



## Being Yourself in a Creative City: Zines, Social Identity, and Community Dynamics in Bandung

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### [ *Abstract* ]

Zines are grassroots media closely tied to social identity, serving as platforms for communities to form, express, and strengthen their collective identity. This study examines zines in Bandung that play a vital role in shaping the social dynamics of local communities through practices such as distribution in public spaces like coffee shops and bicycle workshops. Drawing on Caswell's (2014, 2018) principles of community archiving—Participation, Shared Stewardship, Multiplicity, Activism, Reflexivity, and Valuing Affect—this research explores how zines function as relational artifacts that sustain cultural resilience. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) is employed to analyze how zines act as collective symbols that foster in-group identity across diverse subcultures, including cycling, music, and street art communities. Additionally, existentialist concepts such as Sartre's "existence precedes essence" and Heidegger's "*Mitsein*" are applied to bridge the personal and communal dimensions of zine culture. The findings reveal that zines in Bandung are not merely tools for information dissemination

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but also serve as collective archives that preserve the identity and memory of local communities. Their physical format and distribution practices resist digital homogenization, offering a tangible medium to celebrate community existence authentically while supporting cultural resilience in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** Zine, Bandung, Community, Identity, Alternative Media

## I . Introduction

In the context of popular culture in Indonesia, zines occupy an important position. Zines have proven to be intertwined with other areas of popular culture, such as independent music, football, skateboarding, mural, and many more. In fact, it's not uncommon for zines to be a medium of expression for activism in Indonesian cultural subcultures. This activism thrives in Bandung, the most populous city in Indonesia outside of Jakarta, the nation's capital city (Badan Pusat Statistik 2024).

Bandung is recognized by UNESCO as one of the Creative Cities in the design category, cementing its position as a hub of cultural innovation in Indonesia. With a highly collaborative and supportive community of alternative activities in various fields (such as music, street art, zines, fashion, and graphic design), Bandung continues to maintain its status as an independent and innovative center of alternative culture (especially in the punk scene), with a distinctive approach and strongly connected to its local community (Martin-Iverson 2020).

While zine culture in Bandung is deeply rooted in the punk and underground movements, zines in Bali take a different path. According to Anggawi (2022), zines in Bali often criticize capitalism and promote eco-friendly living, using zines as activist tools in environmentalism. In contrast, in Yogyakarta, zine culture is heavily focused on traditional arts and folklore. These regional variations highlight the adaptability of zines as a medium that responds to

local issues, while adhering to the Do-it-Yourself (DIY) and non-commercial spirit.

In this digital era, zines in Bandung have not really died out. In this city, zines still have many enthusiasts, both among readers and zinester (a term for zine makers). This is proven by the existence of various events that gather zine lovers, one of which is the Bandung Zine Festival which has been running for years until this writing (2024). At the 2024 edition of Bandung Zine Festival, there were at least 100 tenants involved to showcase their zines and it was accessible to everyone as it was a free-to-enter event (See figure 1). This research discusses 5 zines in the festival that represent the dynamics of activism in Bandung.



<Figure 1> Poster of Bandung Zine Festival 2024  
(Source: Instagram/bandungzinefest)

Certainly, the survival of zines in Bandung has been a source of joy for its fans. However, how zines are still relevant today, especially in their physical form, remains a question. If we look at the ease of media technology offered today, it is possible that zines will become extinct like other forms of media, such as newspapers.

Therefore, it is important to examine the development of zines in Bandung. In a broader context, this can be a complementary part of the exploration of the zine phenomenon, which is still a relatively new study (Hays 2020).

Although zines are a "new" object of study in the media sphere, their development is quite impressive. Hays (2020) analyzed the interest in studying zines by academics, the results showed an increasing trend of 1,700% over 28 years (1990-2018). Topics that commonly appear in zine studies are "riot grrrl," "collection development," "music criticism," and other aspects of art. Referring to Hays' findings, this article falls into the "collection development" topic category.

Another interesting thing is that zines today are not migrating to digital forms in an effort to adapt to the times. If we look at newspapers, they have almost completely transformed to digital channels such as websites to survive. Of course, there are zines that can now be accessed digitally, but in general, zines still retain their physical form. The community in this subculture seems to have an important role in archiving and preserving zines. Therefore, the principles of community archiving developed by Caswell (2014, 2018) are appropriate to look at the zine phenomenon in Bandung.

In examining the concept of subculture, it is important to consider the underlying ideology, including the principles of inclusivity and DIY practices in zines. The simplicity of the process allows anyone with the ability to express ideas, thoughts, opinions, news, or artwork. Additionally, zines are usually available at an affordable price, given that zines are generally non-commercial in nature, and can be purchased and enjoyed by a wide audience. Zines are also commonly bartered from one person to another.

This article will discuss zines through Caswell's (2014, 2018) six key principles of community archival discourse which consist of: participation, shared stewardship, diversity, archival activism, reflexivity, and valuing influence. According to Caswell, this concept can illustrate how the archive encourages the participation of its members to engage in the community it represents and serves, Caswell explains the principles as follows:

These principles draw attention to the ways in which community archives generally encourage participation in archival work from the communities they serve and represent; conceptualize their relationship with materials as one of mutual responsible care rather than a formal legal transfer of custody; acknowledge a range of conflicting views, as well as a variety of formats; have an explicitly political orientation; and foster a culture of self-reflection and evaluation (Caswell 2018).

### **1.1. Zine**

In his definition, Chidgey (2020) suggests that a zine is a magazine published independently and with minimal resources to build identity, form community, and explore social activism. In addition, Corwin & Helmer (2024) argue that by their nature, zines are collaborative and act as grassroots media.

In relation to zines as a form of grassroots media, there are some important definitions that refer to Bennett (2023) who explains that there must be an intention to be alternative. Regarding the form, Bennett says it can be writing, collage, or photography/illustration. Of course, it also adheres to the spirit of DIY and community-oriented. This means that it is very important for zines not to be commercial.

