

# Science Communication: Zines From The Margins





Prepared by the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with the Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability (SMUS) network.

December 2025

The Global Center of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability (SMUS) is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



Supported by:



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service



# Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose
2. Project Team
3. Project Timeline
4. Description of Project Activities



# 1 Introduction and Purpose

This zine-making project forms part of an ongoing effort within the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Pretoria to diversify planning methodologies and broaden how students engage with urban realities. The project introduces both Honours and Master's students to zine-making—a historically activist, self-published medium used to amplify marginalised voices—as a creative and participatory tool for urban inquiry. Through fieldwork, workshops, and hands-on production, students are encouraged to engage ethically and imaginatively with the lived experiences of waste pickers, their informal practices, and their interactions with public space.

By integrating visual and participatory methods with critical reflection, the project challenges students to interrogate the socio-political dimensions of waste management and informality. The project adopts an approach that blends academic inquiry with creative storytelling, enabling students to translate research insights into accessible,

community-engaged media. The project began with a site visit where students engaged directly with waste pickers in their working environments, gaining first-hand insight into their roles, challenges, and everyday interactions with public space. Under the guidance of an independent artist Isaac Zavale, students explored the ethics and practice of zine-making and produced creative work that communicates the lived experiences and contributions of waste pickers in Tshwane. The project culminated in a public showcase of student-produced zines on 24 October 2025, creating a platform for peer learning, reflective practice, and creative knowledge exchange.

This report presents the process undertaken to complete the *Zines From The Margins* project. It outlines each phase of the work, from preparation to final exhibition, and is organised into the sections represented in the diagram on page 5.





# 2 Project Team

The successful execution of the *Zines From The Margins* project relied on the coordinated efforts of a multidisciplinary project team. Given the scope of activities—including fieldwork, participatory workshops, creative production, and the public exhibition—it was necessary to assemble a team with complementary skills to ensure that each phase of the project was implemented effectively and to a high standard.

The project was led by Dr Kundani Makakavhule (Lead Investigator, University of Pretoria), who oversaw the overall design, implementation, and academic framing of the project. Ms Zakithi Mhlongo (Research Assistant, University of Pretoria) supported project coordination and played a key role in organising and facilitating the site visits. A group of student assistants contributed to various aspects of the project: Mr Moloko Raphahlelo provided creative production support; Mr Kwazi Ngcobo and Mr Simphiwe Nzima supported the facilitation of the workshop activities; and Mr Raynard Supra assisted with fieldwork logistics and site visit coordination.



**Dr Kundani Makakavhule**  
(Lead Investigator)  
University of Pretoria



**Ms Zakithi Mhlongo**  
(Research Assistant)  
University of Pretoria



**Mr Moloko Raphahlelo**  
(Student Assistant)  
University of Pretoria



**Mr Kwazi Ngcobo**  
(Student Assistant)  
University of Pretoria



**Mr Simphiwe Nzima**  
(Student Assistant)  
University of Pretoria



**Mr Raynard Supra**  
(Student Assistant)  
University of Pretoria

The creative component of the project was further strengthened through the involvement of Mr Isaac Zavale, an independent artist who facilitated the zine-making workshop and guided students through the creative and ethical dimensions of producing zines. Together, the team ensured the smooth running of all project activities, culminating in the successful exhibition held on 24th of October 2025.



**Mr Isaac Zavale**  
Artist

# 3 Project Timeline

This section provides an overview of the sequence of activities that shaped the *Zines From The Margins* project from its early planning stages through to its final exhibition. The timeline captures how the various phases of preparation, engagement, creative development, and reflection unfolded over the course of the project. Taken together, these activities formed a cohesive process that contributed to the successful implementation and completion of the project.

Project Preparation  
& Planning

Pre-workshop  
Orientation

Site Visit &  
Observations

Two-Day Zine-  
Making Workshop

Exhibition of Zines

5-15 August

15 August

22-30 August

1-2 September

24 October



# 4 Description Of Project Activities

## 4.1

### Project Preparation & Planning

5-15 August 2025

The project commenced with a two-week intensive planning and preparation phase. During this period, the project team confirmed the project aim, overall schedule, budget, and logistical arrangements. A series of meetings and team discussions were conducted to ensure alignment regarding roles, responsibilities, and expected deliverables. This collaborative process established a clear roadmap and provided a strong foundation for the successful implementation of the project.



