BRITISH COUNCIL

Sime Darby YAYASAN

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

UNDERSTANDING CREATIVE HUBS IN MALAYSIA

Collectives, Entanglements & Ecologies

UNDERSTANDING CREATIVE HUBS IN MALAYSIA

Collectives, Entanglements & Ecologies

AUTHOR
Clarissa Lim Kye Lee, Roslina Ismail,
Poon Chiew Hwa, Florence Lambert

EDITOR
June Tan

RESEARCH PROJECT LEADER
Roslina Ismail, Florence Lambert

CO-RESEARCHER
Poon Chiew Hwa, Erica Choong

RESEARCH TEAM
Clarissa Lim Kye Lee, Husna Khaidil, Ali Alasri

LAYOUT
Bryan Chang

Contents

Executive Summary

Creative Hubs is a relatively new terminology in the cultural landscape in Malaysia, first making its mark in 2017. Before this term came into play, there were already artist-collectives and art groups operating within similar lines, which is discussed in this report in the section, "Brief History of Collectives and Understanding Creative Policy". This section is arranged along political, social, and economic trajectories of Malaysia from 1950's to 2000s'. After discussing these previous collectives and based on research data of current art groups, the research team developed a current definition for Creative Hubs in Malaysia.

The second part of this report, "Arts and Cultural Ecology in Malaysia" examines the environment and infrastructure that Malaysian artist-collectives work within. This includes identifying agencies supporting art and cultural work; and the tools adopted to support the arts such as government grants, sponsorships, institutional grants, and others. From looking at support, the conversation moves into arts education in Malaysia, which is another area that affects the development of art and culture in Malaysia. This report outlines formal and non-formal education, and the role Creative Hubs play in engaging with education.

The final section of this report, "Role and Impact of Creative Hubs" identifies the key traits exhibited by Creative Hubs. The approach taken in this section is more "story-generated" due to the diverse, pluralist nature of the art scene in Malaysia. The research team had found Malaysian Creative Hubs to be inherently multi-disciplinary; employing a multitude of skill sets in their operations; and organised in different ways and operating under different models. As a whole, they collectively continue to cultivate self-supporting networks.

The report concludes with identifying knowledge gaps, amongst them the call to acknowledge the various models used by Hubs; and finally, a proposition for collectivism to expand beyond existing silos of arts disciplines.

Since the report was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were done online with practitioners and this meant targeting Creative Hubs with internet access, which are those typically situated in urban areas. We acknowledge that this may have limited the scope of this report.

1 *The Zhongshan Building*

1.1
Introduction

This report is a mapping of art and cultural collectives in Malaysia, with a particular focus on Creative Hubs in the urban areas. In this report, we recognise the British Council's definition of a Creative Hub, which is:

> **"A physical or virtual place that brings enterprising people together who work in the creative and cultural industries."**[1]

As our research team began to contextualise and reconfigure what the definition can mean for the Malaysian art and cultural ecology, we divided the research process into three parts:

1. Part I: Collectives and Creative Hubs;
2. Part II: The Arts and Cultural Ecology; and
3. Part III: The Role and Impact of Creative Hubs.

We titled the report "*Understanding Creative Hubs in Malaysia: Collectives, Entanglements & Ecologies*" to investigate how Creative Hubs are engaged and interwoven with their members, their collaborators, their audiences and communities. This report also highlights both top-down, and bottom-up supporting systems. An assemblage of keywords to articulate the art and cultural ecology is available in the appendix.

This report is part of the **Hubs For Good Programme** by British Council, University of Malaya and Yayasan Sime Darby and attempts to map out the complex and vast web of the arts and cultural ecology in Malaysia.

2 *The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre*

3 *MyDance Alliance*

Context of Report

The Hubs For Good Scholarship is a one and a half year research project and is a proponent of the 'Hubs For Good' three-year programme. The scholarship programme involved several interrelated projects: a countrywide[2] mapping and research report, a toolkit for the use of Creative Hub members and creative practitioners, and a digital platform.

Globally it goes without saying that 2020 was a year of change and disruption. During this time, three Hubs For Good Scholars namely Ali Alasri, Nurul Husna Khaidil and Clarissa Lim Kye Lee (myself) were under the supervision of Dr Roslina Ismail and Dr Poon Chiew Hwa from the Faculty of Creative Arts, University Malaya (formerly known as Cultural Centre) for this research project. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the data was collected online and carried out by online interviews. Despite the limited movement, the team hopes to have captured the essence of how Creative Hubs operate in this report.

Malaysia is on the precipice of many intersections, between cultural development and digitalisation and industry 4.0. From 2009, since the National Creative Industry Policy (DIKN) was introduced until 2021, new governmental bodies have been set up to engage with the arts and culture industry. These bodies include federal agencies such as Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA) and the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC). Initiatives on a state level include People of Remarkable Talents (PORT) and Penang Art District.

These bodies, in addition to the existing bodies under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC), are meant to provide infrastructure support for the local art and cultural industry. It is therefore timely that an attempt to describe existing Creative Hubs is carried out.

Before 'Creative Hubs' was adopted, there were already groups working creatively as arts groups, organised as collectives. These are loose collectives, part of the local art and cultural ecology. Some worked beyond Malaysia and benefited from international connections, partnerships, and solidarity. Some worked with their local community, serving local community's social needs. The aim of this report is to broadly map these groups, both historically and present and to provide a context of creative groups in Malaysia.

PART I: COLLECTIVES AND CREATIVE HUBS

———————————————

Part I offers to explore the idea of collective art and cultural work in Malaysia through a historical lens. Creative Hubs is a shared phenomenon globally, but how does the terminology Creative Hub situate in a post-colonial context where art and cultural work are already prevalent and ongoing?

As it originated from a western context, we hope to articulate where the definition aligns and diverges in Malaysia. This part explores a re-contextualisation of the terminology of Creative Hubs, and delves through a brief historical timeline of art and cultural collectives, and describes how the art and cultural ecology is reported on and documented.

2
Brief History of Collectives/Creative Hubs

Creative Hubs—What are They?

The term Creative Hub is typically used in western societies, before being introduced to other regions including Southeast Asia in the past five years.

A working definition of a Creative Hub as proposed in the Creative Hubkit published by the British Council (2015) is:

> **"A Creative Hub is a place, either physical or virtual, which brings creative people together. It is a convenor, providing space and support for networking, business development and community engagement within the creative, cultural and tech sectors."**[3]

Based on the existing definition of a Creative Hub, and proceeding from data collected from our two-year project, the research team has agreed to re-centre Creative Hubs in Malaysia as such:

> **"Creative Hubs is a node for creative people. This node can be either permanent or transient. The medium can be either physical or virtual as long as there is a form of creative production. Creative Hubs are embedded within their local context determined by their geographical location and/or the communities they engaged with. Creative Hubs rely on a rich ecosystem to sustain and support themselves within the art and cultural ecology."**

The additional paragraph hopes to realign the intentions of Creative Hubs as community-centred and focused.

From our research, Creative Hubs usually have a primary practice. However, their work can expand beyond the typical framework of the "artistic" field. Hubs are an accumulation of attributes—what we call categories. A hub is constantly testing and evaluating which strategies to employ, or they are constantly challenging modes of production.

Based on this reframing, we considered some existing art groups and collectives and attempted to map them along what was defined. The next section will provide a quick historical glance through the role of art and cultural collectives in Malaysia.

This research was conducted in conjunction with populating the **Hubs Directory** of Creative Hubs in Malaysia.

Before the term Creative Hubs was adopted, there were already arts groups and artists-collectives in Malaysia that share many of the traits used to define a Creative Hub.

4 *Rainforest World Music Festival Fringe*

3 Creative Edinburgh and Creative Dundee, "Creative HubKit," June 28, 2015: 4 – 5, https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/blog/15/06/28/creative-hubkit-made-hubs-emerging-hubs/.

2.2
Background of Malaysian Art and Cultural Collectives

Historically, local art and cultural collectives are often 'alternative' in nature. They operate and grow in parallel with an emerging art world and market in Malaysia.[4] These collectives tend to form their own spaces, independent from institutional funding. This has resulted in local arts groups prioritising experimentation and alternative art and cultural production models.

The collectives also tend to look at what is happening internationally. While many engage with grassroots and community works, many collectives also work to strengthen regional networks through artist residencies and through participating in international festivals, exhibitions, and others.

In addition, many collectives have adopted a model of working that includes participatory and collective care. Michelle Antoinette, an art historian writes:

"As contemporary art becomes increasingly concerned with 'participatory', 'community-based', or 'socially engaged' art practices, these types of spaces have gained new currency in international art. They often exist in tension with the prescribed institutional programmes and physical space of mainstream art museums, which are inclined to present art with already established circulation."[5]

The section below highlights art groups from before independence (1957) to when the country started formulating its own cultural policies.

5

2.2.1
Pre-Merdeka

Before the independence of Malaysia (then called Malaya) from Britain in 1957, Malayan collectives came together to learn traditional crafts and skills. These collectives existed largely as a space for recreation, for segregated ethnic groups to socialise amongst themselves.

United Artists Malaysia (1929) or《南洋書畫社》was a Kuala Lumpur based art society promoting Chinese culture and premised on the formative years of the *Nanyang*.[6] The collective practiced writing Chinese calligraphy and promoted ink painting to create spaces for cultural enrichment.[7]

In 1960s there was the *Angkatan Pelukis Se-Malaysia* (**APS-All Malaysian Painters' Front**) which was one of the first Malay art collectives that "function[ed] as both a social club as well as a promoter of realism as a painterly style, especially amongst the Malay community". This collective emerged as a social club from the Malay Arts Council established in 1956, and was active in holding exhibitions and art classes for art enthusiasts in Kuala Lumpur.[8]

Another formative group included the Peter Harris' **Wednesday Art Group** (WAG) which was active from 1952 to 1960. Peter Harris was the first Superintendent of Art Education for Malaya, sent from the United Kingdom. He held art workshops every Wednesday evening from 6pm to 8pm for art educators and aspiring artists at the Selangor Education Department (now MaTIC on Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur). Harris' pedagogical methodology denied the use of an eraser to enable art teachers to be unafraid of mistakes, to be flexible and nimble. Some artists who participated in these sessions went on to become prolific figures in Malaysian visual art history. They include artists such as Jolly Koh, Patrick Ng, Rene Kraal, Grace Selvanayagam, the late Syed Ahmad Jamal, just to name a few.[9]

These three groups were part of many groups that had formed coalitions and practised collectivism during the colonial era. These groups managed to gather art practitioners and educators together and their events became a space of communal sharing, learning, and the promotion of different art making methodologies and practices.

4 Sarena Abdullah, "The Emerging Alternative Practices in Malaysian Art (1990s – 2015)",
   https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.25_1.

5 Michelle Antoinette, "Mapping Regional Difference: Institutionalized Cartographies of Southeast Asian Art," *Brill Academic Publishers* 178 (January 3, 2014): 81 – 155.

5 *Arts-ED*

6 In the past during the early years of Nanyang, this was a land of deep forests. Hence persons in the motherland became terrified upon hearing the term "Nanyang." As recent as thirty years ago there were still no schools (and the region was) culturally backward. Fellow Chinese still regard the people of Nanyang as half-civilised and fail to note Nanyang's geographical context.

7 Kian Chow Kwok, "United Artists Malaysia," The Literature, Culture and Society of Singapore, accessed March 4, 2021,
   http://www.postcolonialweb.org/singapore/arts/painters/channel/3.html.

8 Simon Soon, "Angkatan Pelukis Se-Malaysia," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2016),
   https://doi.org/10.4324/9781135000356-REM755-1.

9 Ooi, "Once Upon A Time In Malaya @ Arteri," accessed March 4, 2021,
   http://arteri.search-art.asia/2009/06/27/once-upon-a-time-in-malaya/.

2.2.2
The 70s and 80s

During the seventies and eighties, art collectives experimented in expanding beyond their disciplines. New experimental practices began to emerge, demarcating the artworks with an *avant-garde* quality. Collectives began working with a multitude of forms, media, and even different models of organisations.

The New Economic Policy was launched in 1971, alongside the National Cultural Policy[10] and these two policies were amongst the earliest policies in independent Malaysia. Along with these policies, Malaysia as a young independent nation was also learning to find its own cultural bearings.

T.K. Sabapathy, a prolific art historian, writer, and curator described the entanglements of such culturally defining policies and the impact on primarily the visual arts:

"Overtly and covertly, events of May 1969[11] and the Cultural Congress and no doubt other related movements, began to shape thinking and practices among artists; they were far too shattering and fundamental to be ignored. Throughout the 1970s, artists began the difficult, painful process of rethinking their positions, and recasting their perceptions of culture, language, race, state/nation and identity."[12]

Art historian Sarena Abdullah indicates that both policies shifted the country towards an

Islamification of visual art practices well into the 1980s.[13]

Sabapathy also wrote,

"Art reflecting the global Islamic revivalism in the 1980s has either aligned itself with the tendencies in Abstract Expressionism or found kinship with decorative art."

Abdullah argues that the policies can be seen as a form of a decolonialising intervention to expand interest and practice of Malaysian modern art. It begs the question of "what is the Malaysia-ness of Malaysian Art?" As visual artist Sulaiman Esa noted, as a flip side, the policies have led to the idea of the secular spirit as the Malay Mind was colonised through religion, philosophy, and craft.[14]

Amongst collectives experimenting with art form during this era are Anak Alam, Five Arts Centre and MATAHATI. **Anak Alam** was a collective founded by Latif Mohidin, and the members included Ali Rahmad, Mustapha Ibrahim, Maryam Abdullah, Siti Zainon Ismail, and many others. Anak Alam aimed to break down conventional concepts of Islamic ideologies and identity of nation building by combining art, poetry, literature, theatre, and music. Many of the founders had studied overseas and returned to integrate new ideas in the context of Malaysia (this pattern of a returning student from overseas forming new ideas and new collectives is also seen in contemporary Creative Hubs). These art collectives were keen to challenge the binary that existed between the established and experimental.

The philosophical roots of **Five Arts Centre** (1984) began as a transcending notion of five genres—theatre, dance, visual, arts, literature and a genre that was left 'open-ended'. An experimental theatre-performance art, it is a loose collective, located in a shop lot in the affluent neighbourhood of Taman Tun Dr. Ismail (TTDI). The collective shifts and morphs the reading of what 'Five Arts' equate to. Sometimes the 'five' shifted to young people's theatre and music. Adding to their identity is a mix of elements including research, artistic expression, education, collaborative creation, and advocacy. Five Arts Centre has an extensive profile on our database and information can also be found on their own website.[15]

MATAHATI (1989) translates to "eye of the soul" and was formed by students of the fine arts programme at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). The collective includes Ahmad Shukri Mohamaed, Ahmad Fuad Osman, Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Hamir Soib @ Mohamad and Masnoor Rambli Mahmud. In 2007, MATAHATI created a space known as HOM (House of MATAHATI).

MATAHATI attempted to build a vocabulary of intertwining Malay and Islamic notions, addressing identity, social, and personal. Each member had their specific practice, and the collective was a supporting space to practice their skills and seek guidance.[16]

From the 70s and 80s, themes such as identity, culture, and nation building began emerging. This was guided by the framework of the national cultural policy, leading to an exploration of the role and influence of Islam in Malaysian Arts.[17]

---

10 "National Culture Policy | Prime Ministers Office (PMO)," accessed March 4, 2021, https://www.pmo.gov.my/2019/07/national-culture-policy/.

11 Inter-ethnic violent riots which took place in Kuala Lumpur.

12 T.K. Sabapathy, "Merdeka Makes Art or Does It?", in Vision and Idea: Relooking Modern Malaysian Art, ed. T.K. Sabapathy (Kuala Lumpur: National Art Gallery, 1994): 71.

6 *MATAHATI*

13 Sarena Abdullah, "The 1980s as (an Attempt in) the Decolonialization of Malaysian Art," *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia* 4, no. 1 (2020): 3 – 29, https://doi.org/10.1353/sen.2020.0002.

14 Abdullah, "The 1980s as (an Attempt in) the Decolonialization of Malaysian Art."

15 Husna Khaidil, Ali Alasri, and Kye Lee Clarissa Lim, "Five Arts Centre—Creative Hubs Malaysia," Database, Creative Hubs, 2020, https://creativehubs.my/creative_hub/five-arts-centre/.

