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Communal Activities as Intercultural Communication Strategies of Social Actors in Developing Social Cohesion in Sudiroprajan

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Abstract

This article examines communal activities as intercultural communication strategies used by local social actors to develop social cohesion in Sudiroprajan, Surakarta, Indonesia. Sudiroprajan is a multicultural urban neighborhood in which Javanese residents, Chinese Indonesians, Javanese-Chinese descendants, and communities with diverse religious, generational, occupational, and socio-economic backgrounds interact in everyday life. Using a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm and a grounded theory strategy, this study draws on observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of community practices. The findings show that *Grebeg Sudiro*, *Barongsai Macan Putih*, neighborhood collective work, *Kampung Pelangi*, the Harapan Kita Waste Bank, the Suka Maju Women Farmers Group, and the Sinar Mentari Climate Village Program operate as communicative arenas where residents encounter difference, negotiate meanings, coordinate roles, reproduce local values, and create shared experiences. Social actors, including community leaders, neighborhood administrators, religious figures, women's groups, youth, cultural activists, and environmental organizers, act as initiators, mobilizers, facilitators, mediators, and interpreters of meaning. The article argues that communal activities are not merely socio-cultural or environmental programs; they constitute an infrastructure of intercultural communication that transforms diversity into social capital, strengthens trust, and supports inclusive community identity.

Keywords: Communal Activities, Intercultural Communication, Social Actors, Social Cohesion, Sudiroprajan, Acculturation

1. Introduction

Multicultural societies are shaped by a continuing tension between integration and fragmentation. Diversity in ethnicity, religion, culture, language, generation, occupation, and socio-economic position may enrich collective life when it is supported by inclusive interaction. At the same time, diversity may produce distance, suspicion, and conflict when differences are not managed through open, adaptive, and mutually respectful communication. For

this reason, intercultural communication is central to understanding how plural communities transform difference into productive social relations.

Sudiroprajan, an urban neighborhood in Surakarta, Indonesia, offers a significant case for examining this process. The area has long been known as a space of Javanese-Chinese cultural blending. Javanese residents, Chinese Indonesians, Javanese-Chinese descendants, and residents with diverse religious and socio-economic backgrounds live, trade, worship, celebrate, and participate in neighborhood life within the same social space. This diversity is not only visible in demographic composition, but also in everyday interaction, cultural celebration, economic exchange, religious activity, and community-based environmental programs.

The historical context of Javanese-Chinese relations in Surakarta adds analytical importance to Sudiroprajan. On the one hand, the city has a long history of trade, cultural exchange, acculturation, and neighborhood-level cooperation. On the other hand, it also carries memories of racial tension and social conflict. In this context, Sudiroprajan is important because it has developed social practices that publicly express cultural blending, tolerance, and cross-cultural cooperation. *Grebeg Sudiro*, for example, combines Javanese and Chinese cultural elements and has grown from a local neighborhood celebration into a city-level cultural agenda.

Previous studies have shown that *Grebeg Sudiro* represents diversity and the collective consciousness of the Sudiroprajan community. Hakim (2020) explains that collective consciousness in Sudiroprajan is formed through historical experience, acceptance, interaction, and social negotiation. Alam (2023) demonstrates that Javanese-Chinese acculturation is not only visible in cultural symbols, but also in everyday practices. However, the existing literature can still be strengthened by explaining how communal activities work as intercultural communication strategies and how local social actors activate those strategies in everyday community life.

This article begins from the argument that social cohesion in Sudiroprajan is not formed only by interpersonal communication or by local values such as *rukun* (social harmony), *tepo seliro* (empathetic self-restraint), and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). Social cohesion is also built through communal activities that repeatedly bring residents together in concrete social practices. These activities are not only collective events; they are communicative spaces where residents meet, talk, negotiate differences, develop trust, and produce shared experiences.