There are several studies that adequately explain the definition. Baker & Cantillon (2022) found that zines, as a form of community archive on Norfolk Island, have the power to feature marginalized voices in dominant historical narratives, while offering an important resource for community building and political resistance. In Asia, for example, we can find the use of zines in two of Hong Kong's largest social movements, the Umbrella Movement (2014) and the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (2019). Tong (2020) says, with the push of digitalization, zines have become a medium to spread political reality and encourage collective participation.

In Indonesia, zines are no longer a foreign concept, although their development has been slower than in countries like America. However, in Bali, zines have become a medium to voice anti-capitalist collectives and political critiques. In addition, zines

are also seen as a symbol of non-commercial cultural products in terms of content, circulation, and collection (Anggawi 2022).

While zines do have a connection to social movements, they are essentially a medium that can be very personal to the author. As stated by Duncombe (1997) "...they (zines) celebrate all the celebrity insiders, the losers in a society that rewards the best and the brightest..." This refers to the inclusivity offered by zines and the DIY concept, where anyone can make a zine about anything. Watson & Bennett (2021) explored how the activity of reading a zine can be personally meaningful to the reader. According to Watson & Bennett, the format and material of zines (aesthetics, DIY ethos, and anti-establishment positioning) give the reader a sense of "lightness" or levity in life, which is perceived as intimacy in the zine-collecting experience.

In another study, Gray et al. (2022) showed that zines can be a medium for activism in various conditions, such as during a pandemic. Zines provide emotional support through community building during times of isolation from the zinester involved. This is because zines, according to the article, are accessible and inclusive to anyone with their self-published method.

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (2004) will also be used as a theoretical framework. It suggests that people identify themselves as members of different groups—such as a professional community, fans of a specific pop band, or those with or without children. In doing so, they also assess the groups they identify with (in-groups) and distinguish them from those they don't see themselves as part of (out-groups).

In this case, personal identity then turns into a collective identity or a specific social identity. According to Tajfel and Turner, social identity is an important part of an individual's self-concept that is shaped by their membership in certain social groups. A person not only sees himself as an individual, but also as a member of various groups, such as family, community, organization, or even nation. This social identity helps individuals understand who they are in a broader social context.

This study will also employ existentialist concepts to enrich the analysis of zine culture in Bandung, particularly Jean Paul Sartre's "existence precedes essence" (1946) and Martin Heidegger's "Mitsein" (1962). In Bandung's zine culture, we argue that Mitsein manifests in the communal practices of creation, distribution, and reflection, where zines act as relational artifacts that sustain collective identity and meaning. These philosophical frameworks are appropriate for understanding zines as both individual acts of self-expression and collective practices that foster community identity. By situating zines within these existentialist ideas, this research highlights how zinesters navigate freedom and relationality in the creation and distribution of their work.

## **1.2. Background: Zine and Underground Scene in Bandung**

Bandung is one of the major cities in Indonesia and the capital of West Java province. The phenomenon of popular culture in Indonesia, especially in Bandung, is a socio-cultural phenomenon that has been running gradually from generation to generation. As stated by Martin-Iverson (2014): "Bandung's historical orientation towards global modernity and cosmopolitan culture is an important aspect of the city's colonial heritage." The development of popular culture also gave birth to an "underground" aspect in Bandung as an attempt to break away from mainstream culture.

Martin-Iverson (2021) argues that the emergence of an "underground" dimension in popular culture is important for understanding the politics of cultural production, including social relations and political struggles. We can also see these two things in the phenomenon of the development of popular culture in Bandung, including in its media forms.

The development of popular culture consumption in Bandung went hand in hand with free media consumption. Until 1989, television was only broadcast from one channel, Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI). Obviously, there were not many options for young people to enjoy the content they liked from television. This made the shows accessible only to more privileged young people. But then came the various channels that allowed popular culture to be more

inclusive to different groups. For example, MTV first aired in the 90s on ANTV. At this point, indie music developed in the UK and America became more open to audiences, giving many young people in Indonesia new knowledge that there was another side to mainstream music, including in Bandung. It also signaled a movement to stand on the independent side of the cultural production process.

The heavy flow of information about independent culture and Do It Yourself from MTV made young people in the 90s freely adopt lifestyles abroad. In fact, this was reinforced by the existence of new forms of media such as zines that were shared from one community to another. One of the earliest zines to appear in Bandung was *Submissive Riot*, published by Riotic in 1998. (Prasetyo 2017). Another source also mentioned that *Revograms* in 1995 was the first zine to appear in Bandung. (Budiman, 2014). Both zines not only discuss Punk/Hardcore music culture, but also the anarchism movement it embraces.

What *Submissive Riot* or *Revograms* have to say is in line with the findings of Siddhawira & Sugiana (2023) who point out that zines are usually used by musicians who come from the underground and are idealistic, or even anarchist on the more extreme side. This finding also confirms Martin-Iverson's (2021) assertion that the underground scene is also a place of political struggle.

## II . Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach combining semi-structured interviews, field observation, and zine analysis. The primary site of data collection was the Bandung Zine Fest 2024, where we conducted interviews and observations over two separate days, including a post-festival discussion event. we used snowball sampling to identify zinesters for interviews, starting with those who had booths at the festival—some of whom were already personal acquaintances. Additional participants were recommended by other zinesters based on their availability and relevance to the study. In total, we interviewed seven zinesters, with some booths being

managed by two individuals.

Interviews were semi-structured, guided by a few core questions posed to all participants, while allowing flexibility to explore emergent themes during the conversations. Most interviews were conducted during the festival; however, one notable interview, with that of *Brahauss*, was conducted the following day at a post-event gathering located in Microbus Koffie. We engaged in field observation during both the main festival and a subsequent discussion event. The observations focused on booth activities, zinester interactions, and zine circulation practices. We also used this opportunity to identify potential interviewees and to barter or purchase zines for further analysis.

A total of eight zines were selected for analysis, primarily published between 2020 and 2024, with a few dating back to the early 2000s. We analyzed both textual and visual elements, situating the content within broader contextual factors such as the period of publication, the zinesters' backgrounds, and contemporaneous socio-political conditions.