16 Khairuddin, Nur Hanim. "Rumah YKP: Art in the Margins of Society."

17 This include the New Economic Policy as announced in 1970, part of a measure to the May 13 Incident—Jomo, K. S., "The New Economic Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations in Malaysia."

2.2.3
The 90s

The 90's saw many different shifts and social changes. Amongst them was the growing distinction between popular culture versus subculture; a rise in advocacy amongst artist collectives; the development of multidisciplinary practices, and the growth of globalisation.

As artist collectives began taking their work overseas (e.g. to biennales and international art fairs), they were also keen to respond to local policy and democratic rule. The Asian financial crisis took the region by surprise, along with *Reformasi*, a protest movement founded upon the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. This protest movement rippled into a variety of initiatives by art groups, largely organised by economic class.[18]

In 1991, the vision for the future was introduced with the Wawasan 2020, or Vision 2020, the national call to be a self-sufficient industrial nation by 2020. This directed efforts to build academic institutions such as Multimedia University (MMU) in 1996, which pioneered the first media arts programme led by Niranajan Rajah and Hasnul Saidon.[19] The creation of MMU allowed art students to consider developing skills a within the digital sphere. Artist-collectives began to respond to digitalisation as a new media of art making which resulted in a shift towards online and digital practices.

While digitalisation was thrust as part of the nation's growth, many artist-collectives remained small and "underground". In 1996, a few members of the 121C collective founded **Republic of Brickfields**. It was a space where punk culture, underground bands, indie labels congregated in the urban neighbourhood of Brickfields. This collective had a DIY approach to music making, distribution and expounded anti-capitalist ideals. Many of the ideas experimented by this collective influenced other collectives experimenting with music.

Yayasan Kesenian Perak *(YKP)* or **Perak Arts Foundation** (1996) was established with support from the Perak State Government. Its aim was to *"bring awareness of art and culture to the public through ...diverse projects and activities"*.[20] Located in Ipoh, Perak, it was registered as a non-profit organisation and collaborated with a variety of government and federal agencies ranging from the National Art Gallery to the Institute of Language and Literature. They pioneered *Pekan Seni Ipoh*, or Ipoh Arts Festival (1996 – 00) where exchange programmes, exhibitions, cultural shows and performances took place.

Rumah Air Panas (1997) was founded by a few artists in a single-story bungalow in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur. With around 15 members at its peak, they turned their space into an artist-run experimental studio that presented experimental performances, exhibitions, and festivals.

Artis Pro Activ (APA) (1998) was an ephemeral collective, established during the 1998 *Reformasi* movement in Malaysia. The group organised an exhibition titled *'Apa? Siapa? Kenapa?'* or *What? Who? Why?* held at prolific designer William Harald-Wong's new office in Wangsa Maju.[21] The exhibition opened on the 11th year anniversary of *"Operation Lalang''*—the infamous crackdown carried out in October 1987 which saw the arrest of 119 activists, opposition politicians, intellectuals, students, artists, scientists, detained without trial under the Internal Security Act.

APA's work was political and promoted a self-proclaimed non-partisan ideology promoting ideas of freedom of speech, collective action responding to a political event. Their work included publishing alternative news websites, to stickers, postcards and e-mail newsletters. This led to an almost month-long festival from 27 October to 15 November 1998. This festival was a response to the controversial sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim[22] exemplifying the role of art in social action and work in the public sphere.

Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU) (1998) became a place for university students to congregate in Bangsar Utama, Kuala Lumpur. These students were interested in unpacking progressive theories, current affairs and looking for ways to participate and organise around sdemocratic reform in Malaysia.[23] In 2000 the collective began renting a space for community-based programmes that included educational and arts-based classes for primary school, secondary school and university students. They also had youth programmes advocating for democracy and human rights, and pop-up performances and festivals.

Both APA and UBU were invited to participate in the Gwangju Biennale in 2002[24] to elaborate artist-run spaces. The art curator and critic Hou Hanru commented on:

> **"DIY communities and self-organisations are the main source of sustainability, the main force in the revival and continued development of today's post-planning cities. The creation and development of alternative art spaces is a perfect example."**

In the 90s, much of the art and cultural labour was involved in engaging with underground, and alternative spaces, as artist-collectives expanded room for alternative thought. There was also a shift towards globalisation, where art and cultural work from Malaysia was exhibited, performed, and displayed overseas.

Organising also began to move online—where the email thread was introduced to notify groups rather than using phone calls. This enabled almost instant notifications, allowing artists to react, create and support one another.

---

[18] Organisations such as Artis Pro Activ was organised around the middle class, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsnp8jl83C0.

[19] Rajah, "Pameran Seni Elektronik pertama".

[20] Khairuddin, "Rumah YKP: Art in the Margins of Society," n.d.: 10.

[21] ILHAM Gallery, *ILHAM Conversations: Apa Apa*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsnp8jl83C0.

[22] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Human Rights of Parliamentarians: 186th Governing Council Session."

[23] Hati, "Universiti Bangsar Utama," Database, Hati, 2020, https://www.hati.my/universiti-bangsar-utama-ubu/.

[24] Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, "Harnessing the Means of Production," Society of Control, accessed March 4, 2021", http://www.societyofcontrol.com/pmwiki/Akademie/uploads/Main/harnessing.htm.

2.2.4
The 2000s to 2010s

The noughties saw the ubiquitous use of the internet as a tool for art; and also saw the rise of community care. Many alternative art initiatives popped up in various venues, taking a more festival approach towards art and culture. This means cultivating short-term events that are often transient in nature.

Parking Project was initiated by the late Roslisham Ismail or 'Ise', in 2002. He rented a small space as his home and begun offering the guest room for Artists in Residence. Ismail says he, *"hijacked the network of Ruangrupa"*[25] by offering free accommodation to artists headed to Jakarta but had to stop by Kuala Lumpur. Through *Parking Project*, Ise managed to connect the art and cultural ecology on an international scale and plug that in for local practitioners. The network that was built included musicians, photographers, designers and international artists.[26]

Lostgens' (2003) is part of our existing list of Creative Hubs. Among the many festivals and collaborations the organisation organised, they include (but not limited to):

- Notthatbalai Art Festival (2005) organised in collaboration with other art collectives
- *Kampung Berembang* (2006) Project Kampung Seni (Art Village)[27] in conjunction with World Human Rights Day[28]

- *Bangun!* Penang Clan Jetties Art Project— Penang Clan Jetty (2009)
- Hulu Langat Community Art Project (2011)
- *Bukit Cina*, Melaka Community Art Project (2011)
- Petaling Street Community Art Project (2011)

Each of them is site specific, in a space undergoing contestation (home ownership or cultural contestation). Many of Lostgens' projects were made from found materials, and engaged with the local communities.

Sasaran Art Association (2008) organises various forms of community art and festivals, such as an international art festival once every three years.[29] In 2016, they opened the Sasaran Art Gallery and named it *Balai Seni Kuala Selangor* (Sasaran Art Gallery Kuala Selangor). The gallery is located in a rural small fishing village 80km from Kuala Lumpur at the mouth of Sungai Buloh. Founded and chaired by Ng Bee, who is said to have *"managed to convince the residents of Sasaran, who mostly had no experience or understanding of art, to work together in organising the event."*[30]

Using a methodologies based on community art, the festival engaged with the public to create public participatory works such as murals and workshops. In 2014, the Sasaran International Arts Festival had 65 participating artists from 23 countries with over 10,000 visitors.[31] The association also runs artist-in-residency programmes, exhibitions and public art programmes.

Tindakan Gerak Asuh (TIGA)[32] (2008) was founded under three main branches of nature, arts and education.[33] It was founded by Aisyah Baharuddin, Mohamad Idham Ismail and Farhana Mohd Tajali. The collective has organised festivals and community-engaged arts projects in Kampung Padang Jawa and had created various festivals and a public space called *Pusat Sekitar Seni* (Centre Around the Arts)[34] located at Baharuddin's home.

The rise of community-centric practices drew attention to site-specific events that engaged with community needs. These events included responses to sociological, environmental, or political issues impacting communities and/or livelihood. Art and cultural work were performed in the public realm, engaging with the fabric of neighbourhoods.

The 2000's set the stage for the shift towards many efforts listed in the **Creative Hub database**. A decade later, we saw the rise of the creative economy, digitalisation, and social media, generating a new era of art and cultural collectivism.

2.3
Current Creative Hubs— Categories and the Malaysian Context

From our research, Creative Hubs usually have a primary practice. However, their work can expand beyond the typical framework of the "artistic" field. Hubs are an accumulation of attributes – what we call categories. A hub is constantly testing and evaluating which strategies to employ, or they are constantly challenging modes of production.

Do refer to the **Hubs Directory** for the full list of Creative Hubs.

7

---

[25] An artist collective from Jakarta, Indonesia.

[26] Arsip Indonesian Visual Art Archive, IVAA ARTJOG14 ART|JOG|14—IVAA Public Discussion Forum: Ise Parking Project, Malaysia, 2014,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bvbXVPpfQE.

[27] Forthcoming lostgens archive: Lian Heng Yeoh, "Lostgens' Contemporary Art Space," Lostgens, accessed March 4, 2021,
https://lostgens.org/.

[28] In collaboration with Fahmi Reza: Fahmi Reza, *Wayang Kulit "Tragedi Insan Berembang,"* 2006,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMHqo3OjWQA.

[29] Arts Ed, "Sasaran Art Association," Documentation Project and resource Site, Community Based Arts and Cultural workers in Malaysia, accessed March 4, 2021,
https://www.communityarts.my/profile-sasaran-association.

[30] Abdullah, Sarena. "The Emerging Alternative Practices in Malaysian Art (1990s – 2015)." *Art & the Public Sphere* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 2018): 25 – 41,
https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.25_1.

[31] Rouwen Lin, "The Sasaran International Art Festival in Its Third Edition | The Star," 11 2014,
https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2014/11/29/the-sasaran-internation-al-art-festival-returns-for-the-third-time-with-over-60-participating-artists.

[32] Which roughly translates to fostering action movement. The acronym translates to 3.

[33] T.I.G.A., "About T.I.G.A.," *T.I.G.A (Tindakan Gerak Asuh)* (blog), February 18, 2013,
https://tindakangerakasuh.wordpress.com/about/.

[34] Researcher's translation

7 *PORT Commune*

Creative Hubs—Typologies and Categories

Each Creative Hub has a "unique fingerprint"[35] and production of work is determined through the engagement with their community.

We have currently found three types of Creative Hubs in Malaysia, they are:

- **Physical Creative Hubs:** hubs with a brick and mortar location.
- **Transient Hubs:** hubs that are activated for a temporary period of time and are ephemeral in nature.
- **Online Hubs:** hubs that congregate on an online platform.

Within the three types, we identified 14 categories of Creative Hubs. Many hubs embody more than one category, creating a unique set of attributes for each hub.

8

1. **Collective and Archive**
   Creative Hubs that collect, archive and store records of artwork deemed possessing cultural value. These records should be accessible by the public and organised systematically.

2. **Community**
   Creative Hubs that carry out art and cultural programmes engaging with a community living in an area or defined by a specific characteristic.

3. **Craft**
   Creative Hubs that promote the designing and production of crafted items, giving a nation, region, or city a sense of identity. In Malaysia, the types of traditional crafts identified by the National Craft Institute include batik craft, weaving craft, metal craft, woodcraft, rattan craft and ceramic craft, amongst others.

4. **Creative Education**
   Creative Hubs that use educational tools to equip the public with art and cultural skills and practises.

5. **Culinary Arts**
   Creative Hubs involved in the process of preparing, experimenting, presenting, and serving food and beverages.

6. **Design**
   Creative Hubs that use design methodologies to create, fashion, execute or construct artwork. These design practises can include fashion design, graphic design, industrial design, architectural design, social design, interactive media design and more.

7. **Event Organiser, Producer and Curatorial Services**
   This category involves any of the three arts administrative roles:

   - **Event Organiser/Manager**—Creative Hubs that have the capacity to organise events that connect artists, audiences and sponsors.
   - **Producer**—many Creative Hubs have projects that involve elements of project management to meet the requirements of the artistic project while managing audience expectations.
   - **Curatorial Services**—the role of the curator is to ensure the assembly, cataloguing, management, and presentation of projects digestible for the public. The curator is in constant communication with the artists, and they are often armed with knowledge of art history, art markets and academic institutions.

8. **Fabrication Spaces and Makerspace**
   A fabrication space and/or makerspace is a Creative Hub which offers digital fabrication or workshop for hands-on fabrication. These are spaces of experimentation and small-scale fabrication.

9. **Film, Broadcasting and Digital Video Content**
   Creative Hubs that produce work using film techniques, including but not limited to television, movies, commercials, advertisements, online digital media platforms etc.

10. **Literature, Publication and Digital Content**
    Creative Hubs that contribute discourse to a body of written works. This discourse includes exploring ideas around events surrounding literature.

11. **Music**
    Creative Hubs which use the medium of music to express artistic content. This includes vocal or instrumental sounds that explore the idea of form, harmony and expression of emotion. These hubs can be involved in performing, researching, composing or recording music and sound.

12. **Performing Arts**
    Creative Hubs whose artwork are performed in front of a live audience such as drama, musical theatre, dance, music and other disciplines. These practices refer to forms of art in which performers use their bodies, voices or inanimate objects to convey artistic expressions.

13. **Venue and Space Management**
    Creative Hubs that handle event space management or venue management. This involves planning and managing arts and cultural events with the event organisers and/or clients.

14. **Visual Art**
    Creative Hubs which use visual arts, including mediums such as drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, film, and printmaking.

The next section will highlight creative and cultural policies in Malaysia that were aimed at supporting the art and cultural ecology and eventually meant to assist Creative Hubs.

---

[35] British Council, "Creative Hubs," British Council | Creative Economy, accessed March 4, 2021,
https://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/projects/hubs.

2.4
Understanding Creative Policy

Cultural industries is a term coined by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1947, aligning cultural products with commodification.[36] This term was linked to policy when the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS, 1998) in the United Kingdom government was formed. The department called for a collective effort in bringing back cultural genres, entertainment and a wide interpretation of art and cultural production.

Concurrently in North America, proposals from Richard Florida's "Rise of the Creative Class" published in 2002, were put into action. He asserted the critical relationship between the city and the need for creativity within businesses, thus aligning creative production with capital.

The two discourses became the formative starting points for 'creativity' as an outcome of policy making. The shift of language from arts and culture towards creativity and industrialisation marks the leaning to capital and the neoliberal economy.

Now 'creative industry policy', is used broadly in policies relating to arts and culture and its definition can be interpreted manifold.[37] In Malaysia, the first policy involving art and culture would be the National Cultural Policy (NCP), 1971. According to the national Department of Arts and Culture or *Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara* (JKKN), the national cultural policy mentions a need for *"careful and detailed planning in cultivating the*

Malaysian way of life."[38] As Malaysia is a multi-racial society—care must be used when developing the Malaysian identity. The implementation of this policy is primarily taken on by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC). However, the mandate of this ministry is primarily on tourism and this means looking at culture as a tourism product.

Other than the NCP in 2009 there was the *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (DIKN) or the National Creative Industry Policy. According to then Prime Minister Najib Razak, the policy was designed to:

> **"Empower the creative industries as a whole based on creativity and innovation, thus contributing to a high-income economy and to uphold [sic] the nation's cultural heritage."**[39]

As the creative industries became a policy focus, DIKN was aligned with *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020), the national vision of being a self-sufficient nation; and also the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and Multimedia Development Corporation (MDEC).[40] MSC and MDEC were tasked with spearheading Malaysia forward into the digital economy.

The then named Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture, MoTAC, JKKN and the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (*Perbadanan Kemajuan Filem Nasional Malaysia,*

Table 1: DIKN classification of the creative industries

Industri Kreatif Multimedia (Multimedia Creative Industries)	*Industri Kreatif Seni Budaya* (Cultural Arts Creative Industries)	*Industri Kreatif Warisan Budaya* (Cultural Heritage Creative Industries)
Penerbitan Filem dan TV (Film and TV)	*Kraf* (Crafts)	*Muzium* (Museum)
Pengiklanan (Advertising)	*Seni Visual* (Visual Arts)	*Arkib* (Archives)
Seni Reka (Design)	*Seni Muzik* (Music)	*Pemulihan* (Restoration)
Animasi dan Kandungan Digital (Animation and Digital Content)	*Seni Persembahan* (Performing Arts)	*Pemuliharaan* (Preservation)
	Penulisan Kreatif (Creative Writing)	
	Fesyen dan Tekstil (Fashion and Textiles)	

Source: *Kementerian Penerangan Komunikasi dan Kebudayaan* (2009).