In intercultural communication studies, cross-cultural interaction cannot be reduced to the exchange of verbal messages. Communication also occurs through symbols, rituals, art, collective work, public space, social gestures, and everyday practices (Abu-Nimer & Smith, 2016; Hall, 1959b). In Sudiroprajan, social actors such as community leaders, RT/RW neighborhood leaders, religious figures, PKK organizers, women's groups, youth, cultural activists, and environmental organizers carry out intercultural communication through communal activities. They set agendas, coordinate participation, distribute roles, interpret cultural symbols, manage possible tensions, and ensure that community activities remain acceptable to residents from different backgrounds.

The research question guiding this article is: How do communal activities become intercultural communication strategies of social actors in developing social cohesion in Sudiroprajan? The article aims to explain communal activities as arenas of symbolic communication, cross-cultural cooperation, value reproduction, and community cohesion. Its contribution is to conceptualize communal activities as an infrastructure of intercultural communication in a multicultural urban neighborhood.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural Communication and Communication Competence

Intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging and negotiating meaning among individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural difference does not only refer to ethnicity or language, but

also to values, norms, religion, social status, generation, historical experience, and ways of interpreting social action. In multicultural communities, misunderstandings often arise not because of negative intention, but because actors interpret actions through different frameworks of meaning.

Hall (1959) argues that culture contains hidden dimensions that shape how people organize space, time, expression, symbols, and social habits. Therefore, intercultural communication must be examined not only through verbal messages, but also through symbolic practices and social customs. In Sudiroprajan, intercultural communication appears in cultural parades, barongsai performances, collective work, environmental programs, community forums, informal conversations, and shared celebrations.

Deardorff (2006, 2009) explains that intercultural communication competence involves attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable people to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural contexts. This competence includes openness, respect, curiosity, listening ability, interpretive ability, and behavioral adaptability. Sarwari et al. (2024) further emphasize cultural awareness, empathy, flexibility, social integration, and communication effectiveness as requirements for intercultural competence in the twenty-first century.

In this article, intercultural communication competence is understood not only as an individual capacity, but also as a collective capacity of a community. Social actors in Sudiroprajan do not communicate merely as individuals; they organize and manage activities involving many residents. Intercultural competence therefore appears in the ability to design inclusive events, maintain symbolic sensitivity, adjust messages to diverse residents, and transform communal activities into shared social spaces.

2.2 Communal Activities as Arenas of Social Encounter and Symbolic Communication

Communal activities are shared activities involving residents within a particular social space. They may take the form of cultural traditions, social rituals, neighborhood collective work, environmental programs, women's activities, art performances, creative economic activities, or community forums. In multicultural settings, communal activities are important because they create spaces of encounter through which residents from different backgrounds can interact in practical, repeated, and relatively informal ways.

Aelbrecht and Stevens (2023) explain that public spaces and spaces of encounter can strengthen cross-group relations when they allow mutual recognition and shared experience. Qi et al. (2024) also show that public spaces support social cohesion by enabling everyday engagement, cultural activity, social interaction, and place attachment. However, encounter alone does not automatically create cohesion. Encounters need to be managed through communication, shared rules, participation, and social trust.

Communal activities can also function as symbolic communication. In events such as *Grebeg Sudiro* and *Barongsai Macan Putih*, cultural symbols are not displayed merely as entertainment. They convey messages about diversity, acculturation, tolerance, and shared identity. Crooke et al. (2024) show that artistic and musical activities can support intercultural understanding and social cohesion because they enable different groups to interact through aesthetic and participatory experience. This perspective helps explain why art and cultural activity in Sudiroprajan are not separate from social cohesion; they are part of how cohesion is communicated and experienced.

2.3 Social Cohesion and Local Social Capital

Social cohesion refers to the quality of social relations that allows communities to live together peacefully, trust one another, help one another, participate collectively, and manage differences without damaging social relations. Fonseca et al. (2019) define social cohesion as a process involving belonging, social participation, tolerance of diversity, and equality in social life. In this sense, social cohesion is not a fixed condition; it is continuously produced through interaction.

In multicultural societies, cohesion does not mean that differences disappear. Residents may continue to maintain ethnic, religious, generational, class-based, and interest-based identities. Cohesion emerges when these differences are recognized, negotiated, and managed through constructive social relations. In Sudiroprajan, cohesion appears in residents' ability to live side by side, cooperate in communal activities, celebrate cultural expressions together, care for the environment, and resolve tensions peacefully.