### III. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Participation

In this concept, participation emphasizes forms of engagement and self-presentation. Caswell (2014) also highlight that community participation is a key aspect of self-archiving. As Caswell says, "local events can be used to get community feedback on collection priorities (Caswell 2014)".

In the context of Bandung, it is evident that there are many events organized with the aim of fostering the existence of zines. The Bandung Zine Festival is undoubtedly one of the most significant events in this context. It is an annual event that has been held since 2012 and is scheduled to continue in the future.

At the Bandung Zine Festival, all participants are given autonomy to determine the format and content of their respective

contributions. For example, some issues released by zinesters are translations of their digital versions, or vice versa. This freedom allows for a space of inclusion, thus encouraging the participation of new zineers.

For some zinesters, Bandung Zine Festival was the perfect place to launch their first issue. Domi and Dito from *Brahauss*, a zine that discusses their lives as bikers, for example, recognized this:

Actually, we have never released a zine, but we already have a magazine. It just so happened that a friend offered to share a booth at the Bandung Zine Fest? We, who already had the idea to make a zine, said yes to the offer. That was the beginning of our first edition (Interview with Domo, *Brahauss*).

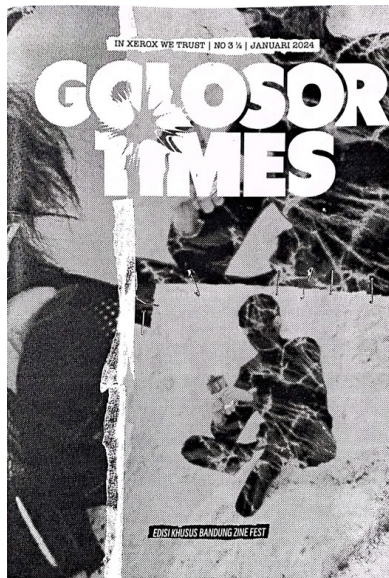
The same goes for Ilham and Sendhi from *Consumed Media*, for whom Bandung Zine Fest was the first time they were involved in this community. In fact, they made this zine as an effort to emphasize the existence of their media among zinesters:

Through our first zine edition, this is part of our effort to show that *Consumed Media* exists in the zine community. Showing that we are also involved. It just so happens that Bandung Zine Fest is the right momentum for us (Interview with Sendhi, *Consumed Media*).

From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, it can be seen that this is also the beginning of their social identification process. Debutant zinesters like Domi, Dito, Ilham, and Sendhi are not just launching a product (the zine); they are also launching their social identity as zinesters. By participating, debut zinesters adopt the norms and values of their subculture by starting their journey to create and express ideas through zines media. This also aligns with Sartre's principle that "existence precedes essence," emphasizing that individuals shape their own identities through actions (in this case by participating) rather than adhering to predefined societal roles (Aho 2023). The act of creating zines becomes a form of existential self-interrogation, where zinesters confront questions about who they are and what values they stand for in a world that often marginalizes alternative voices.

Furthermore, Heidegger argues in his book, *Being and Time* (1964), that *Mitsein* is not an optional feature of human life but a constitutive aspect of existence: “The Dasein is in fact an In-der-Welt-sein (Being-in-the-world), and a Mitsein, a being with. ‘With’ expresses here an existential: as the Dasein is essentially a Mitsein, it encounters other Dasein...” (Candiotta, 2016). The festival transforms individual creativity into a communal practice. This can be seen when Domi (*Brahauss*) or Ilham (*Consumed Media*) “launch” their social identities at the festival, they do so within a shared world where their existence is inherently tied to others. Heidegger’s *Mitsein* explains this dynamic: individual Dasein is a “moment” of a larger social fabric, where participation affirms one’s role within the community.

Bandung Zine Festival not only encouraged the emergence of new zines, but also provided momentum for existing zines to publish special editions. For example, *Golosor Times* (See Figure 2), a media and community with an interest in skateboarding, did just that. On the cover, they specifically stated "Bandung Zine Fest Special Edition."



<Figure 2> Golosor Times "Bandung Zine Fest Special Edition"

In addition, participation in the zine scene in Bandung is also driven by the inclusiveness of the zinesters. For example, we can see that some zines in the city include an email address that allows readers to submit their articles to be published in the zine. Through the submission system, zines become a medium that can actually be owned by anyone. Publishers and zinester then have a discourse to publish from various points of view, or in other words, "users view." By participating in the culture of zine production, zinesters have a means of writing that relates to the next concept, shared stewardship, where the existence of an archive is managed jointly by its own community. In addition, with the Bandung Zine Festival, zinesters are given a spatial space to conduct cultural production. This is as stated by Straw (2004) that the spatial dimension is a vital aspect of the "scene" and its social creativity.

This principle of participation allows us to see the important role of community participation in zine culture in Bandung. Events such as the Bandung Zine Festival exemplify how zine culture develops through collective engagement. Zinesters are given the autonomy to present their work in any format, thus encouraging diverse voices and new participants. The festival not only provides a physical space for zinesters to showcase their work, but also acts as a platform for cultural exchange where creative ideas and practices circulate freely, ensuring the continuity of the zine-making tradition in Bandung. This collaborative participation highlights the inclusivity and communal nature of the zine scene.

On the other hand, despite involving public participation, *Golosor Times* also reflects the skateboarding community's resistance to dominant social norms and values. From a social identity perspective, the zine reinforces an in-group identity that refuses to adapt to mainstream standards, instead, creating an independent subculture. *Golosor Times* zine becomes a symbol for the community to show that they have an identity and a way of life that is different from the existing social norms, expressing their collective values as well as their personal freedom.