FINAS), and MDEC (renamed Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation) were all outlined to disperse the budget allocated to the policy.[41]

In the DIKN policy, the defined creative industries only contributed 1.27% of the national income (in 2014). This definition did not include art galleries, libraries, or the architectural and interior design industry. After the launch of this policy, funding programmes were created to support the work of animation, digital, film and new media companies.

From 2017 – 2021, government financing of the arts and culture increased via newly established Government-linked Companies (GLCs) such as MyCreative Ventures, CENDANA, RIUH, Malaysia Global Innovation Creativity Centre (MaGIC). More funding incentives also came through government departments such as MoTAC, FINAS, and KKMM.

The funding incentives are in various forms, such as tax deductions, grants and the provision of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) for freelancers working in the film industry.[42]

During the pandemic, support came via PENJANA (*Pelan Jana Semula Ekonomi Negara*, National Economic Regeneration Plan) as a form of a short-term economic recovery plan.[43] Under this plan, MYR 225 million will be distributed by KKMM and My Creative Ventures in the form of soft loans, digital marketing grants, animation, and visual effects.

As creativity was now measured as cultural products, it has become more difficult to evaluate the impact of arts on culture and society. The next section highlights how these policies are accessed and the implications it has for future support.

---

[36] Scott Lash and Celia Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 22.

[37] Ranging from aligning Creative City ideals, convergence between technological change and industry occupations and reconciling between culture-centric versus econo-centric. Enterprise Connect and the Creative Industries Innovation Centre, "Creative Industries Economic Analysis" (Centre for International Economics, June 30, 2009), https://opus.lib.edu.uts.au/bitstream/10453/34839/1/CIIC_COLLATERAL_55_original.pdf.

Richard Smith and Katie Warfield, "The Creative City: A Matter of Values," in Creative Cities, Cultural Clusters and Local Economic Development, ed. Philip Cooke and Luciana Lazzeretti, New Horizons in Regional Science (Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2008): 287 – 312.

[38] National Culture Policy | JKKN."

[39] Rais Yatim, "Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara Mampu Lonjak Ekonomi Dan Sosio-Budaya Negara | CariGold Forum."

[40] Barker, Yuen Beng, and School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, MALAYSIA, "Making Creative Industries Policy."

[41] School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Semenyih, MALAYSIA et al., "Making Creative Industries Policy: The Malaysian Case," *Kajian Malaysia* 35, no. 2 (2017): 21 – 37, https://doi.org/10.21315/km2017.35.2.2.

[42] "Budget 2021 Official Budget," Laman Khas Belanjawan 2021, accessed March 5, 2021, http://belanjawan2021.treasury.gov.my/index.php/en/.

[43] MInistry of Finance, "Penjana—Short Term Economic Recovery Plan" (Ministry of Finance, 2020), https://penjana.treasury.gov.my/pdf/PENJANA-Booklet-En.pdf.

3
Role of Appraisal:
Act of Reporting

This chapter highlights how reporting and data mapping is carried out in Malaysia by various types of organisations to evaluate how creativity is explored. This in turn affects how policies are designed and implemented. There is no one universal method of tabulating creativity, and in Malaysia the same applies.

3.1
Government Linked Companies

Two GLCs that are involved in developing data collection and reporting are Think City, an urban development entity; and CENDANA. They generate reports on a city scale generally,[44] but their scope involves the whole country.

Think City gathers data through the lens of urban analytics such as building use, creative industries, cultural services[45] and heritage sites. Their work also supports developing and producing maps and urban design through the method of 'placemaking'.[46] In 2019, Think City was also involved in creating a strategic master plan for a Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District (KLCCD) in collaboration with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (*Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur*, DBKL), MoTAC as well as *Badan Warisan* (Malaysian Heritage Trust). In the strategic master plan, places of creative and cultural significance were assessed.

Since CENDANA is involved in the distribution of grants, it processes the data of their grantees, and also uses commissioned research to draw out patterns in the industry. CENDANA's grants typically cover traditional crafts, performing arts, independent music, and visual art.

In addition, the British Council also embarked on *Mapping Creative Hubs in Malaysia*[47] and has previously commissioned a regional report for Southeast Asia titled the *Connecting Creative Communities*[48] which highlighted the regional Creative Hubs.

9 *Badan Warisan*

[44] Much like the Creative Hubs: Understanding the New Economy (Dovey and Pratt, 2016) written for the UK is accompanied with in depth city profiles.

[45] Their work only engages with Art centres, advertising firms, galleries, and museums from Think City, "Visualising Malaysian Cities."

[46] Four main research areas of Think City includes: Placemaking, Analytics, Resilience and Conservation. Think City, "About Think City Institute."

[47] "Mapping Creative Hubs in Malaysia | British Council," accessed March 5, 2021, https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/resources/mapping-creative-hubs-malaysia/.

[48] Ling Low, "Connecting Creative Communities—Creative Hubs in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia & The Philippines," Creative Economy British Council (Kuala Lumpur: British Council, 10 17), https://www.britishcouncil.my/sites/default/files/bc-regional-creative_hubs_report_sea.pdf.

3.2
International Organisations, Consulting Groups

Frost and Sullivan and Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy have collaborated with CENDANA, Think City, KKKM, Hasanah Foundation, Yayasan Sime Darby, MyCreative Ventures and British Council to create a report titled 'Kuala Lumpur as a Cultural and Creative City' (2017).

The report suggests creativity is used to implement a space for facilitating property development, industry partnerships and connection to the online world. Imbued in the report are descriptions used in "start-ups" such as "incubators" and "accelerator programmes", a clear distinction away from the British Council's definition.[49]

3.3
Summary of Chapter

The section explored the background of the artist-collectives; the terminologies used when describing Creative Hubs; and the context of creative policies. The role of collectives is contingent on collaboration, flexibility and often finding an alternative trajectory of work.

This section also explored the notion of arts and cultural work within a creative economy, with creative policies being tied with capital, digitalisation, and cultural production for the economy.

After going through the broader aspects of the arts and cultural ecosystem, the next section zooms into the role of art and cultural workers, and the organisations that are part of the Creative Hubs network.

10 *Hubs for Good Capacity Workshop*

49 CENDANA, "Kuala Lumpur as a Cultural & Creative City."

PART II: ART AND CULTURAL ECOLOGY IN MALAYSIA

Part II of this report identifies the stakeholders of the Creative Hubs and how their work marked the nature of many Hubs today.

This report uses the term 'ecology' to highlight the interconnectedness of Creative Hubs with the environment from which they operate. It is built on the discourse by Timothy Morton that *"no being, construct or object can exist independently from the ecological entanglement"*.[50] Much like Morton's claim that all bodies, collectives and projects exist within a shared continuum, acknowledging art and cultural work respond and react collectively.

50 Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 1. Harvard University Press paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012).

4
Art and Cultural Ecology

4.1
Governing Bodies Supporting Art and Culture

From 2018 until present,[51] the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MoTAC) (now the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture) has been governing the arts and cultural ecology. However, other agencies are also involved. This has created complexity in delivering support for the arts and culture.

During the 2000s, when the idea of Industry 4.0 emerged, creative industry started to shift towards innovation and technology. This led to the creation of agencies such as Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC, 2014) which is currently under the purview of the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI).

In 2017, the Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA) was granted funding by the Ministry of Finance to develop the creative sector. CENDANA is placed under MyCreative Ventures, a government agency that provides soft loans, which is under the purview of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (KKMM). These governmental bodies received funding via the Creative Industries Policy (DIKN, 2009) and PENJANA.

In addition, beyond the federal government, each state has their own system of supporting the arts. States such as Perak, Penang and Sarawak

directly engage with the community by funding and sponsoring festivals, providing venue support, and pioneering their own Creative Hubs. This can be seen in festivals such as Ipoh Art Festival in Perak and George Town Festival (GTF) in Penang.

To envision the connections between governmental institutions, GLCs and federal ministries, the next section will describe how funding systems and support are linked.

4.1.1
Government Matrix—GLCs, Policies and Support from Government Institutions

The governmental matrix was created in 2020 – 21. It identifies economic stimulus packages, creative industries policies and governmental plans that affect the arts and cultural ecology. The diagram is only indicative of the available data for the

public. These incentives include the Short-Term Economic Recovery Plan (PENJANA, 2020),[52] National Creative Industries Policy (DIKN, 2009)[53] and Malaysian Creative Industry Stimulus Package (PRISMA, 2021).

---

[51] The year of publication is June, 2021.

[52] The support for arts and culture were directed to MDEC, MyCreative Ventures, CENDANA, MaGIC, Technology Park Malaysia, MTDC and Future Innovation Lab.

[53] The support was distributed by PEMANDU and various other banks (SME, Bank Simpanan Nasional).

11 *What About Kuching*

From the diagram,[54] there are direct links between funding and policy and the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Multimedia and Communications (KKMM) and several GLCs. Under KKMM are agencies such as CENDANA, MyCreative Venture, FINAS, all of which are responsible for distributing grants, loan schemes, capacity build-ing programmes and more.

Creative Hubs have also received funding from MaGIC under the purview of MOSTI, by participating in the social enterprise programmes. Annual grants from these agencies are a relatively new develop-ment (from 2017).

It can be seen that direct links between MoTAC (the ministry which takes care of art and culture) and funding is limited. What emerges is a convoluted process of distribution, which includes three different ministries, many more GLCs and government institutions.

In addition, due to the lack of decisive cultural policy, there is a sense that these grants are inconsistent. Therefore, not many Creative Hubs incorporate the grants into their yearly planning. How then do Creative Hubs sustain themselves?

Many Creative Hubs sustain themselves through a mixed bag of funding methods. These range from tangible, in-kind exchange from their immediate community to organised, institutional funding that entails an intensive application process. What is common between Creative Hubs is that sources of funding are not merely from the government. These non-government sources of funding are described in the next section.

4.2
NGOs, NPOs and Foundations

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are registered organisations usually working on the ground to address social or political ideas. Many Creative Hubs have close relationships with NGOs/ NPOs and some hubs themselves are also practicing NGOs and NPOs.

Foundations are organisations that work within the category of non-profit organisation or a chari-table trust. In Malaysia, this includes Yayasan Sime Darby and Yaysan Hasanah who have been instru-mental in supporting many local art and cultural projects. Grants from foundations are usually on a project basis, often non-profit in nature, and aimed at social assistance and development. These organisations also provide yearly reports indicating the amount of monetary support provided to arts and culture, allowing for accountability and transparency.

As Creative Hubs continue to engage with NGOs, NPOS & Foundations, art groups are also developing and acquiring the necessary skills required for proposal writing and project reporting. To find more information about application pro-cesses do refer to the **toolkit**.

4.3
International Cultural Organisation

International cultural organisations are bodies who develop bilateral or regional ties with Malaysia. Many are represented through international NGOs such as the British Council, Goethe-Institut Malaysia, or Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL). Some of these organisations are of a regional scale such as Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) or United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

These organisations are interested in develop-ing global ties and conversations between nations. Many artists have benefitted from programmes from these organisations in the form of grants, artist-in-residency programmes, workshops, cul-tural exchange, and opportunities for collaborative projects.

4.4
Institutional Support

Institutional support includes spaces of care, shar-ing and learning collectively. An example is from Penang Art District (PAD), funded by the Penang State Exco for Tourism and Creative Economy (PETACH) of the Penang State Government. During the pandemic, this organisation found a few ways to support artists. They held informal gatherings on zoom titled *"Arts Community Catch-up"* to garner feedback from the art and cultural workers based in Penang. The catch-up was organised to discuss updates, assistance with grants, and provide a space of support. PAD also shared their zoom account, allowing for unlimited time for discussions between art and cultural workers

---

54 For those interested, please visit,
    https://coggle.it/diagram/YB-HNtpUTgAJ49Rp/t/malaysia.

12 *Yayasan Sime Darby Arts Festival*

4.5
Corporate Sponsorship

Besides institutional support, Creative Hubs are able to sustain themselves by engaging with corporate sponsorship of their events. Companies will come on board as a sponsor and/or partner and have their brand appear on promotional material. In exchange there could be monetary support for the project, or sponsorship of equipment (e.g. projector, camera), venue or materials. This is normally done for performances, exhibitions, and other events.

4.6
Creative Hubs Supporting Each Other

Forms of support between Creative Hubs also include organising events to share experiences, networking, and learning with one another.
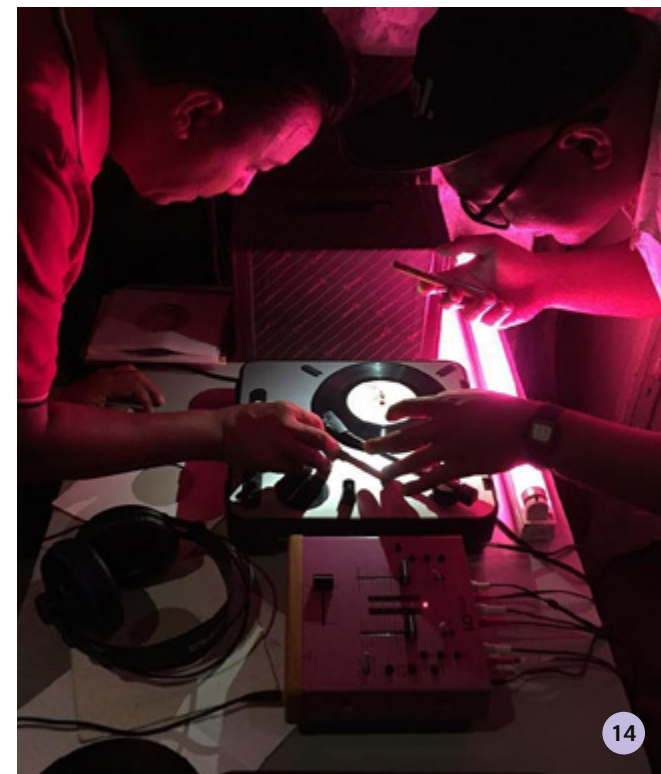
An example organising a network is by **Five Arts Centre**, a local performing arts collective, who managed Arts Network Asia,[55] a regional organisation supporting arts work in Asia. Five Arts Centre became a hub to other regional art organisations as a space for meetings, to create contacts and network with one another.

Another form of support is sharing time and space with one another, as seen in artists collectives like **Rumah Air Panas** with a shared studio space and multidisciplinary projects.

Artis Pro Activ (APA) used a collective email chain to promote organising and seeking support. This is during a time when emails were still new as a communication method. APA also relied on the support of design firms to provide space to meet, to gather, and to exhibit.

Rumah Air Panas and Artis Pro Activ show that Creative Hubs can house spontaneous moments of solidarity or networking to support other art organisations. This resulted in a form of collective care that created richness for the arts and cultural ecology.

4.6.1
Advocacy and Informal Grants

Within the Creative Hubs community, there is also an informal grant economy working on sharing resources through network and connections. This includes sharing space, manpower, or services based on word of mouth. Many Creative Hubs rely on individuals championing their work, promoting stories to the press or opening the conversation with other organisations to bring awareness to their work. Creative Hubs such as **Five Arts Centre (FAC)** also developed a small-grant programme[56] after the late Krishen Jit[57] (one of the founding members of FAC) in conjunction with Astro and the Creador Foundation.

Other than sharing resources, artists have organised together to advocate for changes to art policies. **ReformARTsi** is an informal coalition made up of art companies, art practitioners, and academics focused on advocating for reforms and policies for the performing arts, with over 100 practitioners.[58] During the pandemic, ReformARTsi released statements in three languages such as *"Arts for Malaysians, not just for Tourists"*[59] in response to the Minister of MoTAC's claim that the arts are meant to support tourism. The coalition also released notes of their meeting with the Minister of Finance explaining the impact on art and cultural workers during the pandemic, and suggestions for ways forward.

Another point of convergence during the beginning stages of Movement Control Order (MCO)[60] was when artist and cultural worker Okui Lala opened a Google Sheet to keep track of shows that were cancelled after discussions with ReformARTsi and other arts organisations. The Google Sheet was sent around via WhatsApp and a database emerged, totalling up to 174 cancelled/postponed events. The table also presented financial losses that incurred and was an early documentation of the impact of the pandemic on the sector.