Social cohesion is also related to social capital. Putnam (2000) describes social capital as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation. In Sudiroprajan, communal activities generate social capital because they create repeated encounters, collective responsibilities, and shared pride. Through *kerja bakti*, residents who rarely meet can communicate. Through *Grebeg Sudiro*, residents from different cultural backgrounds can work together. Through the Waste Bank and Women Farmers Group, residents develop new collective habits based on environmental care and mutual support.

2.4 Social Actors in Communal Activities

Social actors are individuals or groups with the capacity to influence community life through communication, legitimacy, networks, experience, and social trust. In local communities, social actors are not always identical with formal officeholders. Community leaders, RT/RW neighborhood leaders, religious figures, PKK organizers, youth, art activists, and environmental program coordinators may become influential actors because they can mobilize residents and shape meanings.

In communal activities, social actors perform several communication functions. First, they act as initiators who formulate ideas and objectives for collective action. Second, they act as mobilizers who encourage residents to participate. Third, they act as facilitators and communication managers who coordinate schedules, distribute tasks, bridge interests, and maintain information flows. Fourth, they act as interpreters of meaning by framing activities as efforts to maintain harmony, identity, and shared responsibility. Fifth, they act as mediators who reduce possible tensions during the implementation of activities.

Communal activities and social actors therefore cannot be separated. Communal activities provide arenas of communication, while social actors ensure that these arenas operate inclusively. Together, they form a mechanism through which social cohesion is developed in everyday life.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design and Site

This study uses a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm. The approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand how residents interpret communal activities as intercultural communication practices and how these practices contribute to social cohesion. Within a constructivist paradigm, social reality is understood as meaning constructed through interaction, experience, language, symbols, and social practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research strategy is grounded theory. Grounded theory is appropriate because the study seeks to identify conceptual patterns from field data rather than merely test an existing theory. Through grounded theory, the study examines how intercultural communication operates within communal activities and how such activities gradually form social cohesion (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The research site is Sudiroprajan, Surakarta, Indonesia, a multicultural neighborhood known for Javanese-Chinese cultural blending and community-based communal programs.

3.2 Data Development

Data were developed through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on intercultural communication practices in community life, particularly in cultural, artistic, social, and environmental activities. Interviews explored residents' experiences in communal activities, communication patterns, the roles of social actors, the use of symbols, and the perceived impact of activities on harmony, participation, and togetherness.

Informants included community leaders, RT/RW neighborhood leaders, *Grebeg Sudiro* activists, *Barongsai Macan Putih* organizers, PKK members, Waste Bank managers, *Kampung Pelangi* initiators, Women Farmers Group members, youth, and residents involved in communal activities. Documentation included community records, event documentation, public information about programs, and visual or textual materials related to communal activities.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In open coding, initial categories were identified, including communal activities, symbolic communication, *gotong royong*, informal dialogue, cultural acculturation, resident participation, conflict management, collective pride, place attachment, and cohesion strengthening. In axial coding, these categories were connected to identify relationships among social actors, communal activities, intercultural communication practices, and social cohesion. In selective coding, the core category was formulated: communal activities are intercultural communication strategies activated by social actors to develop social cohesion.

The trustworthiness of the analysis was strengthened through triangulation of observation, interviews, and documentation; repeated comparison between categories; attention to negative or divergent experiences; and interpretation that remained close to the social context of Sudiroprajan.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Because the study involved community informants, participation was based on informed consent. Informants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the use of information for academic analysis. Personal identities were protected in the analysis, and the findings were presented at the level of social roles and community practices rather than through personally identifiable data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Communal Activities as Intercultural Communication Strategies

The findings show that intercultural communication in Sudiroprajan does not only occur through direct interpersonal or intergroup conversation. It also occurs through communal activities that bring residents together in shared social spaces. These activities include *Grebeg Sudiro*, *Barongsai Macan Putih*, neighborhood collective work, *Kampung Pelangi*, the Harapan Kita Waste Bank, the Suka Maju Women Farmers Group, and the Sinar Mentari Climate Village Program (*ProKlim*).

