

## Research article

# Regionalism and Co-Design Approach in the Redesign of a Literacy Stage at the Nginden Jangkungan Herbal Library in Surabaya

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**Abstract.**

In recent years, regional libraries in Surabaya have been encouraged to support Gerakan Literasi Nasional (GLN), a national program to cultivate literacy in Indonesia. One of these libraries is the Herbal Library on Nginden Jangkungan street in Surabaya that provides various active literacy activities through a literacy stage facility. However, this facility was lacking identity in terms of visual and spatial character and more sub-facilities were needed to accommodate activities for performing, presenting, conducting workshops and other literacy activities. This research aimed to redesign the literacy stage facility of the Nginden Herbal Library using a regionalism approach combined with a community co-design method. The co-design method is a collaborative process between designers and the community to produce designs that truly answer the needs of the community, promote transfer of knowledge and create a shared sense of ownership. The result of this study is an iconic design of a literacy stage that could accommodate the flexibility of literacy activities while representing the local culture of the community. The regionalism approach was adopted through the implementation of natural elements (leaves, bamboo, red ginger, etc.) originating from the herbal library's site, and the use of Javanese language and culture. Crafts from plastic waste were also co-designed with the community's art works. It is hoped that the design product can support the Herbal Library to become a new literacy icon in Surabaya.

**Keywords:** literacy stage, regionalism, co-design, local culture

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultivating literacy is a relatively new program driven by the Government of Indonesia. Through the Gerakan Literasi Nasional (GLN) program regulated by the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015, the Government brings together all parties, including the public, to become actors in the literacy movement to develop and cultivate literacy in Indonesia [1]. Through the developed literacy programs, regional libraries have a very important role in creating a literate generation [2]. Herbal Library Nginden Jangkungan, Surabaya as one of the potential libraries, has literacy programs

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such as: Book of the week, workshop in collaboration with the Department of Education and universities, storytelling, online learning in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, and many more. These active literacy programs create a need for literacy stage facilities. However, the literacy stage at the Nginden Jangkungan Herbal Library is not optimal yet in meeting the needs of functions and local identities.

To answer this need, the concept of regionalism will be applied in the process of designing the literacy stage. Frampton [3] in his theory of regionalism "Critical Regionalism and Vernacular Form" argues that regionalism is not just a traditional design or a design style, but tactile characteristics that can survive in the midst of modern designs. In the sixth point, regionalism is also a design that pays attention to the shape of the natural surroundings. Regionalism can be concluded as a design concept that elevates local values or identities along with the surrounding natural conditions to maintain their existence and relevance in the midst of the modernization era.

This study aims to raise the existence of the Herbal Library Nginden Jangkungan along with its local identity as a new icon in the city of Surabaya and to become a design pilot project for other regional libraries in Indonesia with their respective local identities.

## 2. METHOD

This research applied a hybrid method [4] between co-design [5] and design thinking [6], with the Herbal Library Nginden Jangkungan community as partners (Table 1). The local community was involved to create a sense of ownership and to encourage the transfer of knowledge with the purpose that in the future the community can design independently.

TABLE 1: The design methodology refers to the hybrid method [4].

Design Stage	Methodology and Strategy
Understand & Observe	Designers collect questionnaires, conduct interviews and discussions, visit research objects periodically, and collect information as well as documentation.
Point of View & Ideate	The designers collect information and documentation from the local community about the activities that have been held before at the existing literacy stage.
Prototype & Test	Designers create 3D rendering visualizations and present their design alternatives to the community for selection and evaluation. Designers together with the community actualize the design, then utilize and evaluate the design results.

### 3. DESIGN PROCESS

#### 3.1. Understand & Observe

At this stage, several local culture and potentials from the Herbal Library were found (Figure 1). The local community manages the surrounding land by planting herbs, other types of plants, and trees. This effort produces a beautiful garden atmosphere which is identical with leaves, stems, grass and shady green shades. Red ginger is an iconic herbal plant grown by this community [7]. In addition, there are ornamental plants such as yellow bamboo which the characteristic of the library's surrounding. The community also established a waste bank [8] where the collected plastic waste is processed into decorative elements of the surrounding environment. Herbal Library Nginden Jangkungan is located in Surabaya City, East Java. Accordingly the Javanese language is used by the community in their daily communication. The cracker factory in front of the Herbal Library area results in daily deliveries of branches. The branches are used to produce fire for frying the crackers. Those branches become potential materials that represent the local identity.



**Figure 1:** Herbal Library's local identity and potential (2021).

#### 3.2. Point of View & Ideate

The point of view and ideate stages were carried out by collecting data and documentation of the use of the literacy stage in activities that have been carried out before (Figure 2). The data and documentation were analyzed in terms of activities, needs, objectives, and design concepts to be designed, as shown in Table 2.



**Figure 2:** Documentation of activities that have been carried out before (2021).

Based on the framework created, designers and the community discussed to determine the location that would be the implementation area for the new literacy stage

TABLE 2: Design concept framework as a result of analysis of activities, needs and goals.