An informal survey was also conducted by ReformARTsi and UNDP (United Nation Development Programme)', part of UNDP's Kisah Project. The survey from 75 artists resulted in a video that was picked up by the national news channel to showcase how local artists were impacted by the pandemic.[61]

55 From 2004 – 06.

13 *George Town Literary Festival*

14 *Members from Narrow Marrow and The Zhongshan Building working together*

15 *ReformARTsi*

56 Krishen Jit Fund—you can find the list of beneficiaries here: Five Arts Centre, "Grants | Five Arts Centre Malaysia," Five Arts Centre, 2021, https://www.fiveartscentre.org/krishen-jit-fund/.

57 One of the founders of Five Arts Centre

58 Can find more information about their work here: Husna Khaidil, Ali Alasri, and Kye Lee Clarissa Lim, "ReformARTsi—Creative Hubs Malaysia," Creative Hubs, 2020, https://creativehubs.my/creative_hub/reformartsi/.

59 "Arts for Malaysians, Not Just Tourists—ReformARTsi Coalition | Malay Mail," Malay Mail, April 28, 2020, https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2020/04/28/arts-for-malaysians-not-just-tourists-reformartsi-coalition/1860882.

60 The Malaysian version of a lockdown where only mandatory services were allowed to operate.

61 ReformARTsi, "Kisah: Highlights of Arts Survey by UNDP Malaysia & ReformARTsi."

4.6.2
Circular Model

Another way of support includes adopting a circular model, often relying on inputs and outputs from the arts community, constant collaborators, and in-kind donations. The support here includes reciprocal assistance, collectively taking care of

the space, watching over, and cleaning. Although the labour seems menial and domestic, each small action cultivates an environment of care and ownership shared by the community.

4.7
Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding models are adopted to raise funds and organise resources, and distribute different tiers of creative content. This can range from creating subscriber-only content, to showing only bits and pieces of the creative work to the public.

Crowdfunding examples include organising collection drives for communities in need from book collection drives for a community library, or clothing or food drives. Hubs can act as a node to gather and drum up support, and in turn tap into a way of sustaining their activities.

4.8
Advertisements/Online Streaming

For digital hubs, there are a few ways to contribute to their sustainability. They can:

- Invite advertisers to promote products or events on the different social media platforms available;
- Act as a retail front, selling products for sale to the customers.

4.9
Skillset and Requirements for Sustainability

During the research process, we interviewed many arts and cultural workers from different Creative Hubs on how sustainability is cultivated and how they manage their hubs.

We discovered that roles within Creative Hubs include:

- Hub Managers/Producer/Curator
- Workers (Full time/Part time)
- Constant Collaborators (freelancers)
- Participants
- Community
- And more!

Typically, art and cultural workers within Creative Hubs have more than one scope of work. In addition, not many practitioners are able to create a hub that sustains itself, and often rely on other forms of income for their own personal sustainability.

The type of registration a hub has also reflects their sustainability method. If a hub is registered as a social enterprise, often it is associated with

During the pandemic, some groups also started to pivot towards streaming shows online, enabling groups to deliver art and cultural work to the public when physical events such as theatre, dance were put on a standstill. However as for now, these options depend on existing skill sets and resources, and need further research before live performances can be effectively presented online.

MaGIC. This GLC provides start-up funding, accessible loans, guidance, and space for affordable rent. Some Creative Hubs are registered as a society, which is governed by a board and finances are transparent to all members through reports.

The next section explores different strategies employed by the Creative Hubs for differing levels of sustainability.

16 *Little Giraffe Story House*

17 *PORT Ipoh*

18 *Sembilan Art Residency*

4.10
Creative Hub Sustainability Stories

Sembilan Art Residency

James Yip and his partners run Sembilan Art Residency, a pro-bono residency often supported by his day job. Yip and his partners will typically drive back and forth from Seremban where the residency is located, to Kuala Lumpur where they live and work. The drive is about a 2-hour round trip and involves ferrying artists, workers and even art around.

Yip began our conversation by explaining,

> **"Many people assume things in the space just happen. But I guarantee you, that is truly never the case."**

James' statement pinpoints the sheer amount of work behind hosting an art residency—it involves coordinating with the artists, with venues on and off-site and organising exhibitions. He concludes our conversation by saying that the work he does is *"asking for favours with no bargaining chip"*. Even though the residents are vetted and the artworks are of a distinct quality, art literacy in Malaysia still has not caught up and it is difficult to find support for visual art residencies and exhibitions.

KongsiKL

KongsiKL is a 10,000 square feet old warehouse turned performing arts space in Kuala Lumpur which is supported by a collective of over 10 members known as KakiKongsi. KongsiKL had hired two managers—Low Pey Sien and Mah Junyi to manage the space. Both are trained in architecture and had to learn how to be producers, managers and space caretakers while managing the hub. They both produced Seni Tiga (or Three Arts), an art project that incorporates movement, visual and sound.[62] They were both involved in organising meetings and jam sessions with artists; organising a performance; coordinating ticket sales through various channels while overseeing the maintenance of the space.

Other than managing the space, the two of them are also involved in their own projects involving exhibitions, education, and research. It is a common characteristic for managers of Creative Hubs to weave between different roles.

The Tuyang Initiative

The Tuyang Initiative is headed by Juvita Tatan Wan and her father John Wan Usang, and is a community-led arts management company. They are registered as a social enterprise and they facilitate artwork from the indigenous community in the Bornean region. Their sustainability model consists of facilitating arts and crafts courses, traditional master classes, workshops, talks, exhibitions, and demonstrations. An example of this is their recent multidisciplinary show, *KELUNAN*[63] focusing on performances from the Kenyah and Kayan indigenous communities. The show was performed in Damansara Performing Arts Centre, in Petaling Jaya in 2019. The Tuyang Initiative also released a book called *'Dayak Lore: Tales of Sarawak'*[64] containing Sarawakian indigenous stories.

With their varied skill set, Juvita noted that the team should learn to prioritise and identify avenues that can give cultural leaders the biggest visibility.

> **"How to get people to hear us and listen and understand our stories better."**
>
> —Juvita Tatan Wan

Tuyang is also involved in fieldwork and research, and have hired a community manager to travel to hard-to-reach places and identify cultural leaders and document their work. This is part of their work which is to build rapport from communities before showcasing their work.

Little Giraffe Story House

Renting a one-storey house in Batu 11, Cheras, Little Giraffe Story House is a collective of five individuals who found space for an interior design studio, as well as a F&B outlet. The collective have been morphing and changing their sustainability strategy since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

Within this venue, there is a library and performance space for community engagement with the Chinese vernacular primary school. Each of the founder members takes on a different role—from managing social media to constructing the space, to running the café.

The library space relies on neighbours such as local church, kindergarten, bookstores, and parents from the area to help create programmes and to take care of the space. Recently, the collective has invited a coffee specialist to run the café. They have also changed the interior organisation of space to accommodate a media production company and two interior design firms.

Part of their sustainability strategy lies in acknowledging the different skill sets of the individuals involved and what kind of resources they have. Their central mode of production is interior design, and at the same time, they engage with resources/individuals in the neighbourhood to run other aspects of their space.

19

---

[62] Mah Junyi and Low Peysien, "Seni Tiga—KongsiKL," KongsiKL, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.kongsikl.com/seni-tiga.

[63] The Tuyang Initiative, *KELUNAN: Trailer*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5cM1THwwgQ.

[64] Tuyang Initiative, "Dayak Lore: Tales of Sarawak Encapsulated into a Colouring Story Book—Tuyang," *The Tuyang Initiative* (blog), accessed March 6, 2021, https://thetuyang.com/2020/07/11/dayak-lore-tales-of-sarawak-encapsulated-into-a-colouring-story-book/.

19 *KongsiKL*

Borneo Laboratory

The sustainability strategy of Borneo Laboratory (BLAB) encompasses many forms of art and cultural work, from graphic design, visual identity, education workshops and architectural design. The motivation behind their projects is to circumvent systems of mass fabrication and identifying ways for indigenous craftsmen within Kuching to create quality content while being encouraged to experiment. BLAB is led by Wendy Teo, who trained as an architect but now experiments with different ways of working and pedagogical practices.

Scaling down to a small and flexible team, BLAB can swiftly move from building installations, to facilitating classes, to crowdfunding (Kickstarter campaign). Each project acts as a tool to shift away from the monolithic idea of production.

4.10.1
Conclusion

Over time, Creative Hubs have found their own ways to sustain themselves. Besides applying for grants from the government and foundations, Creative Hubs also rely on corporate sponsorship, sales revenue, space rental, crowdfunding, and advertisements.

In addition, there is also an informal sharing of resources—whether it be monetary, skill set, time or networks. This type of support assists Creative Hubs with sustainability and also creates connectedness and collectivism that marks a lot of the relationships between art practitioners and hubs.

PART III: ROLES AND IMPACT OF CREATIVE HUBS

In Part III, we examine the role and impact of Creative Hubs by discussing through three chapters.

The first chapter in this section is titled, "Arts education" and it identifies the current institutional systems of arts education, and the leading role Creative Hubs play by providing alternative spaces. Creative Hubs offer an expansive and experimental route for those interested in the arts beyond traditional academic routes.

The second chapter, "Communities and Collectivism", offers to identify the philosophies that Creative Hubs organise around. Hubs enable spaces of alternative histories, spaces for socialising and exploring creativity. This chapter will explore the impact and importance of having such spaces to offer diversity in approaching the arts and cultural ecology.

The third chapter explores the methods of building the community around hubs. Other than simply a space, what strategies do hubs use to grow and build audiences? This chapter hopes to describe the impact and journey hubs cultivate for their network.

5
Arts Education

5.1
Institutional Art Education

Primary and Secondary

Formalised arts education plays an important role in Malaysia's art ecology. Currently, arts education is mandatory in primary education[65] (in national curriculum only visual art and music is taught in schools). Art classes are allocated one period per week for the arts (each period is about 40 minutes). Clearly, formal arts education does not cover the breadth and depth of the arts, as opposed to the science subjects.

   In the secondary school curriculum, it is up to the school-by-school to develop a comprehensive arts programme. The national curriculum also relies on a "result-oriented"[66] curriculum rather than fostering interests and talent. Senior secondary students are segmented into the arts or science stream based on examination results. Those who are recommended for the arts are usually "underperforming students" deemed not able to qualify for the science stream. This creates a clear marginalisation of the arts sector by the Malaysian education system.

21

In 2007, the government led an effort[67] to create 5 government-funded secondary schools for the arts known as *Sekolah Seni Malaysia*[68] or Arts School Malaysia. The curriculum covered most of the art mediums—music, dance, theatre, visual arts, design, and visual communications. This has resulted in arts being practiced by only a selected group of students while exposure to the arts is not adequately provided in all schools.

Arts education comes in many forms, from formal institutions (public and private) to small neighbourhood tuition classes. This section will provide an overview of the public arts education system in Malaysia, and explores how Creative Hubs also plays a leading role in providing alternative arts education.

[65] Liau, Swee-Foong. "Implementation of Arts Education in Malaysian Primary Schools: The Teachers' Perspective." In *3rd International Music and Performing Arts Conference Proceedings*, 245 – 50. Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris,: Tanjong Malim: Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, 2018.

[66] Ahmad Suffian Asmawi Bin Ponijan, Mohamad Faizuan Mat, and Sarah Naemah Aman Leong, "The Visual Arts Education Crisis in Malaysia: Placement of Students into the Arts Curricular Stream at the Upper Secondary Level in Malaysian Secondary Schools," *Journal of Visual Art and Design* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 79 – 92,
https://doi.org/10.5614/j.vad.2019.11.2.1.

[67] Aligning with the Malaysian education development plan (PPPM) 2013 – 2025 to provide quality education by expanding to accommodate a comprehensive education system.

[68] "KPM—Sekolah Seni Malaysia," accessed March 5, 2021,
https://www.moe.gov.my/pendidikan/pendidikan-menengah/sekolah-seni-malaysia.

21 *Ruang Kongsi*

Tertiary Institutions

In the past, tertiary visual arts education was facilitated by now defunct institutions such as Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (1938), Specialistic Teachers Training Institute in Cheras, and Kuala Lumpur College of Art. During the 1960s, visual arts education was facilitated by the School of Art and Architecture at *Institut Teknologi MARA* (ITM) that began under the leadership of Hijjas Kasturi. Other independent schools such as Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA) founded by Chung Chen Sun and Kuala Lumpur College of Art founded by Cheah Yew Saik[69] also contributed to visual arts education.

In the 1970s, the first tertiary performing arts programme was established in Universiti Sains Malaysia (1970)[70] and then a Southeast Asian Theatre course was introduced in Universiti Malaya as part of the Southeast Asian Studies programme.

Tertiary education of art disciplines such as dance, arts writing, and traditional performing arts had a boost in the 1990s with the formation of *Akademi Seni Kebangsaan* or the National Arts Academy (ASWARA). It is the only higher education institution under the purview of MoTAC, and it provides programmes that include the diversity of the arts and cultural heritage of Malaysia.

Despite the creation of educational institutions for the arts, Dr. Sarena Abdullah[71] wrote:

> **"In a country where art is an important field of knowledge, [it] has not been promoted and supported in both the education system and government policies"**[72]

To map the current institutional art and cultural efforts, CENDANA has recently collated several maps to identify the current tertiary education institutions within three mediums: Performing Arts, Independent Music, and Visual Arts.

- **Independent Music Map**, 2020, CENDANA
- **Performing Arts Map**, 2020, CENDANA
- **Visual Art Ecosystem Map**, 2020, CENDANA

This is a useful resource for anyone hoping to tap into Malaysian art and cultural education.

A further elaboration is available in *"Narratives of Malaysian Art Volume 3"*, chapter titled *'Infrastructures'* published by RogueArt. The book provides an overview of past and present faculties of tertiary institutions, focused on visual arts.

Cultural Institutions

In addition to the formal education provided by institutions of higher learning, we also bring to attention the extensive arts education provided by private cultural institutions such as Kwangsi, Kwangtung, and Hainan associations (associations based on dialect groups) and private institutions such as Temple of Fine Arts, Sutra Dance Theatre, River Grass Dance Academy and more.

69 Hasnul Saidon et al., "Some Ideas on How to Discuss Art Education in Malaysia: A Conversation," in *Infrastructures: Narratives in Malaysian Art* (Kuala Lumpur: Rogue Art, 2016), 324 – 35. To find more information do refer to 310 for a table.

70 Five Arts Centre and Arts-ED, "Meta Timeline—AEAM," Arts Education Archive Malaysia, 2017, https://myartseducationarchive.com/meta/.

71 Senior Lecturer at the School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

72 Sarena Abdullah, "The Emerging Alternative Practices in Malaysian Art (1990s – 2015)," *Art & the Public Sphere* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 2018): 25 – 41, https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.25_1.

5.2
Alternative Arts Education

Currently, there appears to be a gap between formal education of the arts and the realities of the industry. This gap is evident for many practitioners, mainly thought to be due to the systemic rigidity of the formal education programmes. This has resulted in some Creative Hubs taking on a leading role in providing an alternative and informal form of art education. Creative Hubs are known to provide on-going training programmes, workshops, courses, and seminars. This encourages knowledge production in a collective and informal manner.

Creative Hubs have even begun to historicise and archive the work of past programmes. The Arts Education Archive Malaysia is a digital humanities project that compiles *"arts-education programmes and projects conducted outside of formal education"* mostly drawing from collectives such as Arts-ED

and Five Arts Centre's body of work. It is led by Janet Pillai, an arts and cultural researcher and activist, and part of the Five Arts Centre collective. Although the physical repository of work is stored in Arts-ED, Penang, information is readily available online, including a meta-timeline giving an overview of arts education programmes.

Many Creative Hubs also create programmes to support life-long learning within the arts and cultural ecology. The following section will explore the role Creative Hubs play in the following areas:

- Providing alternative spaces for learning;
- Co-creating together;
- Encouraging knowledge sharing;
- Encouraging learning of digital technology.

5.2.1
Providing Alternative Spaces for Learning

Teater Muda

From 1992 to 2002, Five Arts Centre ran Teater Muda which was led by Janet Pillai, Marion D'Cruz and Krishen Jit, in conjunction with Young Theatre Penang (1995 – 2000). The curriculum was built on international exchange with MAYA Thailand. It used theatre, multimedia, and puppetry as tools to bring awareness to *"issues such as health, nutrition, democracy and media literacy in schools"*.[73]

The Teater Muda programme was free of charge and trained around 25 children aged 10 – 16 during any one of the 3 – 6-month long programs. The programme explored the potential

of an Integrated Arts approach where participants were concurrently learning and adopting many art mediums.