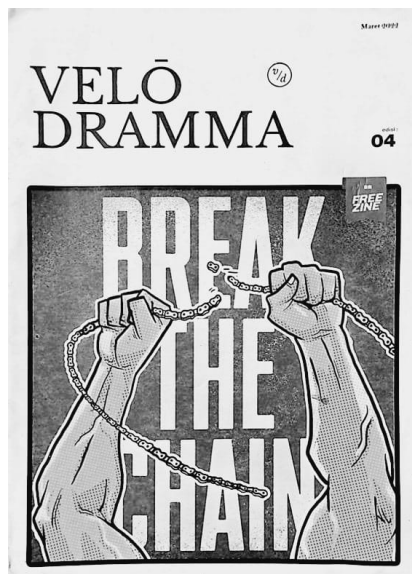
The DIY philosophy adopted by *Golosor Times* emphasizes complete freedom in terms of creativity, without any commercial intervention or strict editorial restrictions. The zine's often rough

and experimental design, content and structure symbolize authenticity and creative freedom. This freedom allows each contributor to convey their stories, images and experiences in a way that best suits them, making *Golosor Times* an authentic representation of the skateboarding community.

### 3.2. Shared Stewardship

For Caswell (2014), another important part of this concept is how communities manage archives for mutual sustainability. Shared stewardships, as researched by Baker & Cantillon (2022) in the context of zines, also refers to the commitment to ensure zines are always available to the community.

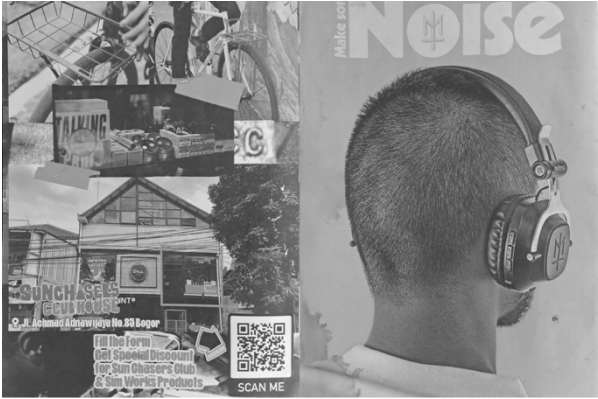
Zines are a subculture that also intersects with other spectrums of Bandung popular culture. Each of these intersecting spectrums has a role in maintaining and distributing printed material to facilitate wider public access. *Velodramma*, for example, is a zine that discusses the dynamics of cycling in Bandung (see Figure 3). The *Velodramma* zine is available at various coffee shops and bicycle workshops in Bandung, so anyone interested can pick it up for free.



<Figure 3> Cover of *Velodramma* Free Zine "Break The Chain"

Social identity theory, introduced by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (2004), emphasizes that individual identity is formed through attachment to groups or communities that share certain characteristics, values or goals. In the context of the *Velodramma* zine, which is distributed in public spaces such as coffee shops and bicycle workshops in Bandung, it is clear how the zine plays a role in strengthening the collective identity of the cycling community. Thus, the *Velodramma* zine becomes an object that attaches each member of the cycling culture in Bandung.

To be able to continue providing free printouts for its readers, zinesters must have capital because zines are not commercial in principle. To ensure its sustainability, *Velodramma* provides space for community businesses in Bandung, and even outside Bandung, to become advertisers on the pages of the zines it prints (See Figure 4). In this way, zines in Bandung are no longer just a medium, but also an important part of the community's cultural ecosystem.



<Figure 4> Sun Chasers and Natural Disasters as Advertisers in *Velodramma* zine

Advertisers in *Velodramma* zine play a significant role in strengthening the social identity of the cycling community in Bandung. Advertisers who advertise in *Velodramma* often come from local businesses or enterprises that share similar values with the cycling community, such as bike repair shops, cycling equipment stores, or community-friendly coffee shops. By appearing on *Velodramma*, these advertisers are not only looking for

customers, but also showing their affiliation with the values and lifestyle of the cycling community. This makes the advertiser part of the community ecosystem, thus reinforcing the impression that they support and contribute to the sustainability of the cycling culture in Bandung.

Although supported by advertising, *Velodramma's* zines also provide a space for the community to convey social criticism, for example about the city's infrastructure that is less friendly to cyclists or environmental issues. The freedom of expression offered by *Velodramma* allows the community to openly express their critical thoughts without having to worry about censorship or restrictions that may exist in the mainstream media. This accentuate their existential freedom to speak and act according to their values.

This freedom of expression is also supported in a more practical context, the ease of duplicating each print is also guaranteed by the zinesters. At the Bandung Zine Festival, for example, the organizers gave readers the freedom to copy by providing Xerox machines that could be used at will.

All these efforts are certainly beneficial in the short and long term for zine lovers in Bandung. The togetherness in caring for and ensuring the sustainability of these zines shows that there is no culture of competition within them.

The zines produced by zinesters in Bandung will be managed by the community, with the understanding that the material is managed on behalf of the community they represent, not on behalf of legal ownership. This comes from the collective memory and awareness of zine-making practices by zinesters and support from the ecosystem. This collective memory and awareness shapes their identity as part of the community and has a shared responsibility to maintain its existence.

The identity formed among zinesters can be assumed as a binding force, and creates a sense of belonging and connectedness within the zine community in Bandung. Therefore, shared stewardship in the context of zines as a culture is also related to the concept of shared identity. This is in line with what Ilham and

Sendhi from *Consumed Media* said, by releasing and participating in Bandung Zine Festival, they wanted to show that *Consumed Media* is part of the zine culture in Bandung. This motif of collective self-awareness is one of the ways in which the zine landscape is shaped and sustained in various places, and becomes a social identity.

We can see a collective responsibility to preserve and distribute zines in Bandung. Zines are not just individual projects; they are part of a broader, community-driven effort. For example, zines like *Velodramma* are available for free at various venues, reflecting the community's commitment to maintaining access. Furthermore, the infrastructure provided at events, such as Xerox machines to reproduce zines, reinforces the DIY ethos and ensures that zine production remains within the reach of all participants. This co-management creates a sustainable system where the community actively looks after its own cultural production.

### **3.3. Multiplicity**

The concept of multiplicity by Caswell refers to the formats and perspectives brought by archivists in a community (Caswell, 2014). From the format aspect, Caswell cites Flinn et al. (2009) and Wakimoto et al. (2013) that the forms of community archiving are indeed more diverse than mainstream repositories.