Communal activities have two main communicative dimensions. The first is an interactional dimension. Activities provide spaces where residents of different ethnicities, religions, ages, occupations, and social positions meet, talk, cooperate, distribute tasks, solve practical problems, and help one another. The second is a symbolic dimension. Activities communicate messages about diversity, cultural blending, tolerance, mutual cooperation, environmental responsibility, and shared identity.

In Sudiroprajan, communal activities are not merely routine agendas. They work as intercultural communication strategies because they connect participation, symbols, cooperation, and collective experience. Residents do not only hear messages about harmony; they experience harmony through involvement in shared activities. In this way, communal activities translate abstract values into concrete social experience.

Social actors are central in this process. Community leaders provide moral and historical legitimacy. RT/RW neighborhood leaders organize coordination. Religious figures strengthen messages of tolerance. Women's groups mobilize domestic, social, and logistical networks. Youth contribute creativity, technical skill, and digital communication. Cultural and environmental activists translate ideas into programs. Through these roles, communal activities become arenas where diverse actors work interdependently.

Table 1: Communal activities and their intercultural communication functions

Communal activity	Primary actors	Communication function	Contribution to cohesion
Grebeg Sudiro	Cultural committees, community leaders, youth, residents	Symbolic communication of Javanese-Chinese acculturation	Collective pride, shared identity, public recognition
Barongsai Macan Putih	Art activists, youth, coaches, performers	Cross-ethnic participation in performing arts	Cultural regeneration, tolerance, interreligious blending
Kerja bakti	RT/RW leaders, residents, youth	Informal dialogue and practical cooperation	Trust, familiarity, mutual responsibility
Kampung Pelangi	RW leaders, residents, youth, local mobilizers	Visual communication of environmental improvement	Place attachment, collective ownership, neighborhood pride
Waste Bank	PKK/women's groups, waste managers, households	Environmental communication and habit formation	Shared responsibility, empowerment, repeated interaction
Women Farmers Group	Women's networks, residents, community facilitators	Domestic and ecological communication through urban farming	Social resilience, care networks, everyday participation
ProKlim	Environmental activists, RW leaders, residents	Integrated environmental movement and external recognition	Collective confidence, program sustainability, broader legitimacy

4.2 Grebeg Sudiro as Symbolic Communication of Javanese-Chinese Acculturation

Grebeg Sudiro is the most prominent communal activity in Sudiroprajan. The tradition has developed as a cultural festival combining Javanese and Chinese elements. The event includes cultural parades, *gunungan*, *jodang*, barongsai, *liong*, lanterns, traditional food, art performances, culinary festivals, micro and small enterprise bazaars, decorated boat tours, and other forms of cultural expression.

The term Grebeg refers to a Javanese tradition, while elements such as Chinese New Year, basket cakes, barongsai, *liong*, and Chinese ornaments indicate the presence of Chinese culture. This combination makes *Grebeg Sudiro* a cultural text that can be read as a symbol of acculturation. Javanese and Chinese cultures are not presented as separate cultural blocks; they are brought together in a new shared form accepted by residents.

From an intercultural communication perspective, *Grebeg Sudiro* functions as a space for negotiating meaning. It does not simply display difference; it manages difference into a symbol of togetherness. The event expands intercultural communication from the neighborhood level to the city and national levels. When *Grebeg Sudiro* became recognized as a broader cultural agenda, residents gained collective pride because their local practice of cultural blending was valued beyond the neighborhood.

The communicative power of *Grebeg Sudiro* is not located only in the public festivity of the event. It is also located in the process behind the event: committee meetings, task distribution, coordination with residents and government, involvement of youth, artistic preparation, crowd management, and symbolic sensitivity. Through this process, messages about tolerance are not delivered only through speeches; they are embodied in participation, cooperation, and shared cultural performance.