The programme had various sources of funding, from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kompleks Kebudayaan Negara, and many other bodies. It drew together a teaching body ranging from Tan Sooi Beng, Sugu Kingham, Razak Kalek, Soo San, Ivy Josiah, and Anne James[74] to guide students through the arts. This programme offered cultural exchange not only between the practitioners, but to engage with the youth to encourage an enriched learning experience through the arts and culture.

73 Five Arts Centre and Arts-ED, "Teater Muda Programme, Five Arts Centre & Young Theatre Penang," Arts Education Archive Malaysia, 2017, https://myartseducationarchive.com/selected-programs/teater_muda/.

74 Leow, Puay Tin. "Theatre for the Young." Berita Shell, January 1993, 4.

Kapallorek

Kapallorek is an arts space in Sri Iskandar, Perak, a college town. The hub manager is concurrently lecturing in fine arts at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), also in Sri Iskandar Perak. Since the collective is close to a university, Kapallorek creates programs to encourage discussions, exhibitions, and sharing between international and local artists with the student population.

Kapallorek was also one of the participants in the recent Festival Kolektif facilitated by Gerakan Seni Ipoh and they conducted workshops highlighting the arts and cultural ecology of Perak. The space offers not only a leading role in promoting media and experimental arts but also offers opportunities for students to create their own exhibitions.

Ruang Kongsi

Another Creative Hub located near a university is Ruang Kongsi, a loose collective of 9 members of diverse interests. Ruang Kongsi is situated opposite Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang. The collective is on the top floor of a shop lot, and has become a space for discussion, reading, and even living. The space currently has over 1,500 books in their community library, with over 1,000 available in the Chinese language. The collective conducts talks with organisations ranging from Tricontinental: Institute of Social Research, ZINE COOP, and Malaysia Design Archive. The key focus is to introduce a platform for cross-disciplinary discussion and learning as explained by Lee Cheah Ni, a member of Ruang Kongsi:

"Universities open up spaces and ideas but if you look at the Malaysian scene, a lot of university students study in a vacuum environment. So Ruang Kongsi hopes that by throwing out ideas, USM can start thinking about new spaces—physical, creative or spaces in the mind that they want to create." [75]

Lee Cheah Ni is currently a curator based in between Taiwan and Malaysia. Ruang Kongsi would run programmes in Chinese, Bahasa Melayu and English, and looks to expand to accommodate different languages, to play a leading role in promoting inclusivity through language, breadth of topics and collaborations.

Borneo Laboratory

There are also Creative Hubs who are affiliated with international universities. Wendy Teo of Borneo Laboratory (the larger collective project is titled Borneo Art Collective) is currently a visiting scholar at Feng Chia University in Taiwan with the rank of an assistant professor. Concurrently she runs various academic programmes such as workshops, studios, and artist exchange. Borneo Art Laboratory is supported by a network of craftsmen in the state of Sarawak, which allows the collective to push the limits of design and architectural experimentation.

22

Theatresauce

Theatresauce, a theatre company formed and headed by Kelvin Wong, runs an annual Emerging Directors Lab, described as a *"rigorous year-long program catered for early-career directors"*. The Lab is solely focused on the performing arts, and it provides a 3-part program to hone and train emerging directors by providing the foundation of theatre making. The entire program is free and consists of once-a-week masterclasses, rehearsals, and meeting sessions totalling up to an intensive 160 contact hours, and a final performance.

Theatresauce also devised The School that provides opportunities to the public to learn theatre-making tools. Scheduled as micro and shorter courses, these opportunities allow the community to come together to network and learn, thus creating cultural exchange for participants.

Wong himself is a full-time educator at Sunway University and uses this to bridge his work in the formal academic world and the more ad-hoc world of capacity building in the arts community. Theatresauce also promotes other performing art companies through an informal compilation list on their website[76].

Festivals as places of learning

Festivals also come with an educational element, where they provide space for the public to engage with the arts through workshops, informal seminars and/or international collaborative exhibitions. This is evident in events such as **Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur** with conversations between curators, artists and academics, to **George Town Festival (GTF)** and **George Town Literary Festival (GTLF)**. All three have a wide variety of educational events for all ages. In 2020, GTLF placed their conversations online as podcasts to disseminate the conversations between writers, curators, and artists.

To find out more do refer to our database **here**.

---

[75] Andrea Filmer, "Penang's Arts Scene Kept Alive by Resilient Community Spirit | The Star," News, The Star, March 9, 2020.

[76] Theatresauce, "Directory of Theatre Companies in Malaysia," Theatresauce, accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.theatresauce.com/community.

22 *Theatresauce*

5.2.2
Co-creating Together

In the process of co-creation, collective learning emerges for many Creative Hubs. This occurs as hub members continually share skills and experiences between each other.

KongsiKL and the reinvention of Seni Tiga
Seni Tiga ran as a collaborative project using the three elements of movement, visual, and sound as mediums for performance art. The project uses a non-hierarchical approach to develop performances with a collective of artists from different disciplines. The process is organic, sometimes slow, dynamic and process driven. Often beginning with a process of 'jamming', the end production challenges the practice of performing art itself. In this project, constant communication with each other on their practise is key. Their productions have won many awards such as the Boh Cameronian Arts Awards[77].

Borneo Art Collective—
to read and learn collectively
Borneo Art Collective runs an annual reading club and in 2020 due to the pandemic, the reading club had to be switched online[78]. The reading club is organised over the period of 8 weeks, with participants from 8 different regions, on 8 different topics digging deep into 35 books. During the session, Wendy Teo (founder of Borneo Art Collective) will pull a titbit from the reading list and describe the

phenomenon, case study or theory. Readers are given 5 minutes to reflect and write a response on the collective document before being given a further 5 minutes to discuss.

All the work produced during the session is documented and archived for future reference and is available on the Borneo Art Collective website.

Arts-ED—
community arts education
Annually, Arts-ED engages with around 1,800 school students and 800 educators and creative practitioners, through Arts-ED's creative arts and education team, volunteers, and co-collaborators.

As an organisation focused on innovating community-based arts, one of the main initiatives is to equip art and cultural workers with the know-how to create placed-based and community engaged arts projects.

Other than providing training for practitioners, Arts-ED also conducts workshops and provides much needed community work for specific neighbourhoods. This falls under their anchor program, the Cultural Heritage Education Programme, catered for students and teachers. This programme is carried out in collaboration with George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI). Events that emerge from this programme include Youth Arts Camps, School of Craft, Heritage Exploration Trails and Wa Wa Warisan[79].

The Tuyang Initiative and stories
The Tuyang Initiative created *'Tuesday Tales'*[80] as a social media campaign to explore the different stories from indigenous communities through illustration and writing. The stories come from a process of collecting, translating, editing, and illustrating before being posted on social media. The work is a practice of transcribing and archiving oral histories for everyone (children to elderly) to enjoy. The stories include everyday experiences living in Borneo to folklore of different communities. *'Tuesday Tales'* empowers the local indigenous community by reminding and presenting stories from their own culture.

5.2.3
Encouraging Knowledge Sharing

Creative Hubs have also been known to give up space for others to take over and run programmes—workshops, up-skilling sessions, mentorship or guidance, etc. Trust is a required symbiotic component when collaborating in such forms of partnerships.

Art and cultural workers may conduct a one-off or a series of programmes facilitating or participating in continual learning. These endeavours give room for the practitioners to share knowledge, experiment, and practice.

Rimbun Dahan—
a garden and a space to contemplate/research
Rimbun Dahan, a family-owned and managed space, facilitates artist residencies and more recently, researchers of ecology, and botany. The plot of land has an extremely rich biodiversity filled with plants indigenous to the region. Several times

a year, the family opens the garden to visitors who are led on a tour to learn about the plants and landscaping methodologies. In 2021, Rimbun Dahan also has an open call for a research-writing residency for environmental conservation issues.

Ilham Gallery—
a space for public art, learning and programming
According to its gallery director Rahel Joseph, Ilham Gallery is *"a public space for public art"*. The small team managing the gallery has coordinated over 500 events in total, since the gallery opened in 2015. Ilham Gallery currently has two programming directions—one is mostly directed to children. The other aligns with the visual art exhibition in the gallery. These two directions sometimes overlap.

Ilham Gallery's children education program is rooted in exploration. The gallery uses the space and activities to guide children through the idea

77 Dinesh Kumar Maganathan, "Malaysian Community Arts Groups Score Big Wins at Boh Cameronian Arts Awards | The Star", https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2020/07/03/malaysian-community-arts-groups-score-big-wins-at-boh-cameronian-arts-awards.

78 Wendy Teo, "The New Normal Reading Club," Borneo Laboratory, accessed March 6, 2021, http://borneoartcollective.org/researchthinktank/2020/8/26/the-new-normal-reading-club.

79 Which explore traditional games. More information here Arts-ED, "Community-Based Arts and Culture Education," *Year in Review* (Penang, Malaysia: Arts-ED, n.d.), https://www.arts-ed.my/updates-blog/2019/12/5/keeping-the-traditional-games-going.

80 The Tuyang Initaitive, "Tuesday Tales—Tuyang," *Tuesday Tales* (blog), accessed March 6, 2021, https://thetuyang.com/category/tuesday-tales/.

23 *The Tuyang Initative*

of art. Ilham Gallery also creates a worksheet for children where open-ended questions are encouraged. On the website, online learning resources[81] are compiled for teachers and parents to guide students through the exhibitions. These programmes are aimed to provide the basics of art appreciation, which is usually not taught in the national school curriculum.

The other programmes typically are workshops, music, screenings, conversations, and artist talks. All talks and discussions are archived on YouTube[82] under the Creative Commons Attribution License for public use, exemplifying public-ness and open access in the digital world.

Rumah Seni Selangor (RUsSEL)

Located in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, RUsSEL runs an artist residency programme with a dedicated studio space for emerging visual arts artists. A total of three artists at any one time are invited to conduct their residency. The programme not only provides studio space and art-making materials, but also the opportunity for emerging artists to exhibit, sell and connect with the public about their practice.

RUSsEL is currently facilitated by a collective of practising artists and has a 'Salon spaces' initiative dedicated for collaborative work and community programming.

24 *Rimbun Dahan*

5.2.4
Encouraging Learning of Digital Technology

In Malaysia, spaces which promote digital and fabrication technology are up and coming. Aligning with the STEM to STEAM[83] conversation, some Creative Hubs not only promote the use of new technologies, but also encourage hands-on making and crafting skills. These spaces provide workshops and learning opportunities for small business owners, handicraft workers, and academic institutions, and have introduced the laser cutter, digital embroidery, UV printing and many more tools to the public.

Me:reka and Biji-biji

Me.reka is a social enterprise that has run 55 programmes, with over 2,000 participants. Me.reka is a huge supporter for STEAM education. They collaborate with a variety of organisations and their programmes deal with entrepreneurship organised around bootcamps, accelerator programmes and others.

Programmes that Me.reka have been involved in include the Malaysian Indian Youth Accelerator, as well as the Youth Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (supported by the U.S. Mission to ASEAN). Through access to their Makerspace, Me.reka is a node for digital technologies, entrepreneurism, design, and fabrication intersect.

Me.reka tapped into the idea of circular economy and created The Plastic Recycling Machine, inspired by Precious Plastic Project.[84] The machines create new recycled plastic products with the recycled material. This programme hopes to empower communities to re-imagine the plastic they use.

Me.reka also has a sister company, Biji-biji Initiative, which was set up as a social enterprise. They are interested in introducing methods of

sustainability for Malaysian youths for areas such as ethical fashion, education, renewable energy and others.

Fabcafe KL and other digital fabrication labs and makerspaces

Fabcafe KL is a franchise connected to the Fabcafe Global network around the world. Previously they used to run digital fabrication workshops for children and some adults. These workshops teach participants how to use digital tools to create small everyday objects.

In 2019, three fabrication labs, FabCafe Kuala Lumpur, FabU Café, and Me.reka came together to facilitate a series of workshops and a forum titled, *"Re-imagine Art Making: Digital Fabrication for Artists"* where artists, illustrators, designers and practitioners were introduced to the digital tools, from laser cutting systems, to digital embroidery, UV printing and more. Over 15 artists were selected to participate in this programme.[85]

25 *Fabcafe KL*

---

81 ILHAM Gallery, "Learning Online Resources | ILHAM Kuala Lumpur," Ilham Gallery, accessed March 6, 2021,
http://www.ilhamgallery.com/learn/tips/learning-online-resources.

82 Ilham Gallery, "Ilham Gallery Youtube Channel," Youtube, accessed March 6, 2021,
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClN-3Yo5Fgi-WH2lCY_aC_Q/videos.

83 STEAM—Sciences Technology, Education, Arts, Mathematics.

84 Biji-biji, "Beyond Bins—Biji-Biji Initiative," Biji-biji, accessed March 6, 2021,
https://www.biji-biji.com/what-we-do/beyond-bins/.

85 I (Clarissa Lim) was one of the artists selected to participate in the workshops.

FabU Café is headed by Lim Kok Yoong with a team of seven. He is an educator at Multimedia University (MMU) and was part of many collectives involved in the intersection of arts and sciences. Both a café and a digital fabrication space, FabU Café provides access to digital innovation for art products and interactive media pieces. Their portfolio includes pushing the boundary of digital marketing by introducing projection mapping and 3D printing souvenirs and pieces for clients.

We are Filamen

We are Filamen (Filamen) is a collective focused on lighting design and projection art under new media art and design. The collective is the node between contractors and fabricators; companies that sell and invent digital technologies and designers that create new media works. Recently they have facilitated several competitions and virtual residencies exploring projection mapping art and audio-visual arts.

5.2.5

Key Takeaways—Creative Hubs and Alternative Arts Education

We believe that the informal role Creative Hubs play in providing and sharing knowledge feeds into an on-going form of alternative arts education that is very valuable to the arts community. Some key takeaways we gleamed:

Social Impact on the Arts Ecosystem

- Teaches practitioners how to identify the needs of the local community or specific contexts. This is conducted through cultural mapping exercises, devising surveys or putting out questionnaires online.
- Cultivate a culture of enabling practitioners to devise and collaborate without unduly prioritising immediate economic impact.
- Creates a space for non-hierarchical co-creation through these strategies:
  - **Jamming**—to learn about each other's practice and methods of expression.
  - **Producing work**—working together on a project
  - **Mentoring**—to guide participants through and help each other by "checking-in".
- Empowering emerging arts practitioners with opportunities to make their own work. This includes acknowledging their role in the project and giving credit where it is due.
- Creating safe spaces for discussion and exchanges and helping practitioners question,

and speak about their work, even when dealing with potentially controversial discussions about social and political issues.

Cultural Impact on the Arts Ecosystem

- Provide new ways of connecting and complementing formal institutions with exchanges between students, real-life practice and training after graduation.
- Allowing less experienced practitioners to engage with more experienced practitioners.
- Allowing open access to knowledge by documenting, archiving, and sharing. Some open access strategies include:
  - Archiving videos of events;
  - Creative Commons;
  - Online social media campaign; and others.
- Finding new ways and methods for audience development.
- Informal education program by providing facilities and resources for the public, such as:
  - Library and curated resources;
  - Space to experiment;
  - Indirect academic institutional support such as expertise, spaces, facilities, and audience; and
  - Locations close to an institution as an alternative space for students and educators.

26 *We Are Filamen*

27 *Me.reka*

6
Communities and Collectivism

This chapter explores the philosophies of Creative Hubs in Malaysia. Through short stories of each hub, we will traverse through the different ideologies and how people come together and support one another. Each of these hubs have impacted their community by providing a shared space. Hubs offer a multitude of possible ways of enriching art and cultural work. The impact of Creative Hubs offers slow and sustainable changes. These changes and impacts range from highlighting alternative histories, allowing for devising collaboratively, and cultivating the vocabulary of advocacy for communities.

6.1
Shared Ideology

Organising collectively explores how practitioners come together under a collective ideology or practice. *How does a collective come together? What roles do the practitioners play?*

These questions are often answered through programming methodologies and principles of practise of the Creative Hub members. In most of the Creative Hubs interviewed, a clear camaraderie and co-operation is seen between the hub members based on shared interests and ideologies.

