggar Seni Semoyo Endo, traditionally performed by farmers in the past to rhythmically create sounds from pounding the rice grain inside a ship-like container while singing, producing a meditative yet energizing experience.

Related to the development of local agricultural potential by revitalizing farming activities, several programs were carried out one after another. First was the replanting of the *Rojolele Delanggu Murni* pure rice strain in the sample area of rice fields by farmer groups. Ironically, these seeds were not found at all in the area of Delanggu District, but with the support of Indonesian Center for Rice Research, these precious seeds could be obtained and used. The next activity was the development of handicrafts from straw carried out by the mothers from Women Farmers Association. The craft products are developed for everyday household needs such as placemats, brushes, and soap made from burnt dried straw (*merang*). In straw craft-making activity, 'Ecofish'-making workshop was also held with the United Farmers Association where fish-shaped objects were made and placed in various water channels to filter the dirt before water enters the rice field area. This activity was directly supported by Ecofish designer Kimihide Nagase of the Inagaki Straw community, Aomori, Japan. As a creative and educative activity especially organized with and for the children in Sabrang Village, natural materials such as straw and bamboo were made into toys and used in various interactive games, such as throwing straw-rings at poles, straw-buffalo racing competitions, playing and exploring with pottery waste, and twirling bamboo rings. To stimulate an awareness of agricultural potential, the children of Al-Hikam Delanggu Kindergarten were also encouraged to make sketches and drawings with themes of rice fields which were later collected to draw inspiration for making a mural in the Sabrang village area.



Figure 4: Re-planting Rojolele local rice, artifacts reconstruction, wiwitan ritual, ngani-ani harvest, and gejok lesung performance, (A to E).

Slametan celebration, rice straw craft development, ecofish, rice straw games, and mural (F to J)

(Source: Pandu, 2021, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

4. DISCUSSION

Based on several discussions with farmers' groups, the development activity was named 'Ngani-ani' festival 2020 which means harvesting rice with ani-ani (small cutting tools with handle made from bamboo and small knife). It became a forum that take inspirations from traditional harvesting activity as respect for rice plants. The implementation of community development activities was carried out during a pandemic, and therefore strict health protocols and restrictions were placed on communal activities. However, for the dissemination stage of introducing these activities to the community, each event was documented where the works were assisted and edited by a team of students from Faculty of Fine Art and Design Universitas Sebelas Maret (FSRD UNS), and published in social media such as YouTube, in which the people of Sabrang village are already familiar with the operation. Currently, almost 100% of the people use smartphones and are accustomed to accessing social media, especially YouTube and Instagram. In the process of disseminating information, word-of-mouth is strongly practiced by anyone in the village, which was helpful for sharing activities with neighbours. One vacant spot in front of the village was also painted with murals to inform the wider community of these activities. Through 'Goodnews from Indonesia', a popular mass media platform that shares positive events throughout the nation, information related to this agricultural potential development of Sabrang Village could be shared with a wider national audience. The hope is to inspire others outside the village to find out about these activities as well as open up for tourism opportunities after the pandemic is over.

In implementing these activities, there were four aspects produced that have the potential to be explored and developed in the future, including local entertainment aspects, economic aspects, social aspects, and environmental aspects. In terms of local entertainment, it is provided from the cultural potential of traditional rice farming activities which incorporate communal celebrations. In fact, this is what distinguishes one agricultural area from another. This particular diversity becomes a special attraction and could be enhanced to attract visitors. In terms of economic potential, through the planting of local rice variety of *Rojolele Delanggu Murni*, the Sabrang village will have the full potential of premium rice production with historical knowledge and local stories to share. Authentic endogenous branding could provide more ways to generate a circular economy and healthier food culture within the community compared to superior rice varieties, in general. The development of handicrafts made from rice straw has the potential to provide another form of income generation, especially from the empowered female farming community, which in their spare time makes creative products to provide additional income for the family. For environmental soundness, several activities such as making Ecofish water filters and also workshops on making natural washing soap from rice straw were accepted as positive change made to improve the health of natural environment, and have re-acquainted the farmers with the natural nutrient cycle. This activity has the potential to be made into collaborative programs with educational institutions in introducing the use of straw and practicing experiential learning programs in Sabrang Village. In the context of social acceptability, various activities were carried out mutually and self-motivated by each stakeholder for optimal implementation because they considered the success of these activities to be their success as well.