4.3 *Barongsai Macan Putih as Cross-Ethnic and Interreligious Cultural Blending*

Barongsai Macan Putih Sudiroprajan is a barongsai and *liong* art group that has become a cultural icon of the neighborhood. Although barongsai originates from Chinese tradition, the membership of this group shows an important pattern of cultural blending. Many performers are Javanese residents, many are Muslims, and others come from Javanese-Chinese or different religious backgrounds. This means that barongsai in Sudiroprajan is no longer only an expression of Chinese culture; it has become part of shared neighborhood identity.

The practice process is itself an arena of intercultural communication. Members interact, divide roles, build discipline, discuss performance techniques, and coordinate with coaches or senior members. Communication is fluid and cooperative. Members do not simply watch a cultural form from outside; they actively learn, practice, and perform it. This active participation strengthens cultural blending because residents experience themselves as part of a shared cultural expression.

When *Barongsai Macan Putih* performs during Chinese New Year, Cap Go Meh, *Grebeg Sudiro*, and cultural carnivals, it communicates symbolic messages about harmony, tolerance, and acculturation. For audiences, the performance may appear as entertainment. For Sudiroprajan residents, however, it has deeper meaning: it signals that Chinese cultural expression has become integrated into neighborhood life and can be practiced across ethnic and religious boundaries.

Barongsai Macan Putih is also important for cultural regeneration. Youth who join the group learn not only performance techniques, but also the history and symbolic identity of the neighborhood. Art therefore becomes social education. This finding is consistent with Crooke et al. (2024), who argue that participation in artistic activities can strengthen intercultural understanding and social cohesion.

4.4 *Neighborhood Collective Work as Fluid Communication and Practical Gotong Royong*

Neighborhood collective work, or *kerja bakti*, is a simple communal activity with deep social meaning. In Sudiroprajan, *kerja bakti* is not merely an activity for cleaning the environment. It is also a space for fluid communication among residents. During *kerja bakti*, residents who may rarely meet in everyday life greet one another, talk, joke, share tasks, repair public facilities, and work for a common interest.

This activity shows that intercultural communication does not always occur in formal forums. It can occur in casual conversations while cleaning drains, sweeping streets, trimming plants, painting walls, tidying alleys, repairing neighborhood facilities, or sharing light refreshments after the activity. Informal situations are often effective in reducing social distance because residents communicate without strong structural pressure.

In a multicultural community, *kerja bakti* temporarily dissolves social boundaries. Residents of different ethnicities, religions, occupations, economic statuses, and social positions work in relatively equal roles as members of the neighborhood. They do not emphasize their separate identities; they carry out shared responsibility. This strengthens mutual need, mutual care, and a sense of belonging.

Kerja bakti also reproduces *gotong royong* as a lived value. *Gotong royong* is not only mentioned as cultural heritage; it is practiced through concrete action. Residents give time and energy because they understand a clean

and comfortable environment as a shared responsibility. Thus, *kerja bakti* becomes an intercultural communication strategy that works through action rather than words.

4.5 *Kampung Pelangi as Visual Communication and Collective Pride*

The *Kampung Pelangi* program in RW 01 Sudiroprajan shows that environmental arrangement can become social and visual communication. The program began from residents' concern about walls and public spaces that looked dull. Through resident initiative and support from local social actors, walls, fences, plant pots, and alley corners were beautified with colorful paint.

Physically, *Kampung Pelangi* created a cleaner and more attractive environment. Socially, the program had broader meaning because the process was carried out through *gotong royong*. Residents helped one another, shared tasks, sought support, and maintained the results of their collective work. Through this process, a sense of ownership toward the neighborhood became stronger.

Kampung Pelangi can be read as visual communication. The colors in the neighborhood space communicate that residents have the spirit to improve their environment, build a positive atmosphere, and create a more pleasant living space. The neighborhood is not only a place to live; it becomes a shared identity that can be seen, remembered, and valued.

In the context of social cohesion, *Kampung Pelangi* strengthens collective pride. Residents feel that their environment has uniqueness and attractiveness. This pride can increase motivation to protect the neighborhood and participate in further communal activities. The program therefore demonstrates how local social actors can transform an environmental issue into momentum for communication, participation, and togetherness.