Caswell continues, this aspect of multiplicity also means diversity of views. In fact, it is possible for there to be "conflicting viewpoints" due to the freedom to express thoughts. Although communities are formed because of similarities, archiving also plays a role in documenting the differences that exist within them (Caswell 2014).

In the zine community, zinesters can easily convey their interests through zines because of the flexibility of the medium's format. In terms of content, although in its development zines have an affinity with activism and critical ideology, but in essence zines provide space for various themes, even those that seem "trivial." DSTR (pseudonym), a graffiti artist, uses zines "just" to archive his weekend activities.



<Figure 5> Flip Zine "Another Weekend" DSTR x Kape

In its publishing, DSTR collaborates with Kape Mart, a store that sells lifestyle goods such as t-shirts, shoes, sweatshirts, magazines, and others. Although DSTR and Kape "only" present graffiti archives made on weekends, format-wise, they offer diversity among other zine makers, namely the one-page zine format (See Figure 5). This means that while zines in Bandung are still dominated by the book format, other variations can still be found.

Social identity in the archiving of *Another Weekend* zine plays an important role in shaping and deepening the sense of community and collective memory of the community associated with weekend activities, especially among the graffiti and street art communities. *Another Weekend* is not just a print media, but also serves as a collective archive that documents the experiences, views and activities of this community. By archiving their activities, the zine also affirms the community's presence in society. Thus, *Another Weekend* plays an important role in strengthening the social identity of the graffiti community as a unique group with its own lifestyle,

values, and visual aesthetics.

In Bandung, the phenomena framed through zines are very diverse, which shows that Caswell's (2024) concept of multiplicity in terms of content is also fulfilled. This diversity is formed by the relationship between zines and a wide spectrum of other subcultures, such as skateboarding, football, music, murals and graffiti, literature, bicycles, and many more. It also encourages anyone, even those without a critical ideology, to participate in making zines. This was felt by two new zinesters in Bandung, Domo and Dito from *Brahauss*:

At first we were hesitant to make a zine because zines are usually critical, but then we ventured to join the Bandung Zine Festival because we got a booth from a friend. It turns out that there are also many other zinesters whose content is not too critical either... (Interview with Dito, from *Brahauss*).

What was said by the *Brahauss* zinesters mirrors Heidegger's claim that authenticity involves embracing one's *Mitsein*—understanding oneself as part of a shared whole. They were initially hesitant to create zines, fearing their work lacks the “critical” edge of established zines. By participating in the festival, they transition from the “*das Man*” (conforming to perceived norms) to an authentic self that recognizes its relational existence.

Furthermore, because zines are a highly adaptive medium, zines in Bandung are also used by students to document their activities. For example, the zine *Lorong Waktu* published by *Gilanada*, a student group with an interest in music at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, Padjadjaran University. The content of the zine is a documentation of the journey of their works for 9 years.

The first stage of cognitive process from the Social Identity Theory—social categorization—can also be used to analyse the diversity of zines in Bandung. The Bandung Zine Festival itself becomes a showcase of this multiplicity, a microcosm of the broader subcultural landscape in Bandung. Each booth represents a different social category, allowing attendees to easily identify and engage with

the groups they feel aligned with.

The large number of zines in Bandung is in line with Caswell's (2014) statement between traditional and community forms of archiving. The physical and content diversity of zines in Bandung allows community members to “reflect on the culture, epistemology and values” of their lives. In this sense, zines are not only a medium that facilitates commonalities, but also brings together differences. This also shows that zines do not have to be overtly political, but in the spirit of their production, zines have a political meaning, which relates to the next concept, activism.

### **3.4. Activism**

Flinn et al. (2009) note that grassroots and independent archiving in the 1960s and 1970s was a political and social response. This is in line with what Caswell said about the activism aspect as one of the principles of community archiving. In addition to their role in activism, zines have also become an important part of archival collections. Many institutions, such as the Barnard Zine Library and the Riot Grrrl Collection, have created specialized zine collections. These collections not only preserve physical artifacts, but also provide a platform for the stories and experiences of marginalized communities to be remembered.

According to Caswell, the simple act of collecting community archives that have been silenced, erased, or marginalized, is a political act. Moreover, collecting archives is not only about preserving traces of the past, but also imagining a new future (Caswell 2014b; Harris 2011). Caswell also says that, “for community archives, memory work is a tool for political liberation”.

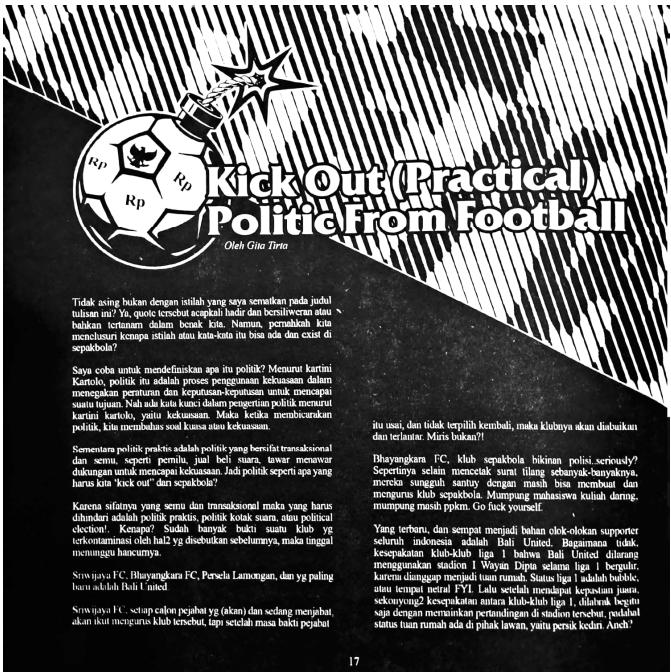
Based on what Caswell (2014) describes, we can see that zine practices in Bandung fulfill the principle of archiving community activism. There are many zines that voice the views of marginalized communities, or provide opinions with a critical point of view.