## 4.2

### Pre-Workshop Orientation

15 August 2025

A one-day orientation was conducted to introduce students to the theoretical and ethical foundations of the project. The session addressed the role of creative methods in planning and urban research, the history and ethics of zine-making, and questions of representation and power in visual storytelling. Some students were initially hesitant, perceiving artistic work as outside their technical training. However, through engagement with diverse examples of zines, participants developed confidence and began to recognize the value of creative methods in illuminating urban experiences that are often invisible or misunderstood.

## 4.3

## Site visit & Observations

22–30 Aug 2025

Fieldwork was conducted across three sites: Plastic View Informal Settlement (Pretoria), Mamelodi Township (Pretoria), and a Waste Sorting Facility (Johannesburg). Students engaged in observation, photographic documentation, and spatial analysis to investigate formal and informal approaches to waste management. Visiting multiple sites exposed students to different areas where waste is managed and presented in distinct ways, allowing them to compare contexts and understand the diversity of practices and challenges faced by both waste pickers and formal operators.

The site visits provided an immersive understanding of the complex realities of waste management, including spatial precarity, health risks, limited recognition, and the relationships between informal economy workers and public space. They also enabled students to apply theoretical concepts, develop observational skills, and reflect critically on the socio-spatial dimensions of urban livelihoods.



## 4.4

## 2-day Zine-Making Workshop

1–2 September 2025

The two-day workshop, facilitated by independent artist Isaac Zavale, took place at the Maboneng Precinct in Johannesburg. During the workshop, students translated insights from their fieldwork into creative outputs, producing zines that combined illustration, collage, text, photography, and storytelling.

The workshop focused on several key areas, including the ethics of representation and engagement with marginalised communities, page layout and narrative flow, translating spatial research into creative formats, collage and mixed-media techniques, and critical reflection through storytelling.

As a result of the workshop, students diverse, visually compelling, and reflective outputs enhanced their understanding of material, and political dimensions of waste, realities and contributions of waste pickers, of visual and participatory methods in ethical approaches to storytelling when representing marginalised communities.



## 4.5 Zine Exhibition

24 October 2025

The final two-day exhibition was attended by students from all undergraduate and postgraduate year levels, as well as staff from the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development working in the area of Spatial Planning and Land Use Management, the Department of Theology with staff working directly with homelessness and public service outreach. Their engagement provided a rich platform for discussion on spatial justice, and creative communication in urban planning. The workshop fostered collaboration and encouraged students to think beyond conventional planning tools. The exhibition served as a platform for reflection, discussion, and feedback, allowing students to critically assess both their own work and that of their peers. It highlighted the diversity of approaches, storytelling techniques, and visual styles employed to represent the lived experiences of waste pickers. By presenting their zines in a public setting, students were able to communicate the insights gained from fieldwork and workshops to a wider audience, reinforcing the value of participatory and creative methods in planning education. Overall, this final phase consolidated the learning outcomes of the project, demonstrating the potential of creative media to enhance critical engagement with complex urban issues.

Following the exhibition, the zines have been stored in the Department of Town and Regional Planning, where they are displayed alongside student posters, books, and studio work. This creates a physical archive that current and future students can engage with as part of their learning environment. The project overview and outputs have also been shared internally with academic colleagues. Additionally, the zines have been digitised and will be used in future video materials, departmental open days, and public-facing events to showcase student work and the importance of communicating research through alternative, and creative mediums. These efforts ensure that the project continues to reach its intended audiences and inspire wider engagement beyond the initial cohort.



For more information please contact:

Dr Kundani Makakavhule

Senior Lecturer: Department of Town and Regional Planning

Research Committee Chairperson and Coordinator

Programme Coordinator: Masters Town and Regional Planning Coursework

Tel +27 (0)12 420 4180

Email [kundani.makakavhule@up.ac.za](mailto:kundani.makakavhule@up.ac.za)

[www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)

Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology

Room 1-6, Building 8, South Campus

University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20

Hatfield 0028, South Africa



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service