4.6 *The Waste Bank as Environmental Communication and Collective Habit Formation*

The Harapan Kita Waste Bank program in RW 01 Sudiroprajan demonstrates that environmental activity can operate as an intercultural communication strategy. The program encourages residents to sort household waste, collect inorganic waste, process organic waste, and utilize used goods so that they gain economic and environmental value.

The Waste Bank is not merely a technical waste management program. It is a process of collective habit formation. Residents learn to distinguish organic and inorganic waste, understand the value of waste, and gradually change household routines. This process requires repeated communication. Organizers invite, remind, provide examples, answer questions, and maintain residents' discipline.

Women's groups, especially PKK networks, play an important role in this program. They act as mobilizers, managers, and information distributors. Through women's communication networks, information about waste collection schedules, sorting methods, recycling benefits, and economic outcomes can move quickly. Women's networks therefore become social infrastructure supporting the success of the Waste Bank.

Socially, the Waste Bank increases interaction among residents. Residents meet when submitting waste, discuss environmental management, and observe the results of collective work. Waste, which was previously viewed as a problem, becomes a medium of communication, cooperation, and empowerment. In this way, environmental concern becomes a shared practice that strengthens trust and collective responsibility.

4.7 *The Women Farmers Group as Interaction, Social Resilience, and Urban Farming*

The Suka Maju Women Farmers Group in RW 01 Sudiroprajan shows that limited urban space does not prevent residents from developing productive communal activities. In a dense neighborhood with limited open land,

women use pots, polybags, and other planting containers placed along narrow alleys to grow vegetables and household herbs.

This activity has ecological and social meanings. Ecologically, it beautifies the environment, expands green space, and supports household food resilience. Socially, it becomes a meeting space for women. They share seeds, exchange experiences, discuss plant care, water plants together, and maintain the alleys. Communication in this activity is informal but repeated, and this repetition strengthens social closeness.

Conversations about plants often develop into conversations about family, the environment, community activities, and other social issues. The Women Farmers Group therefore becomes a domestic communication space that expands into community cohesion. It shows that social cohesion can be built through small, practical, and continuous activities, not only through major cultural events.

The program also highlights women as social actors. Women are not only supporters of community activities; they are main mobilizers. They manage activities, maintain continuity, and build communication networks. In multicultural neighborhoods, women's networks are highly significant because they often become early channels for information, coordination, and social care.

4.8 ProKlim as an Environment-Based Communal Movement and Collective Recognition

The Climate Village Program, or *ProKlim*, in RW 01 Sudiroprajan shows the expansion of communal activities from local initiatives toward broader recognition. *ProKlim* encourages community-based adaptation and mitigation actions against climate change, including greening, urban farming, waste management, composting, plastic reduction, water management, and environmental resilience.

In Sudiroprajan, *ProKlim* did not emerge from an empty social space. It developed from social capital already formed through *Kampung Pelangi*, the Waste Bank, the Women Farmers Group, and *kerja bakti*. Before joining *ProKlim*, residents had already built experience in working together, managing the environment, and communicating within communal programs. *ProKlim* then became a broader framework that integrated these practices into a recognized environmental movement.

The success of Sinar Mentari *ProKlim* RW 01 Sudiroprajan in achieving recognition strengthened residents' confidence. Residents felt that their work was appreciated not only internally, but also by external parties. Such recognition increased collective pride and encouraged residents to maintain program sustainability.

ProKlim also demonstrates that social cohesion can be built through environmental issues. In the face of climate change, environmental activities are not only ecological; they are social and communicative. Residents learn to share tasks, build commitment, coordinate action, and experience shared benefits. Thus, *ProKlim* connects environmental concern with the strengthening of social cohesion.

4.9 Synthesis: Communal Activities as Infrastructure of Intercultural Communication

The findings show that communal activities in Sudiroprajan function as an infrastructure of intercultural communication. The term infrastructure is used here to emphasize that communal activities are not merely events; they are recurring mechanisms that make cross-cultural communication concrete, practical, and meaningful. They provide settings, routines, symbols, roles, and shared experiences through which residents learn to live with difference.