Five Arts Centre—
multidisciplinary collective, shared platform

Five Arts Centre (FAC) practises a loose collective organisational method. Each member has their own practice in Malaysia but come together to develop a platform for projects in the performing arts. Their personal endeavours range from finance, performing arts, academia, film and TV, lighting design and NGOs etc. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the work, members of the collective contribute skills in performing arts, finance, production, and management internally. FAC is currently supported by the CENDANA Arts Organisation Grant (for 2020) to develop full-time arts administrators and workers.

Bentarakata—
between advocacy, Borneo community, and the arts

Bentarakata was formed as an online collective, with a focus on the inclusion of marginalised communities through art, film, writing and human rights. Their work sits at an intersection connecting advocacy and activist groups, art collectives, and Bornean voices to the Malaysian public. This includes facilitating and moderating conversations for events such as Freedom Film Network[86] and other advocacy platforms.

28

[86] An International Human Rights Documentary and Social Film Festival—you can find more information here: Freedom Film Fest, "Freedom Film Festival," Freedom Film Festival, 2020, https://freedomfilm.my/.

28 *Five Arts Centre*

REXKL—
empowering local crafts and F&B

REXKL is interested in empowering different sectors of the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry, by experimenting with different models for commercial sustainability. Rather than shifting towards a typical shopping mall methodology of imported brands, REXKL hopes they can increase the appetite for local crafts and food for their audience.

REXKL has also recently presented a unique proposal to the community—an investment opportunity with a target amount of raising MYR 1.5 million capital (branded as REXKL 2.0). REXKL would serve as an incubator, business partner and venture building for F&B Entrepreneurs, many of which employ a Creative Hub outlook in how they build communities.

Borneo Bengkel—
collective art residency

Formed in 2017, Borneo Bengkel is a platform consisting of a loose collective of over 30 artists from Borneo and invited artists. Every year, artists come together to participate in a series of workshops, dialogue sessions, exhibitions and performances sometimes in conjunction with festivals in Sarawak. The collective aims to address the urban-rural divide that exists in Borneo.

The programme ends with a three-day public event known as 'Glass house weekend' which exhibits works for sale from the residency programme. Borneo Bengkel is a collaborative effort between Catama Borneo, a social enterprise, with HAUS KCH, an event host and the first Creative Hub of its kind in Kuching.

Borneo Bengkel offers networking opportunities for a variety of practitioners, connecting between all the different art forms. This will have future cultural impact as the practitioners around Borneo can cultivate kinship. Engaging between the urban-rural divide will have social impact to begin the process of creating relations. This opens many opportunities to begin diminishing the binary.

Ruang Kongsi—
interdisciplinary collective action

Ruang Kongsi is organised as a loose collective, and their work involves running a community library (where most of the books are in Chinese, as there is a shortage of public Chinese-language libraries). It is also the headquarters for two independent organisations: SUARAM Penang (Suara Inisiatif Sdn Bhd) a branch of the independent human rights organisation and Parti Sosialis Malaysian (PSM) or The Socialist Party of Malaysia.

"We generate our own events, but we also hope for collaborations with people who want to share the space for non-commercial events. Everyone is used to thinking of money as the main resource, but at Ruang Kongsi, we try to think out of the box when it comes to other resources—human resources, knowledge and ideas—and how we can create an environment where we don't always focus on money and the traditional economic system."

—Lee Cheah Ni[87]

Ruang Kongsi also recently held an exhibition titled, *Capitalism: Anti-Imperialist Poster Exhibition*. Organised by Choo Chon Kai of Ruang Kongsi and Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM), this exhibition enabled Ruang Kongsi to expand and connect with other communities such as Tricontinential: Institute of Social research, and other anti-imperialist organisations. The event was held on the premises and conversations were streamed online.

Due to the immediate proximity to Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Ruang Kongsi has connections with the Social Sciences department and the Arts department. The collective encourages students to share their work and create space for dialogue and exchange beyond their current institutions. For example, Ruang Kongsi connected an Indonesian group Bakudapan with an organisation, Projekmakankita from USM who are studying systems of food production. Together, the Indonesian and Malaysian groups organised discussions and workshops.

During the pandemic in 2020, Ruang Kongsi opened their venue for people to use as a home/office space and called the programme, *Kongsi Bumbung* or 'Sharing a Roof'. This programme acts as a community resource, emerging as a space of care for those in need.

The spectrum of events Ruang Kongsi offers creates a cultural impact on not only the student community of USM, but also Penang at large. As a space it houses possible ideologies to consider, such as socialism and leftist theories. Although not all may subscribe to such ideologies, these ideologies are often not broadly discussed. By providing access, this Creative Hub is already creating a social and cultural impact.

Little Giraffe Story House—
renovation

Recently there is a shift in organising between the stakeholders within Little Giraffe Story House.

29 *REXKL*

30 *Borneo Bengkel*

[87] Andrea Filmer, "Penang's Arts Scene Kept Alive by Resilient Community Spirit | The Star," News, The Star, March 9, 2020, https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2020/03/09/penang039s-art-scene-kept-alive-by-resilient-community-spirit.

This includes a large-scale renovation to grow the partnerships in the hub, whilst maintaining a community space. Little Giraffe Story House drew a stakeholder diagram to describe the changes:

Before the Renovation
- Little Friends Studio (run by the co-founders)
- Little Moments Café (run by the co-founders + Rojak Wan)

The participants of the profit-driven side are in-house and within the collective. At the same time, the community component is still embedded within the users of the community library—for the community and by the community.

After the Renovation
(which happened during the pandemic)
- BTXI (Bt Eleven Atelier)
- m2ws (Little Moments Workshop)
- Little Stone production
- Yue Coffee (Run by Winnie Chieng) + Rojak Wan

The library will remain for free as a community space—the shared ideology never changed. What changed was to include and expand the space to house more tenants, inadvertently growing partnerships.[88] A new, specialised, and dedicated cafe team was introduced. This allows the founders to now focus on design and advertising, which is their initial practise.

The story of Little Giraffe Story House explores how shifting and changing social structures within a hub can offer newfound engagement with the community. Often the pragmatic challenges of running a hub get in the way of the original intentions of the hub This example, while creating a social impact, also suggests best working practices for hubs, which is to embrace and enable organisational change.

**Key Takeaways:**

- **Funding Process**
  Many funds and grants do include collaboration as a requirement, typically under a project. Borneo Bengkel worked with various organisations, individuals and received in-kind donations.

- **Points of Engagement**
  It is import to cultivate hybrid engagements—both online and offline so communities from near and afar can access the event. An example would be one organised by members of Ruang Kongsi—the *Capitalism: Anti-Imperalist Poster Exhibition* which held events online and an exhibition on-site.

- **Collaborating with Other Hubs and Artists**
  It is important to connect to other groups and organisations with similar political agendas, disciplines or methodology of art and cultural practices, and programming.
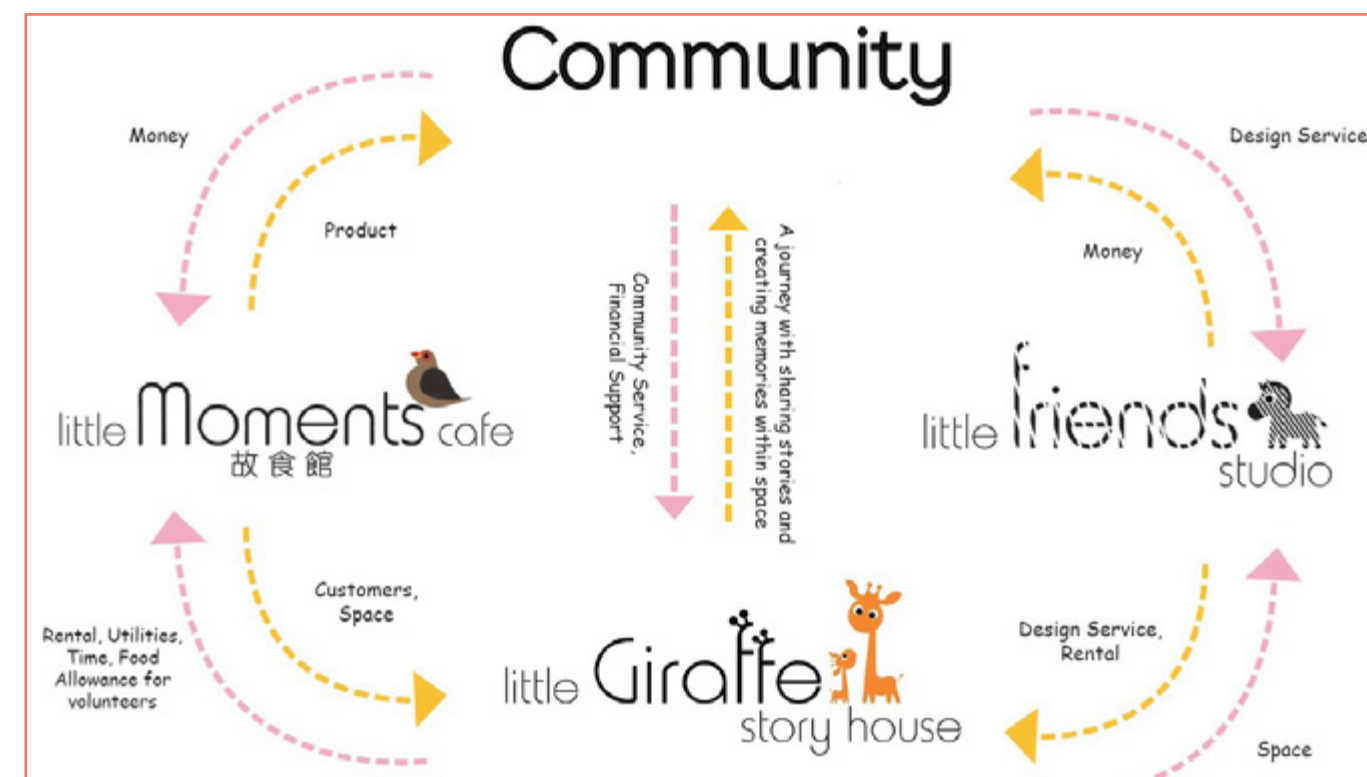
Little Giraffe Story House's original stakeholder diagram

Little Giraffe Story House's new stakeholder diagram

---

88 草根 CaoGen AKAR, 月你喝咖啡! 长颈鹿故事馆新伙伴, Yue Coffee! At Little Giraffe Story House, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7M2Z1Tj8kc.

6.2
In Between Physical and Digital

This section discusses how hubs build their community by cultivating audiences both online and offline using hybrid events. Having the flexibility of delivering art and cultural work through two mediums offers will not only have a cultural impact on how we consume art and cultural work, but also a social impact through developing new relations online during the pandemic. We will also explore how hubs integrated theatre, literature, and workshops on digital platforms.

Safehouse KL—
youth and new media
Safehouse KL, located in the affluent neighbourhood of Taman Tun Dr Ismail, was is founded by eight art and cultural workers. Their desire is to create an ecosystem of designers, DJs, artists, and all other art forms. They connect to the DJ community and create a space for live streaming and performance of their work. The collective also produces podcasts, holds graphic design and branding classes, music production tutorials and more. Recently they have expanded their mode of operations also to Discord, an online platform to connect over voice, video and text chat.

The collective created events for designers, art collectives, illustrators to showcase and sell their work ranging from prints, zines, artworks and more. At night, the venue turns into an underground music space for independent DJs and performers with liquid-acid aesthetic lighting design.

Safehouse KL plays a leading role in the new Millennial-Gen Z underground grunge, creating a platform where artists, illustrators, musicians and more can connect and sell their work. As one of the very few experimental event spaces, it is a space of cultural significance for the next generation.
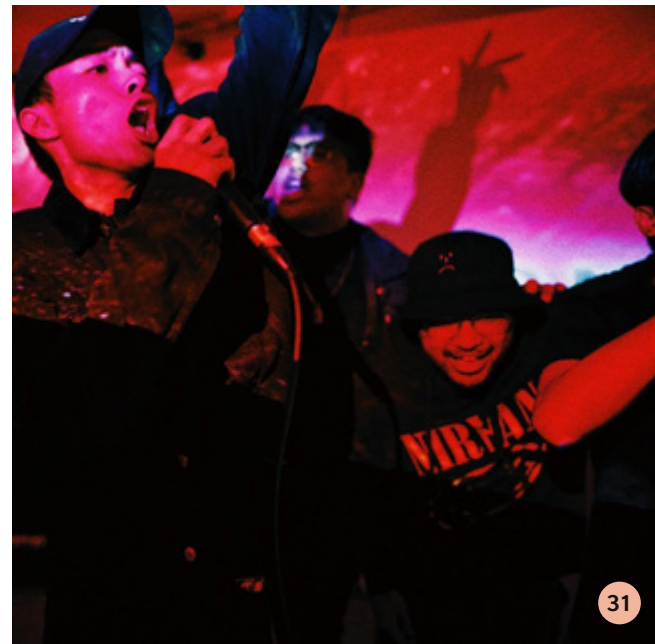
Georgetown Literature Festival—
annual literary event
Georgetown Literature Festival is an award-winning literary festival connecting writers, editors, poets, translators, screenwriters, and musicians. Organised by Penang Global Tourism and Penang institute, the event is annually produced by Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB). It is one of the few literary events in Malaysia that has been happening yearly.

The 2020 edition was affected by the pandemic, and many of the programmes shifted online. This includes Zoom conferences, and Spotify podcasts and other formats of engagement on social media. The events ranged from exploring in-between disciplines of the written form, in-between languages and collaborating with different organisations (PEN Malaysia, Swadaya Collective, etc), and delving into the visual arts.

The festival plays a leading role in the field of literature, winning international festival awards and putting Malaysian and regional literature on the foreground.

Moka Mocha Ink—
organising between mediums,
organising between collectives
Moka Mocha Ink is an alternative publishing house situated in between the performing arts, publishing and mapping projects. The work of Moka Mocha Ink emerges in multiple mediums, from zines to books, to radio and sound experiences, to theatre productions and experimental films.

The collective also works with other collectives. For example, in Ensemble Teater Kaos Nol, Moka Mocha Ink collaborated with performance artists and producers.

This collective situates its practice in organising between mediums and between projects. The process of devising the script is also guided between the director, context and theatre practitioners. Moka Mocha Ink not only play a leading role in demonstrating the strength of the interdisciplinary, but also working beyond the newly introduced infrastructures of arts funding through collaboration both online and offline.

Key Takeaways:

- **Online Platforms for communities**
  To cultivate online communities, one should actively engage in different platforms and learn about the types of engagement with each platform.
  - **Discord/Slack**—spaces for closed discussion and specific topics to solicit opinions, with options for streaming and voice chat. These platforms allow for semi-anonymity/anonymous interaction and can be organised around subtopics of interest.
  - **Zoom**—time based organizing and sharing sessions.
  - **Facebook**—sharing links and comments and usually not anonymous.
  - **Instagram** Live and online live events—To create instant shared spaces to perform, display and record for the public.

31 *Safehouse KL*

32 *George Town Literary Festival*

6.3
Digital Communities

Online communities (refer to 5.2.4) exist primarily online but also manifest in the physical world through events, exhibitions, workshops and more. Events can be organised through Zoom sessions, to physical pop-up events, or social media (e.g. Instagram live). This section explores how Creative Hubs strategizes and utilises the online medium.

Cult Creative—
professional networking
Cult Creative is a professional networking app for creative individuals. The team behind it organises community projects such as hybrid creative festivals, workshops, panel discussions and community events known as 'cult mixers'. The platform also has an editorial magazine with pieces interviewing 'creative crushes', 'Lokal Makers' and Zoom/Instagram Live sessions.