The relationship between zines and the surrounding cultural spectrum is also evident in the tendency for zines to be used as a medium to convey alternative views on culture. For example,

football-related zines present critical content compared to mainstream football magazines or websites. Such is the case with *Bandung Supporter Alliance*.

*Bandung Supporter Alliance* is an organization made up of supporters of Persib, a football club based in Bandung. In an interview conducted for the purposes of this research project, one of the Alliance's representatives stated that the purpose of the organization is to voice aspirations that cannot be expressed in the stands. In addition, the *Bandung Supporter Alliance* also considers that zines can easily become a medium of interaction between individual supporters.

Through zines we voice things that cannot come out in the stands, including criticism of things related to football. Zines are also easy to interact with friends, we can exchange zines as reading material (*Bandung Supporter Alliance*, interviewed at Bandung Zine Festival).



<Figure 6> One of the chapters of the fourth edition of *Bandung Supporter Alliance's* zine, "Kick (Practical) Politics Out of Football".

The activism of the *Bandung Supporter Alliance* was driven by concerns about the situation within their community. They documented the sentiments of supporters regarding a series of unfortunate incidents that resulted in their marginalization (See Figure 6). To illustrate, there are several examples of conflicts between supporters and authorities, as well as the issuance of expensive official jerseys by club management. In addition to serving as a platform for journalism, zines in Bandung also provide a platform for writers who wish to actualize their activism in other forms, such as prose or poetry.

Zines have been used in Bandung to voice resistance to various social and political issues. For example, during the anti-extradition bill protests in Hong Kong, zines played an important role in disseminating information quickly and accessibly (Tong, 2020). Similarly, in Bandung, zines such as *Humane* continue to serve as a medium to criticize mainstream media and promote animal rights and veganism. This mirrors global zine movements such as the *Riot Grrrl* zine in the United States, which focuses on feminist issues and provides a platform for marginalized voices to express their dissatisfaction with patriarchy.

By nature, zines are media that are close to critical ideologies because they are formed and developed within subcultures. This makes political contestation in the dynamic zine landscape rare. Even if there is political contestation, it is usually a form of resistance from marginalized groups against mainstream norms, as explained in the previous examples. This is slightly different from other aspects of the underground, such as music and clothing lines/distributors in Bandung for example. Both are sometimes vulnerable to commercialization and commodification, which creates class polarization, as a result of market growth and capital accumulation. (Martin-Iverson 2021). Meanwhile, in the zine scene, such political-economic clashes are rare.

Activism in zine culture in Bandung is similar to what happens in other countries. For example, in the UK there are many football-related zines like *The City Gent* or *Red Issue*. We can also find the zine *Positive Influence* which discusses veganism in Italy.

This shows that zines have become a medium that integrates activism across the cultural spectrum. This is also demonstrated by one of the earliest zines to emerge in Bandung, *Submissive Riot* created by Riotic in 1998. This zine publicized activism within the hardcore punk scene and the ideology of anarchism (Prasetyo 2017).

Taking examples such as the *Bandung Supporter Alliance*, which critiques football politics, I argue that zines provide an important platform for marginalized voices. These publications offer alternative narratives that challenge mainstream media and provide a space for grassroots movements to express their views. The activism documented in these zines reflects a global trend, where zines have historically been used in social movements, such as the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. This section highlights how zines in Bandung are not only cultural artifacts but also catalysts for social and political change.

Activism and resistance in Bandung's zine culture can also be analyzed through the lens of social comparison within Social Identity Theory (SIT), particularly in how zines foster in-group identity and differentiate themselves from mainstream norms. Zines serve as platforms for marginalized communities to critique dominant ideologies, express alternative perspectives, and establish their collective identity. For instance, zines like those produced by the *Bandung Supporter Alliance* challenge mainstream football politics by voicing concerns about commercialization and the marginalization of fans. This act of resistance positions the zine creators and readers as part of an in-group that values grassroots activism and community solidarity over the corporate-driven dynamics of professional football. Through social comparison, these zines reinforce the distinctiveness of their group by highlighting shared values, such as authenticity and inclusivity, which contrast sharply with the perceived homogenization of mainstream media.

Additionally, zines such as *Humane* amplify critical ideologies like animal rights and veganism, creating an in-group identity centered around ethical consumption and environmental activism. The content of these zines often critiques societal norms that prioritize profit over sustainability, further emphasizing positive

distinctiveness. By comparing their values to those of out-groups (e.g., commercial industries or indifferent consumers), zinesters and readers strengthen their sense of belonging to a morally superior community. This dynamic aligns with SIT's principle that individuals derive self-esteem from their group membership, especially when their group is perceived as positively distinct.

### 3.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is essentially a process that occurs at all stages of community archiving. Caswell (2014) says, to a certain degree, reflexivity is important to review how archiving activities affect one's physical and mental state, including the self-reflection of individuals within the community. Self-reflection can be seen from internal self-reflection and external expressions carried out by zinesters, which affect the final product of the zine. According to Baker (2023), one example of self-reflection is highlighting how zine making also encourages collaboration to build historical narratives for community members.

One zine that brings self-reflection to this phenomenon is *Golosor Times*. In "In Xerox We Trust," they explain the link between the emergence of photocopying technology and the development of zines. Frans Ari Prasetyo, the author of this chapter, emphasizes that the emergence of Xerox made zines more inclusive and accessible to everyone. This is in line with the concept of zines adopting a DIY culture and opposing corporate media. This effort is important to remind us that the choice of technology used when making a zine is actually inseparable from the ideology carried by the zine itself.

In the dynamics of zine-making by the Bandung zinester community, reflexivity can generally be found on the first page of the zine they print, the preface. Various forms of reflection can be found, such as a reminder of the journey a community has taken, an invitation to reject commodification, or an affirmation of their existence in the Bandung zine scene.

*Bandung Supporter Alliance*, for example, in its foreword expressed gratitude for having a birthday, and that gratitude was realized in the 4th edition of the zine.