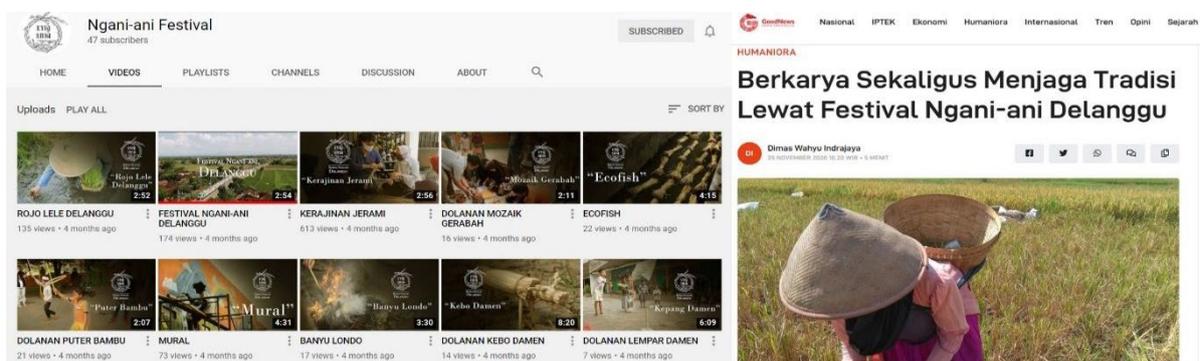


Figure 5: Project documentation on Youtube and Indonesia's popular news media
(Source: Pandu, 2021, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

5. CONCLUSION

Designing development by incorporating local people to become "main actors" raised a sense of ownership in each of the program being carried. Thus, a sense of responsibility for the success of these activities was cultivated and facilitated. The active role of designers in this project was to facilitate participatory learning and incite curiosity by listening and mediating the opinions of the local community, encouraging them to be active, stimulating potential activities for further discussion, and motivating the local community to get to know the opportunities they can generate from their own regional and cultural potentials. In this context, designers must position themselves as a well-blended part of the local community and be sensitive to the constraints they face.

In the development of the rice farming community in Sabrang Village, Delanggu District, the majority of ideas have come from the local community who were feeling "nostalgic" about traditional farming culture which has not been observed in the village for about twenty-five to thirty years. The role of the designer here was therefore to find ways to make this long-lost activity one that was performed and regularly practiced again, albeit during this pandemic period, by paying attention to aspects of authenticity and health, and create supporting protocols. Ideas which were basically adapted from the outside by re-purposing Japanese design practices have allowed another kind of development to take place in the community. That is, products such as straw handicrafts have the potential to become an organic part of villagers' future when people find meaning and value in their everyday life context, and can be supported by designers in cultivating their creativity. For now, however, the local community accepts these activities through discussions supported by the PLA method and the fact that what was carried out yielded a positive impact on stakeholders.

Based on the evaluation conducted after the first phase of activities, designing development will continue with several programs that will be slowly and sustainably carried out such as the Rojolele Delanggu pure strain cultivation, straw handicraft-making, and traditional celebration activities at harvest time. As an additional suggestion from the village chieftain after the first activity, farmer groups were provided with an area as a village asset to expand activities towards a Tumpang Sari plantation for independent village food resources. Future activities will also be carried out to prepare for the post-pandemic period, and tourism activities and workshops for both neighbouring rural and external communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In terms of the community works that made this Ngani-ani festival 2020 accomplishment, the authors' sincere appreciation goes to the main stakeholders in Sabrang Village, Sedyo Makmur Farmers Association, Women farmers Association, and the supporting stakeholders, the Regional Government and the Semoyo Endo Art Studio. Gratitude and appreciation also for GoodNewsFromIndonesia (GNFI) for national publication and our students who engaging this project from start to finish.

FUNDING

The authors received research grant from non-tax national income, Research and Community Service Institutions Universitas Sebelas Maret.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author was responsible for field coordination, data collection, and writing the journal framework. The second author contributed to compiling data and writing journals. The third and fourth authors were responsible for supporting data collection.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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