They have gained over 12,900 followers on their social media. Dedicated subscribers to their platform can learn how to manage finances and build up audiences, how to create brands and how to price one's services. For a fee, Cult Creative provides access to the know-how and information needed for any enterprising individual or Small Middle Enterprise (SME), which many art and cultural workers and hubs fall under.
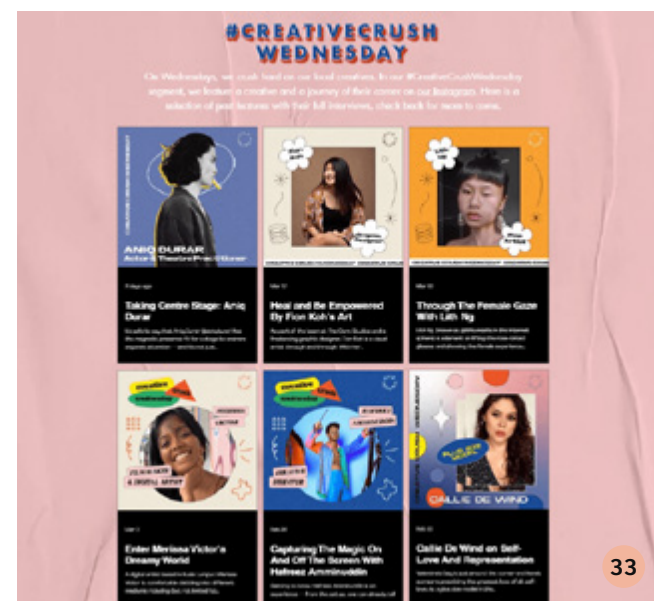
Cult Creative stormed onto the scene to offer an exciting opportunity to connect employers and employees (which they call creative), pioneering a possible social exchange.

Eksentrika—
arts media platform
Eksentrika is an online community platform (an informal group on Facebook) that publishes articles in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. Writings include poetry, short stories and critical editorial pieces. The submissions come from the youth, academics and educators, and artists.

As an online platform, submissions come from beyond Malaysia. The platform has learned throughout the past five years to be more family-friendly and have adopted a more informational tone. Other than the publishing arm, the website also has an artist registry. Audiences can select the type of art and cultural work, and the location of the artist (in Malaysia and internationally). There is also a section to promote and archive art and culture events around the region. Eksentrika offers a body of cultural knowledge for future generations.

The Rondo Production—
music social enterprise
The Rondo Production is a social enterprise looking to disseminate and present classical music knowledge and programmes for the public. Through social media campaigns and master classes online, the collective hopes to use the digital space to bring music education closer to music students and the younger generation.

Currently the collective has produced over 50 educational multimedia content and discussions on their website. Other than editorial work, Rondo Production also organised an online festival called *'Rondofest'*. The festival presents a series of events such as *'The Stars Masterclass Series'* featuring classical music master classes, in addition to one on one lessons and workshops (different price

34

points depending on group).

Rondo Production has developed a platform that seamlessly connects live chats and interviews on Instagram to their website and intermittent events. This has allowed for opportunities for partnerships, networks and connections between music enthusiasts globally and locally. The cultural impact of Rondo Production encourages the legacy and promotion of classical music for future generations.

The Wknd—
recorded live performances
The Wknd is an online music-publishing platform promoting independent music from Southeast Asia. The website has editorial articles on up and coming albums, music videos and news. The platform also has a dedicated YouTube channel with over 120 video recordings of *"The Wknd Sessions"* of live performances, plus interviews and events. They act as an archive of independent music in the area, focusing on producing high quality recordings and videos for the wider public to share.

Instant Café Theatre Company—
pivoting to digital
Many Creative Hubs involved in the performing arts were immediately affected by the pandemic. What Instant Café Theatre Company (ICT), a well-established Malaysian company did, was to explore re-staging and engaging with the audience in a new way—online.

In 2020 they re-released the play *'Nadirah'* online to an international audience. The production was originally filmed in Japan, while the play is set in Singapore and is performed by mostly Malaysian performers. This is an example of cross-border mixing. In addition to re-staging online, the Company engaged in online conversations with the audience after every show during the play's run.

33

33 *Cult Creative*

34 *The Wknd*

MulaZine—
online publishing

MulaZine is an independent publishing collective, with a large online presence. It shares and curates content about contemporary life in urban Southeast Asia, leaning towards online behaviour and aesthetics of the youth. They focus on inter-secting contemporary youth culture with popular culture in the past, thus creating a vintage and retro feel to their company.

Recently the hub worked with Theatresauce (2021) on their Emerging Director Lab programme, where they released a series of short videos on Instagram. The team is based around Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia and is connected from all corners of Southeast Asia.

Key Takeaways:

• **Brand Management**
Brand management enables audiences to associate ideologies, art, and cultural work to the specific Creative Hub. This is done by maintaining and aligning with a specific creative vision. To maintain brand management strategies is to cultivate a following and build audiences. Cult Creative offers courses and workshops to cultivate social media presence.

• **To Archive**
The Wknd provides a clear example of the need to ar-chive and organise previous content that is readily and easily accessible. When creative work is archived and made easily accessible online, continual engage-ment can be created.

• **Choose the right social media platform to publish their work**
Instagram—image/moving image-based platform and easy sharing through stories, hashtags, and followers.

6.4
Summary

The obvious social and cultural impact of Creative Hubs is their position as a connecting point for audiences and communities. How they come together is mainly based on a shared ideology and we have seen how they program and present their work creates an impact on themselves as artists, and on their audiences.

35 *MulaZine*

36 *Instant Café Theatre Company*

7

Building Networks:
From Programming to Design

The next chapter explores Building Networks—Programming to Design. This chapter explores building a physical space but ways of building audiences, networking and finding solidarity with one another.

Creative Hubs interviewed were very much aware of using social media as a form of advertising. The hubs seem to understand social media algorithms, brand stories, and choice of language as factors when advertising their work. They play a leading role in promoting arts and culture to the public through cultivating public relations. This includes creating accessible programmes, designing easy to understand brand stories and offering entry points for all.

7.1
Programming

This section looks at how, through programming, Creative Hubs can develop their audiences. To develop an audience, it involves designing programs that engage and continually stimulate the relevant audience. This process is not unidirectional, but multi-directional to capture the attention and interest of the audience.

Each Creative Hub goes about programming activities, workshops, and engagement in different ways. In this report, we highlight two Creative Hubs adopting outreach programmes as part of their programmes.

ASK Dance Company—
teaching dance as a programme
In the case of ASK Dance Company, the format of the programming can be as simple as providing training in multicultural dances in their studio space in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur. The dance company consists of graduates from the national arts academy, Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA), who are well versed in the country's multicultural dance forms.

Recently, ASK Dance Company has also pivoted online by offering free classes of Malay traditional dance.

Unrestricted Stage—
seeing yourself live online
Another Creative Hub, Unrestricted Stage, created during the pandemic, curates their weekend streams via applications open to members of the public. Their programme is made by the community, for the community. Their brand highlights the genre of 'edutainment' as the focus. The programming relies on a grassroots movement, word of mouth strategy to give a platform for anyone to teach, perform, cook, draw, sing along, talk or any other creative form that can be live streamed.

By connecting communities digitally through their platform, Unrestricted Stage immediately offers a social impact. This impact is made pertinent as a variety of socially-distanced control orders were imposed during the pandemic, resulting in loss of other forms of connecting.

37 *Lostgens'*

Lostgens'—
programming as advocacy

Lostgens' work symbolises how art and social reform are inseparable. While in their premises in Petaling Street, Lostgens' host artists in residencies and exhibitions, their work also incorporates social activism. Their projects embody a social engagement, advocating for marginalised communities through public participatory art, festivals, workshops and others.

One of their encompassing projects is the Petaling Street Community art Project (PSCAP). Lostgens' was one of the many stakeholders that was part of a coalition of grass root art and activist communities to resist the redevelopment for the Mass Railway Transit (MRT). One particular street-art protest was called "Light a Lantern, Save Jalan Sultan" held on 23rd of February 2011 which stopped traffic for over four hours with over 5,000 visitors. Lostgens' has gone on to advocate for issues surrounding homelessness, heritage conservation.[89]

Through their organising work, the hub connects the community, the public and those in power. This has a social impact on the communities they work with, through empowering and giving voice through art.

38

Key Takeaways:

- **Expertise**
  Engage with experts, academics, and seasoned professionals in the field to advise or participate in the programmes within the Creative Hub. This not only ensures the quality of work, but also engages with pre-existing discourse about the work. All the teachers and dancers of the ASK Dance Company are trained practitioners

- **To support your ecology**
  Lostgens' work describes participating in your community and understanding that there are many stakeholders in any one context. Their role encourages participation in local politics and organising between all the stakeholders. Supporting your ecology is to understand the expertise of other Creative Hubs and stakeholders, and to see where one's practice can fit into existing ecosystems.

7.2
Brand Story—Importance of Design

Brand stories encourage storytelling and connect art and cultural work with the public. The tools used for communication and methods of representation employed by Creative Hubs can impact audience engagement.

The strategy of using distinctive, beautiful, thoughtful graphic designs to create an impactful brand identity is evident for many Creative Hubs. Creating brand story and operating with thoughtful design not only will have a cultural impact, but can transform the mode of operating of hubs themselves.

New Naratif—
role of illustration

New Naratif, an online independent media platform, employs illustrators and comic artists to illustrate their journalistic pieces. This includes dissecting complex political issues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through their platform, complicated ideas can be delivered artistically and are easy for audiences to digest. The focus on the accessible role of illustration not only normalises and promotes the medium, it also offers alternative journalistic commentary, another method of distribution.

REXKL—
digital and online marketing design

The programming done at REXKL employs largely a millennial-Gen Z vocabulary, including promoting coffee culture, busking, film screenings. For example, REXKL taps into the world of international culinary endeavours by engaging world-renowned chefs for pop up kitchen sessions. In turn, the promotion is done vicariously on Instagram, on both posts and stories.

RIUH—
curated social media presence

RIUH programmes festivals and pop-up markets centring on the local creative scene. Their programme materials (with their signature orange visual) focus on engaging with collaborators, selecting the right vendors, and working with micro to small-scale businesses. Their social media feed not only introduces such businesses, but also promotes local makers, performers, cooks, crafts, and artists.

Shifting primarily online due to the pandemic, RIUH has created accessible digital databases of businesses for the public to contact and connect with. This creates social, cultural and potentially economic impacts since customers can now be easily connected to small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

39

---

[89] lostgensadmin3, "Petaling Street Community Art Project • Lostgens."

38 *ASK Dance Company*

39 *RIUH*

35@Jetty—
heritage reinterpreted as art and cultural space

This Creative Hub, which is located at former warehouses/godowns, has been around for more than a century, and is located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Georgetown, Penang. The venue engages with craftsmen, artisanal practitioners and retail micro and small enterprises and cultivates a multilingual community. Also called the *Gudang* (warehouse), this site has developed a dedicated following after working closely with grassroots communities such as the Clan jetties, to festivals such as George Town Festivals and Open Studios Penang.

The different languages used in this venue, and by way of an easily accessible design create an inclusive feel to this space. The physical interior and exterior façade retains a handicraft aesthetic, using calligraphy for the Chinese characters and a DIY, self-built design. This use of similar colour tones, materials (such as wire mesh, reclaimed wood and plentiful foliage), and the choice of decorative 'found' items, allows this space to stand out amongst its current community. 35@Jetty exhibits cohesiveness between the brand story, curation of events and the selection of collaborators.

Kwai Chai Hong—
activating the back alley

Kwai Chai Hong is a renovated back alley off Petaling Street, also known as the Chinatown area of Kuala Lumpur. Encompassing a series of 10 heritage shop lots, the launch of the back alley saw the presentation of mural wall paintings. In addition, a careful choice of vendors and events manages to activate the site during holidays and celebrations.

This Creative Hub invites artists, coinciding with either festivals or holidays, to activate the back alley (now a publicly accessible space) with temporary installations and commissioned wall paintings and events. These pop-up events are led by the hub's art direction team, and supported by video documentation. One of their key strategies to increase visibility of their events is to invite key online influencers (KOL) to photograph themselves in the space and share these photos on social media.

Key Takeaways:

- **Audience**
  It is important to understand your audience. Ask yourselves these questions: Where will they be and what will they be looking for? Would a simpler and easily accessible design be more suited rather than a polished, minimal design language?

- **Audience Development**
  Develop a recognizable online and offline presence. This can be done with a cohesive brand story (written and graphic design), engagement on social media and collaborating with relevant organisations and people.

- **Understand your network, your niche**
  35@Jetty is interested in participating in the narrative of the UNESCO world heritage site, and connecting with local arts practitioners. As a Creative Hub, this is an example of how we can connect directly with the physical community around a certain location.

35@Jetty

Kwai Chai Hong

7.3
Cultivating Networks

Network infers to a set of relationships and connections, internally or with other communities. Networks allow knowledge to be shared while finding support in social relationships and solidarity. Many Creative Hubs have cultivated regional networks, and/or part of coalitions/advocacy groups.

New Naratif—
transnational solidarity
New Naratif situate themselves as a regional media advocate that is interested in uncovering Southeast Asian voices. They advocate freedom of expression, freedom of information and democratic practises. Shifting away from the state-owned news outlet, they are an independent media organisation and seek to bring awareness to marginalised stories.

New Naratif has also managed to find alliances with other organisations who are doing work within the same regional space on marginalised voices. Recently they co-organised a conference, *Transnationally Asian Digital Conference*.[90] This conference connected regional publishing collectives such as Lausan[91] Collective (Hong Kong) and New Bloom Magazine (Taiwan). The conference maintained that they "*were able to capture the anti-nationalist and internationalist perspective, across Asia and in the Asian diaspora*".

New Naratif offers a social impact through connecting transnationally between diasporic conversations. Through their online collaborations with other organisations, standing up for freedom and justice promotes transnational solidarity and awareness.

SeaShorts Film Festival—
Southeast Asian cinema
SeaShorts Film Festival is organised by Next New Wave, an initiative founded in 2015 to nurture emerging filmmakers. It is a not-for-profit cultural organisation bringing independent films to the forefront. The 2020 SeaShorts program was supported by several regional networks of film organisations such as the Asia Centre Japan Foundation, National Youth Council of Singapore, Taipei Economic and Cultural office in Malaysia, FINAS and more.

The festival is made up of many screenings from competition submissions to S-Express, an annual presentation of short films across Southeast Asia. The programmes are selected and curated from a country programmer, usually a writer, director, or festival organiser. In its 3rd iteration, the audience for the festival grew from 500 to 2,000 a month.

Rekan Library—
Muar design community
Rekan Library is a community library space that promotes collaboration and actively engages the community with reading, design and learning. Working with the Chinese community of Muar, Johor, their network includes a collective

publication Muar River Times; creating a co-working subscription model with an event venue Ngam Hall; collaborating with children's toy designers; and many more.

The design and art community in Muar works on cultivating a small town spirit, creating publications, podcasts, hosting musical performances and creating community spaces collectively.

Key Takeaways:

- **Understand your network, your niche**

  - To think beyond the national boundaries and to find ties internationally as a way to grow one's practice.
  - Creative Hubs can find networks based on medium, types of practice, or type of spaces. SeaShorts Film Festival connects with other filmmakers, international arts and cultural organisations and encourages exchange programmes. Participating in or housing such programmes can enable Hubs to grow a network specifically tied to the arts.

90 Lausan, New Naratif, and New Bloom, "Transnationally Asian Digital Conference," Event, Eventbrite, October 2020, https://www.eventbrite.com/e/122661446689?aff=efbneb.

91 Lausan Collective, "流傘 Lausan Collective," Lausan, accessed March 6, 2021, https://lausan.hk/.

42 *New Naratif*

43 *Rekan Library*

8
Conclusion

_____

For this report, tracing artist-collectives in the past to the present was an incredibly enriching exercise and at the same time, demanding. Creative Hubs emerged not only as models for adoption, but also are a constant source of curiosity for us to deepen our imagination and experimentation.

8.1
Knowledge Gaps

As per any report, there will be limitations in either the process, method, or time range of data collection. Although the *'Hubs For Good'* research project identified over 100 hubs, there is a lack of representation of different language groups. The workshops of the programme are organised in English. Groups using other languages may not feel inclined to participate. There is also a tendency for the professional and entrepreneurial programmes to be expressed in English and situated in urban areas. As the teams worked in English for this project, many other hubs were not identified and located due to language barriers.

Other groups may also be situated in suburban or rural communities, and due to the restricted movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic the research team were unable to travel to discover the outlying art and cultural collective work conducted in smaller communities.

Grassroots and community associations that may not be recognised as being artistic or cultural also often carry out art and cultural work. These associations often engage with local neighbourhoods and are aligned with cultural festivals such as Mid-Autumn or Thaipusam to name a few. Such groups are entrepreneurial by nature, trading cultural and traditional craft, products, and artwork during the cultural events. Modes of production often run alongside their community building work. Would these be also considered Creative Hubs? This is a question perhaps to be considered in future research.