Of course, for anyone who reads this, you are the ones who sincerely want to be friends with us, anyone who reads this, you are the ones who really make us stand up and believe that we are never alone (*Bandung Supporter Alliance* on its front page).

However, Caswell continued, reflection should not just stop at the individual, but should also result in dialogue between community members to ensure that needs are met, issues are resolved, and priorities are aligned.

The dialog described by Caswell can be seen in the About Us section of the *Velodramma* zine, for example. The initiators of this zine understand that they are not cycling experts. They were "just" a community that initiated the documentation of the cycling lifestyle that was increasingly enjoyed by the wider community when the pandemic ended. Through the zine, they invite all cycling experts to contribute in any form. Ideas, writings, photos, works, and criticisms. This is in line with what Caswell said, that community members themselves are considered experts as facilitators of memory work.

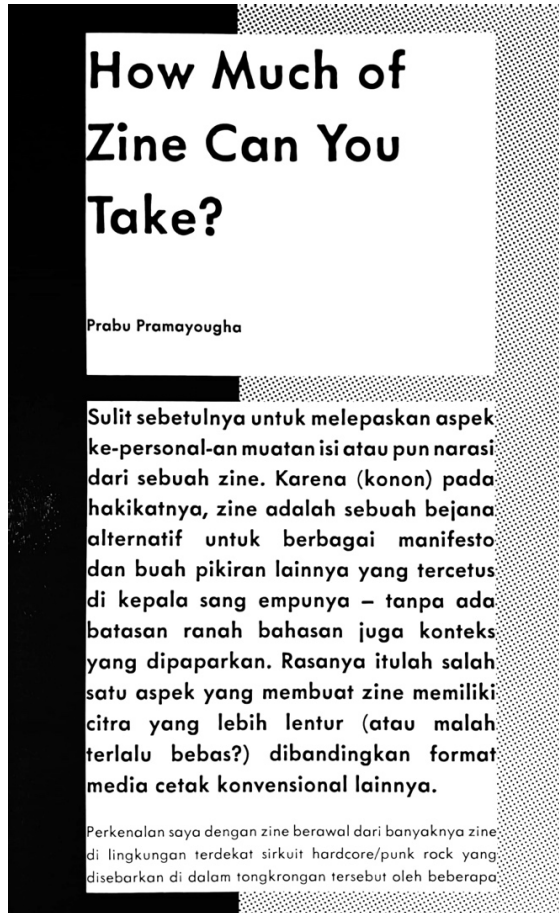
On the other hand, if we analyse this with the Social Identity Theory, this statement reflects a strong emphasis on creating an ingroup identity. By addressing readers as "the ones who sincerely want to be friends with us," the Alliance positions its audience as part of a supportive and loyal community. This aligns with the idea that individuals derive a sense of belonging and self-esteem from their membership in an ingroup. The language fosters a sense of inclusion and shared purpose among members, strengthening their collective identity.

Through reflection and dialog between the various communities in the Bandung zine scene, we can find that their priorities are essentially the same. The orientation that drives these zinesters is to give back to the community and build solidarity. This ongoing reflection nourish the bonds within the zine community and aligns their practices with shared goals and values.

### **3.6. Valuing Affect**

The last and most recent aspect is valuing affect, defined by Caswell

(2020) as the emotional impact felt by a community in the archiving process. In the zines created by *Consumed Media*, we can see that the development of zines has a significant impact on the cognition and affection of its readers. Prabu Pramayougha, as a contributor to *Consumed Media*, revealed that his life close to the hardcore/punk subculture bridged his introduction to zines (See Figure 7).



<Figure 7. "How Many Zines Can You Take?" by Prabu Pramayougha

In his writing, Prabu said that the paradigm carried in the zine he read had given him something priceless, even though zines are

relatively very cheap in production. Prabu Pramayougha's reflections on zines' impact illustrate how existential choices (e.g., embracing punk subculture) forge identity. His writing embodies Sartre's (1946) claim that "we are condemned to be free," as he navigates the tension between subcultural belonging and individual agency.

...Everything I've described above is just a personal vent about how an alternative print media format that is relatively affordable to produce can have a very valuable and implementable impact on its readers, of which I am one of them (Consumed Media 2024).

Prabu acknowledges that his engagement with zines is a deliberate act of creating meaning in his life, stating that the alternative media format has had a "very valuable and implementable impact" on him (Consumed Media 2024). This aligns with Sartre's idea that individuals must actively construct their essence through creative acts, rather than passively adhering to societal expectations (Aho, 2023).

Another emotional impact in the zine-making process is the nostalgic aspect as felt by *Brahauss*. Initially, *Brahauss* published the zine digitally, but they realized that a physical printout can give a different feeling when read by hand.

We are basically magazine collectors, and we also like other print products in physical format. For music for example, we look for cassettes or CDs like when we were in college. We want to feel that nostalgic feeling again (with zines), reading while holding it in physical form has a different feel. There's an emotional attachment there... (Interview with Domo, *Brahauss*).

In Social Identity Theory, the process of self-identification within groups often grows through shared experiences and emotional expression. *Brahauss* offers a space where members can share and reflect on these emotions, helping individuals affirm their identity as bikers while also fostering meaningful connections with others who have had similar experiences. Emotions such as courage, pride, and even fear during rides become key elements of the shared social identity, forming the core of the community's

collective identity.

*Brahauss* also serves as an emotional archive, capturing the meaningful experiences of its members. By preserving these emotionally rich stories in a zine, the community can keep its collective memories alive, even after the journey ends. This emotional archive not only commemorates past experiences but also rekindles the sense of camaraderie and emotional connection that forms the foundation of the community's identity.

Sartre's concept of "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 1946) too can be applied here by framing this attachment as a deliberate choice to preserve tangible media in a digital world. By choosing physical formats over digital ones, zinesters assert their freedom to prioritize intimacy and authenticity over convenience or efficiency. This decision reflects an existential commitment to creating meaning through intentional engagement with their medium.