Communal activities perform five main functions. First, they become arenas of encounter by bringing residents from different backgrounds into shared spaces. Second, they become media of symbolic communication by conveying messages about acculturation, tolerance, *gotong royong*, environmental care, and shared identity. Third,

they become spaces of cooperation by requiring residents to share roles and responsibilities. Fourth, they become means of value reproduction by keeping values such as *rukun*, *tepo seliro*, and *gotong royong* alive through practice. Fifth, they create collective pride by making residents feel that their neighborhood has a valuable identity. Social actors mobilize and interpret this infrastructure. In *Grebeg Sudiro*, social actors interpret acculturation symbols and manage cultural sensitivity. In *Barongsai Macan Putih*, they support cultural regeneration across ethnic and religious boundaries. In *kerja bakti*, they maintain participation in practical *gotong royong*. In *Kampung Pelangi*, the Waste Bank, the Women Farmers Group, and *ProKlim*, they connect environmental problems with community participation and collective pride.

The conceptual model emerging from this study can be formulated as follows: multicultural context produces diversity and social memory; social actors activate communal activities; communal activities generate intercultural communication practices; these practices create residents' social experiences of acceptance, safety, trust, place attachment, and collective pride; and those experiences strengthen social cohesion. Diversity does not automatically produce harmony. Harmony emerges when diversity is managed through shared activities that enable communication, cooperation, and collective experience.

Table 2: Conceptual model emerging from the study

Analytical stage	Empirical form in Sudiroprajan	Cohesion effect
Multicultural context	Ethnic, religious, generational, and socio-economic diversity; history of acculturation and social memory	Creates both potential for conflict and potential for shared identity
Social actors	Community leaders, RT/RW leaders, religious figures, women's groups, youth, art activists, environmental activists	Provide legitimacy, coordination, mediation, and meaning
Communal activities	Cultural festivals, performing arts, collective work, visual-environmental programs, waste management, urban farming, ProKlim	Create repeated spaces of encounter and participation
Intercultural communication practices	Symbolic communication, informal dialogue, role distribution, cooperation, meaning negotiation, norm strengthening	Transform difference into shared experience
Residents' social experiences	Acceptance, safety, trust, place attachment, collective pride, experience of working together	Strengthen belonging and relational stability
Social cohesion	Harmony, solidarity, inclusive identity, collective participation, ability to manage differences	Sustains multicultural community life

5. Conclusion

This article shows that communal activities have a strategic role as media of intercultural communication in developing social cohesion in Sudiroprajan. *Grebeg Sudiro*, *Barongsai Macan Putih*, neighborhood collective work, *Kampung Pelangi*, the Waste Bank, the Women Farmers Group, and *ProKlim* do not only function as cultural, artistic, environmental, or social programs. They operate as arenas of cross-cultural encounter, symbolic communication, cooperation, and value reproduction.

Communal activities enable residents from different ethnic, religious, generational, occupational, and socio-economic backgrounds to interact, cooperate, negotiate meaning, and build shared experiences. In these activities,

values such as *rukun*, *tepo seliro*, *gotong royong*, tolerance, and cultural blending are not only discussed; they are practiced through participation. This practical and repeated experience is what makes communal activities effective for strengthening social cohesion.

Social actors play a crucial role in ensuring that communal activities become intercultural communication strategies. They act as initiators, mobilizers, facilitators, mediators, communication managers, and interpreters of meaning. Through these roles, they transform communal activities into communication infrastructure that strengthens trust, participation, collective pride, and inclusive community identity.

The theoretical contribution of this article lies in its conceptualization of communal activities as infrastructure of intercultural communication in multicultural communities. Social cohesion is not formed only through formal policy or interpersonal communication; it is also built through repeated communal practices managed by local actors. Practically, the findings suggest that strengthening social cohesion in multicultural urban communities requires the preservation of inclusive traditions, support for local social actors, involvement of youth, strengthening of women's networks, and integration of cultural and environmental programs.

This study has limitations. It focuses on one neighborhood and emphasizes communal activities that are already relatively successful in producing cooperation. Future research can compare Sudiroprajan with other multicultural neighborhoods, examine possible tensions within communal activities, or analyze how digital communication supports or challenges intercultural cohesion at the neighborhood level.

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