Activities	Needs	Goals	Design Concepts
Story telling	Stage.	Provide a place to show literacy competencies.	Setting up the stage.
Workshop and presentation stage	Area for projectors and activity banners installation.	There is an empty area for the projector and a place to put up an activity banner.	Provide a stage background design with an empty area in the middle.
Group photo background	A wider area with a background that represents local identity.	The literacy stage serves as a background for group photos and accordingly introduces local identity when published.	Looking for a location with a larger area and a background design that represents local identity.
Online event shooting background	Background that represents local identity.	Recording background that introduces local identity.	Background design that represents local identity.
A place to gather and discuss	A comfortable area to hold discussions as well as attractive to visitors.	The literacy stage become an attraction for other people to visit.	Looking for a location which is visible and accessible by the public and designing an eye-catching background design.

(Figure 3). The semi-outdoor area is considered as the strategic area to implement a new literacy stage since it has an adequate area, visible, and accessible by the public who pass the street in front of the library.



Figure 3: Location of literacy stage design implementation (2021).

### 3.3. Prototype & Test

The prototype stage began with the making of 3 alternative designs in the form of 3D rendering visualizations (Figure 4). The first alternative is filled with elements of branches arranged in elongated wooden pots along with leaf shape stickers which are randomly spread on the wall. The second alternative emphasizes bamboo as the main material and a few stems of yellow bamboo, the characteristic of the local surrounding, is applied as accents to make it more visible because the color is different. The last alternative uses panel pieces which are shaped like leaves. The choice of dark green and light green represents the color of the leaves, the brown color represents the wood, and the pink color represents the red ginger. The three alternative designs were made blank in the middle area of the background with red typographic elements in Javanese language "Laku ing Sasmita Amrih Lantip" which means "Knowledge must be sharpened, to make it sharper" [9] Wooden color stage, ornamental plants, synthetic grass mats which strengthen the natural atmosphere, chandeliers from the plastic waste, and lighting elements for the modern touch were also added in those three designs.



**Figure 4:** 3 alternative literacy stage designs (2021).

Designers presented the results of the 3 alternative designs to the community for selection and evaluation (Figure 5). Through discussion and consideration, the community chose the second alternative because its simple design represents the character of the community and the environment.

Next, the designers together with the community actualized the design that had been selected (Figure 6). During the making of the chandeliers [10] the designers taught the children in the Herbal Library community to make those chandeliers by themselves. This collaborative work process creates a transfer of knowledge from the designers to the community and a sense of belonging by the community to maintain the sustainability of the literacy stage is also acquired.

At the test stage, the community tried to use the literacy stage for storytelling, presentations, and group photos, as well as a place for discussion (Figure 7). The result proves that the design of the literacy stage has succeeded in accommodating





**Figure 5:** Designers present the results of the 3 alternative designs to the community (2021).



**Figure 6:** The process of co-implementing with the community and the final result (2021).

the functional needs and representing the local identity of the community. From the evaluation questionnaire, there were suggestions to make the stage wider. It was also reported that the color of yellow bamboo does not last quite long. Within 1 month the yellow color changes into brown, just like the color of bamboo in general.



**Figure 7:** Documentation of the use of the new literacy stage by the community (2021).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The literacy stage is a facility that accommodates many active literacy activities. For example, the literacy stage in the Nginden Jangkungan Herbal Library functions as a facility for storytelling, workshops and presentation stages. It also functions as background for group photos during the library's events, background for shooting online events, and as a comfortable place for discussions. The results of the study stated that the literacy stage at the Herbal Library was still not optimal in meeting the needs of its function and not sufficient enough to represent the local identity. As a solution, it is necessary to redesign the literacy stage based on the functional needs and the local identity.

Functional requirements that had not been fulfilled before the project is done include: size area, higher stage position, background with a blank area in the middle for LCD projector or activity banner, and background design which is eye catching and represents local identity. To resolve this, the new design of the literacy stage was planned to be implemented in a newly built semi-outdoor area which has a wider area, visible and accessible. This area would also be equipped with a stage and a background with a blank area in the middle. The background design that represents the local identity follows the concept of regionalism, where the design will raise the elements of local potential but remain relevant to the modern era of design. This study found various local potentials owned by the community: natural atmosphere, leaves, stems, grass, bamboo material, yellow bamboo, red ginger, decorations from plastic waste, Javanese language, and tree branches. These aspects were implemented in the stage design and lighting elements is added to keep the design relevant to modern times.

From the designing process to the implementation process, the co-design method was used, where designers worked with local communities to encourage the transfer of knowledge and to create a sense of belonging to the community. The sense of belonging would play an important role for the community in carrying out maintenance.

At the test stage, the new design was avowed successful in meeting the functional requirements and also the local identity. However, some technical notes that need to be considered were added as the project evaluation.

Hopefully, this new design will help the Herbal Library Nginden Jangkungan to be one of the new literacy icons in the city of Surabaya in supporting the Indonesian Government's GLN program. Moreover, it is also expected that this project will become a reference for other regional community libraries in designing their place by elevating their respective local identity as a design concept.

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