In another case, we can see how *Bandung Supporter Alliance* has a very close bond between the community and their love for football. The emotional feelings that are in their minds are expressed in several chapters through their self-published zine.

At this point, let's celebrate everything. Celebrate the wounds, celebrate the love, celebrate the hope, celebrate the friendships and celebrate the many battles, and celebrate the grueling defeats. Let's celebrate this day, a day where tears don't fall at the end of our eyes, a day where no one leaves... (Bandung Supporter Alliance 2024).

The *Bandung Supporter Alliance* zine serves as an effective tool in building and strengthening the social identity of the football supporter community in Bandung. Furthermore, this kind of statement from *Bandung Supporter Alliance* also underscores how social identity is not only about categorization but also about emotional investment in group membership. This emotional reinforcement strengthens loyalty and fosters a sense of mutual support among members. The emotional language used in these zines—such as celebrating "wounds" and "hope"—mirrors Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* ("being-with-others"), emphasizing the relational aspect of human existence (Candiotto, 2016). By

archiving collective memories and struggles, these zines strengthen communal bonds while encouraging members to reflect on their shared identity and purpose.

What was conveyed by Prabu from *Consumed Media*, Domo and Dito from *Brahauss*, and the *Bandung Supporter Alliance* is in line with the article from Robinson (2018) that zines in their creation have 'emotional credentials' for both readers and creators. This is because according to Robinson, zines are a counterpoint to corporate media.

The physical form of zines can also create an intimate connection between zine creators and their readers through shared experiences, nostalgia, and personal reflection. For example, physical zines evoke a sense of attachment that digital media often cannot replicate. The zines produced by *Consumed Media* illustrate how deeply zine makers and their readers can connect through shared subcultural experiences. This affective bond is crucial in sustaining zine culture, as it strengthens community solidarity and makes zine making an emotionally significant practice for all involved.

The following table shows the attitudes, social identity, authenticity and freedom of expression of the 5 zines studied:

<Table 1> Identity of Five Studied Zines (Source: Author's Own Work)

Zine	Attitude	Social Identity	Authenticity	Freedom of Expression
<i>Velodramma</i>	Promotes a healthy lifestyle and environmental awareness	Community of cyclists in Bandung	Displays genuine cycling experiences free from commercial influence	DIY design reflecting freedom in writing and design
<i>Golosor Times</i>	Challenges negative stereotypes about skateboarding	Community of skateboarders in Bandung	Authentic documentation of challenges and experiences of skateboarders	Voices social criticism and showcases the "rough" side of the skateboarding community

Zine	Attitude	Social Identity	Authenticity	Freedom of Expression
<i>Another Weekend</i>	Values creativity and self-expression in public spaces	Community of graffiti and street artists	Captures graffiti and street exploration activities with an authentic perspective	Freedom to voice artistic expressions without formal or mainstream constraints
<i>Brahauss</i>	Solidarity in the biking community and road adventures	Community of bikers who value freedom and solidarity	Documents experiences, journeys, and friendships without conforming to common norms	Tells the unique side of biker life freely from mainstream cultural limitations
<i>Bandung Supporter Alliance</i>	Fights capitalism and discrimination, also raises social issues in football	Community of football supporters in Bandung	Authentic narrative of supporters' struggle and solidarity	Provides a space for supporters to express criticism of social issues in football

#### IV. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal the enduring significance of zines as relational artifacts that sustain collective identity and cultural resilience in Bandung. Rather than merely documenting phenomena, zines actively shape social identity, foster solidarity, and resist the homogenizing forces of mainstream and digital media. By applying Caswell’s six principles of community archiving—participation, shared stewardship, multiplicity, activism, reflexivity, and valuing affect—this research highlights how zines in Bandung serve as both creative expressions and tools for community-building.

The persistence of physical zines in Bandung, despite the dominance of digital media, underscores their role as a deliberate medium of resistance. Zines prioritize tactile intimacy and localized storytelling, offering an alternative to the algorithm-driven curation

of digital platforms. This phenomenon reflects broader trends across Southeast Asia, where zines are used to preserve cultural narratives and amplify marginalized voices. For example, Bali's eco-critical zines and Yogyakarta's folklore-focused publications demonstrate how zines adapt to local issues while maintaining their DIY ethos. Bandung's zine culture similarly showcases how grassroots media can thrive as spaces of authenticity and relationality.

The DIY ethos central to Bandung's zine scene reinforces its non-commercial nature and creative freedom. Zines like *Velodramma* and *Bandung Supporter Alliance* document subcultures such as cycling and football fandom while fostering communal bonds through shared practices like free distribution in coffee shops and workshops. These practices align with Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* ("being-with-others"), illustrating how zines become ontological spaces where relational existence is expressed and nurtured. Furthermore, by inviting reader submissions and encouraging collaboration, zinesters transform individual creativity into collective meaning-making.

The survival of physical zines also raises broader questions about cultural resistance to digital homogenization. In a world increasingly dominated by screens, the tactile experience of flipping through pages creates emotional connections that strengthen community solidarity. Zines like *Brahauss* evoke nostalgia while preserving the imperfect aesthetic elements that define their identity. This affective bond between zinesters and readers highlights the importance of tangible media in sustaining cultural practices that resist commodification.

In a Southeast Asian context, Bandung's zine culture offers valuable insights into alternative media practices that bridge tradition and modernity. The regional parallels—such as Hong Kong's protest zines or Bali's anti-capitalist collectives—highlight how grassroots media can serve as both cultural safeguards and political tools. By reclaiming agency over narratives, zinesters across Southeast Asia challenge mainstream norms while fostering inclusivity and solidarity within their communities.

Ultimately, Bandung's zine culture exemplifies how grassroots

media can thrive as spaces of authenticity, relationality, and resistance in an increasingly digital world. The survival of physical zines is not just a nostalgic act but a profound assertion of cultural resilience—offering a blueprint for alternative media practices across Southeast Asia that value presence over convenience and collectivity over algorithms. As we look to the future, hybrid models combining physical and digital formats may emerge, ensuring that the communal aspects of zine-making endure while embracing new technologies.

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