Another gap is the underground movement within the art and cultural ecology of Malaysia. There are collectives engaging in work situated in the legal/grey areas of the law. To name them openly in a report may have a negative impact on such collectives. Lastly, some collectives may also be involved in experimental work that is activated and disappears quickly. Such work may also be considered failures by the conventional parameters of sustainability, but their transient nature should not stop them from being considered as a Creative Hub.

8.2
Malaysian Art and Cultural Ecology—What Next?

This report aims to build awareness of the history of art and cultural collectives, to consider the policies that affect the art and cultural ecology, and to draw out certain patterns and characteristics of current Creative Hubs in Malaysia. So, what should we be doing next?

The work of Creative Hubs is often social, organising creative work for, or with, a specific community. The work can be conducted through the many examples in 5.2 Alternative Arts Education, fulfilling a gap and need beyond informal education systems. Support and awareness are needed to ensure possible education routes can be encouraged.

All hubs will have cultural impact by the creative processes of art and cultural work. The art forms emerging from hubs add to the cultural landscape of Malaysia, through the different categories of Creative Hubs described in section 2.3. These categories can infer how hubs can have multiple categories of cultural impact, often intertwining more than one medium of art and cultural work.

Another cultural impact is the notion of networking and archiving the work. Creative hubs should offer open access to knowledge. To learn about our own art and cultural history is imperative to ensure the growth and continuation of our art and cultural ecology. To work on digitally archiving and creating repositories either in the form of reports, or catalogues can help newcomers understand Creative Hubs, and by extension the art and cultural ecology better.

One of the biggest cultural impacts is connecting to online and offline networks. Hubs are a resource for gathering. These gatherings can be centred around openings, festivals, events, or even just reflective moments of sharing. To embrace the growth and continual nourishment of networks is imperative to ensure a sustained cultural impact. Hubs should continue to have a bottom-up network of sharing—from knowledge to space to resources.

44 *Toccata Studio*

45 *Hin Bus Depot*

Creative Hubs create communities for those participating in art and cultural work. They grow camaraderie through open dialogue, conversation, and discussions. The action of creating safe spaces enables solidarity amongst art and cultural workers while allowing them to investigate their own art and cultural work.

Economic impact is less immediate. Creative Hubs often coordinate sharing resources to support the ecology, creating an open-ended input and output cycle. The support can range from sharing subscription accounts for streaming and online conferences to creating community-led spaces for all to contribute to.

Economic impact can also be found in the use of branding exercises. It is the methodology of inviting potential patrons, participants, and artists to connect to a hub's work. Creative Hubs that do design exercises to write, document and archive their work online and offline provide clarity for

the public to understand their initiatives. To give thought to how art and cultural work is advertised, audiences can easily access, understand, and participate in the art and cultural work through clear and careful design on social media campaigns. Creative Hubs such as Cult Creative are founded on the belief that such effort and work is important to ensure the longevity of a creative practice.

The report suggests alternative methods of interpreting impact—through the work in communities and collectivism and building networks and audiences. These two impact areas integrate social, cultural, and economic aspects by creating spaces of care, experimentation, continual learning and sharing. This we believe comes from a shared network that continues to develop the community via an entangled art and cultural ecology. The stories explore ideas of sustainable impact, where the changes will permeate long after the project is complete.

8.3
Creative Hubs—A Proposition for Collectivism

Creative Hubs create sustainable forms of impact by encouraging collectivism and community wellbeing. Collectivism is qualitative, explored through short accounts in Part III of the report. Research can document how many participants were part of a programme, or how many working hours each workshop ran for, but what is fascinating about art and cultural work are the specific details of creating programmes, design, and collaboration. Creative Hubs put energy into creating programming for communities to gather, to share and experience art forms collectively. Such experiences are immeasurable, often advocating for social development of healthy and liveable communities.

Other than categorising and organising the Creative Hubs into categories, this report also adds complexity by acknowledging Creative Hubs using stories of Communities and Collectivism (online and physical), Building Networks, and striving for Alternative Arts Education. This consideration of

collectivism can shift away from the neoliberal agenda to a more communal ideology—a sharing economy. In a time where mutual aid and care is important, Creative Hubs and collectives in Malaysia have activated the role of organising around community issues, informal arts education, giving voice to communities.

An interdisciplinary lens of the arts and humanities, sociology or ethnographic lens should be adopted when researching further about Creative Hubs in the context of Malaysia. Different methods of collaboration can also be explored in extended research of Creative Hubs. This report is only the beginning, to draw attention to the art and cultural work of a lively ecology.

All Creative Hubs are inherently cultural, advocating various forms of art and cultural work to the public. It is my hope this report gives a snapshot during a difficult time of our history, the COVID-19 pandemic.
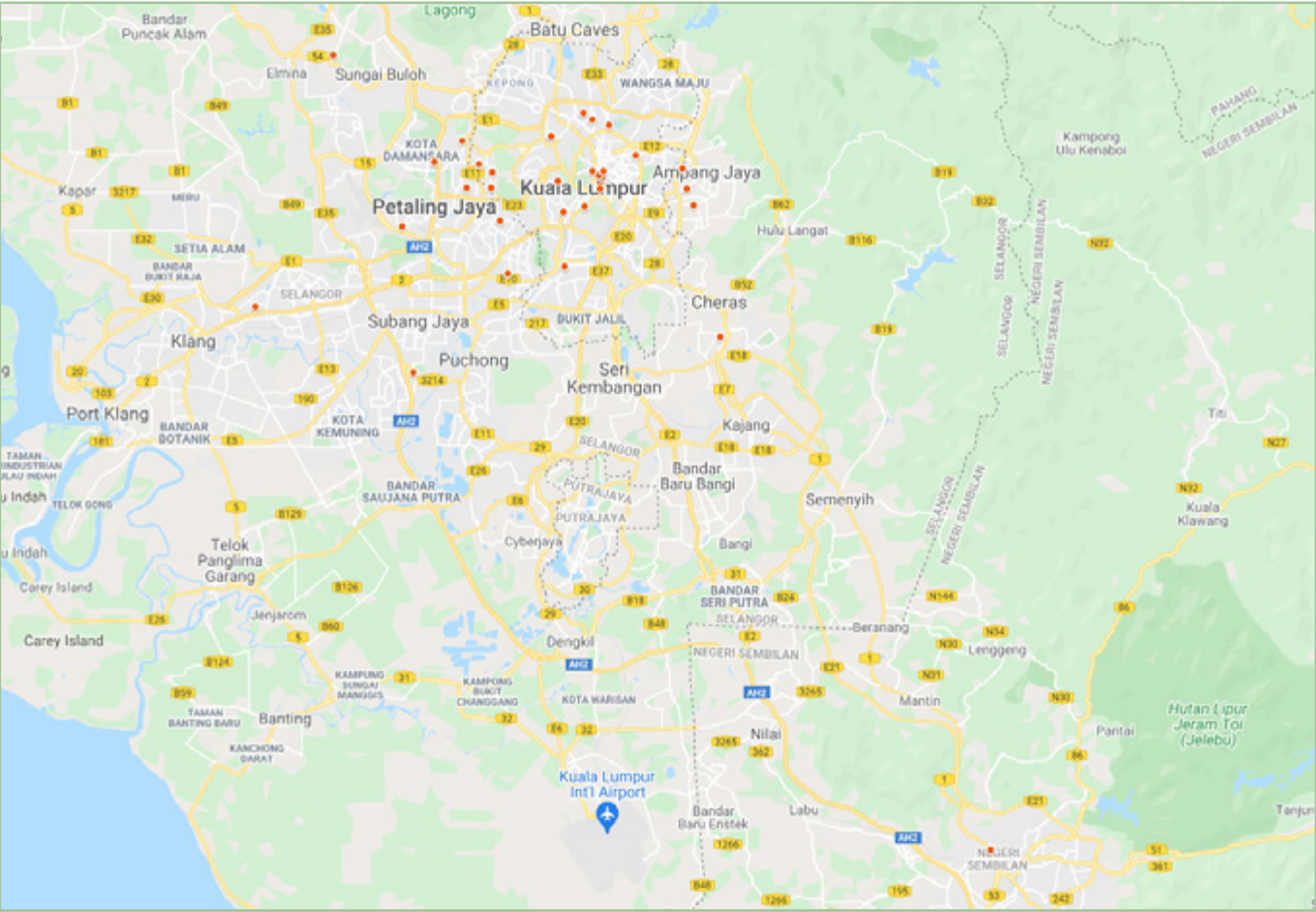

46 *HAUS KCH*

47 *Urbanscapes*

9
Map of Hubs

_____

The map of creative hubs can be accessed through **Google MyMaps** available online. From looking at the map, creative hubs do primarily focus on urban centres.

Overall Map of Malaysia

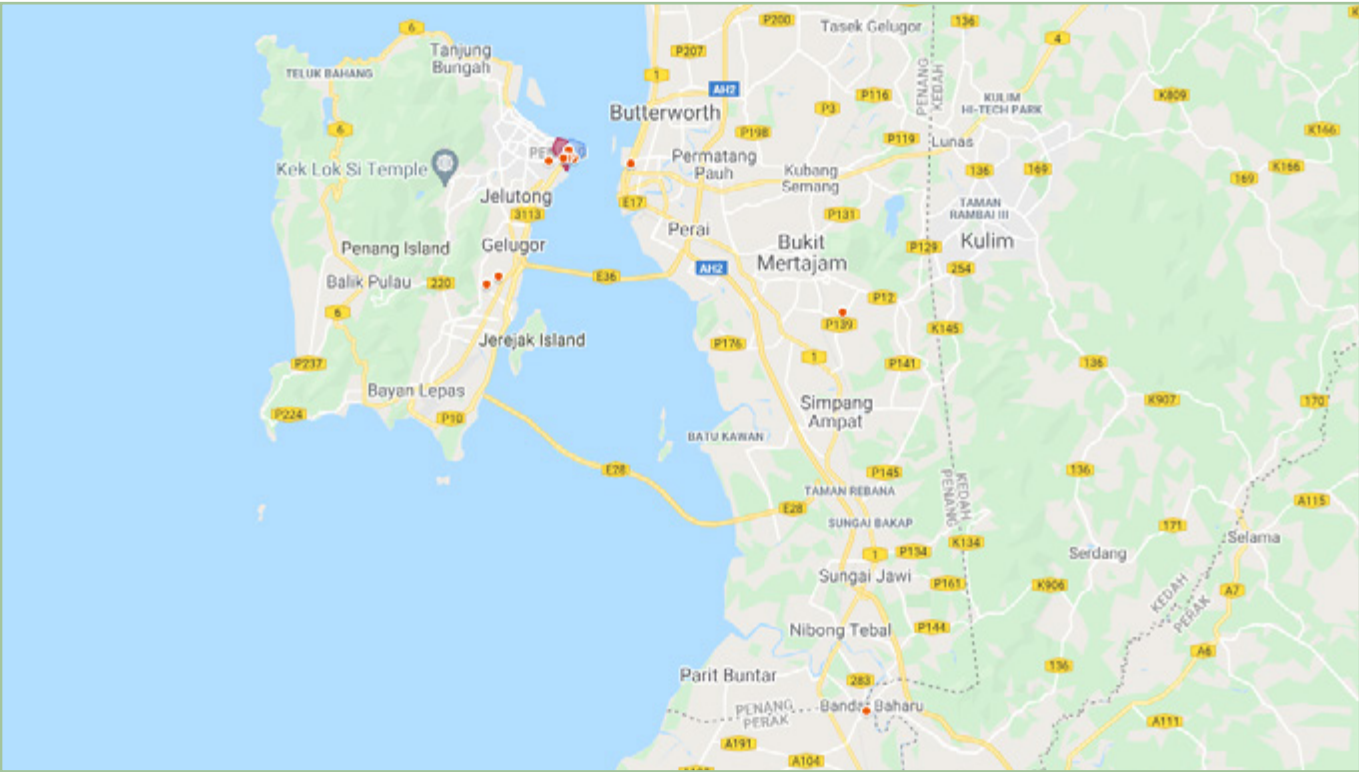**Klang Valley has the highest concentration of Creative Hubs**

Map of Penang State

10
Appendix

_____

The appendix draws together some notes and thoughts
which can begin to contextualise the key terminologies
and reference points. It also acts as a repository of reports
conducted locally and internationally around the term
Creative Hub, and if not within the arts and cultural ecology.

APPENDIX

10.1
Terminology of the Art & Cultural Ecology

Creative Hubs—
Physical, transient and virtual collectives that congregate creative people to participate within the art and cultural ecology (full description in **Section 2.3**)

Creative Hub Managers—
Individuals who organise and run the Creative Hub. These individuals liaise and negotiate between the various stakeholders within the Creative Hub. The manager is the connective tissue, the mycelium permeating throughout the arts and cultural ecology of a specific hub. They are aware of the different types of relationships and interconnectedness between all involved. These managers have developed an understanding, mostly from training through practise, on how to consistently translate the different demands required by the different production models of the hubs.[92]

Art and Cultural Ecology—
Abdullah uses the terminology "art ecosystem" to describe the

> **"Dynamic interactions—such as how artists meet, talk trust, share collaborate, (work together in teams), explore and grow together… the study of interactions of artists in the art ecosystem with their natural, social and built environment."**[93]

The threefold worlds (natural, social and built environments) imply a connection that spans physical space towards relationship building and networks. Communities participating within the arts and cultural ecosystem are not made up of constant entities, many of the workers are freelancers, embodying multiple roles and identities.

Art and Cultural Sector—
Under the government national employment structure of the Industry Classification, the arts and culture are categorised under the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Division 90. The sector is also represented by several ministries with a variety of objectives, such as, the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture (MoTAC), Ministry of Communications and Multimedia (KKMM), and other agencies under the government (please refer to the government matrix **diagram**).

Art and Cultural Workers—
Art and Cultural workers are typically activists, development workers or non-formal educations engaging within the discipline of the arts. Their practice includes engaging with social, cultural, or political ideas.

In 2000's, art and cultural work began to be defined by policies promoting a creative industry, instead of the national cultural policy (note: findings of the effects of the national cultural policy is not extensively available). Such policies were meant to directly support, fund and connect the art and cultural sector to an economic value.

At this point, features of art and cultural workers include fragmented employment, informality, self-entrepreneurship, insecurity, high mobility levels, and blurring of working and private times. The labour is in a continuous negotiation between self-exploitation and self-realisation.[94]

Within the context of Malaysia, the inclination to practice in different roles—producer, curator, artist etc. is the norm. There is also a tendency to have constant dialogue between collaborators.[95] Janet Pillai has written to also describe negotiation between theory and practice:

> **"Cultural workers, fresh from universities, attempt to negotiate theory and application by bringing objective scientific ways of seeing to interface with subjective cultural ways of doing."**[96]
>
> —Janet Pillai

Government Art Institutions—
Malaysia has several major public arts institutions typically focused in urban areas. They include Balai Seni Visual Negara (The National Art Gallery) and Istana Budaya (The Palace of Culture) located in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. There are several museums under either federal, state, or departmental management and they are usually found in state capitals.[97]

The conventional way to identify an art institution is that it is a place for art viewing. Traditionally "museums, galleries, auction houses and private collections"[98] fulfil this function. These institutions relate mainly to the visual arts. Creative Hubs not only interact with these institutions but also intersect with other alternative art and cultural production spaces.

[94] A. Bain and H. McLean, "The Artistic Precariat," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 93 – 111, https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rss020.

Mark Banks, The Politics of Cultural Work (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=736373.

Susan Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-Expressive Creative Worker: An Industry Perspective on Entertainment Media," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 7 – 8 (December 2008): 73 – 95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408097797.

[95] Susanne Bosch and Herman Bashiron Mendolicchio, *Art in Context: Learning from the Field: Conversations with and between Art and Cultural Practitioners*, 2017.

[96] Janet Pillai, "Cultural Collectives in Southeast Asia: Initiating Change in Community Consciousness through Engaged Arts."

[97] In 2013, there were 181 museums (-8 private controlled museums) located in Klang Valley. Currently these initiatives are not considered Creative Hubs, but their engagement in cultivating the arts and cultural ecology are repositories of histories and culture are important starting points.

[98] The Art Genome Project, "Art and the Institution," Artsy, February 11, 2014, https://www.artsy.net/article/theartgenomeproject-art-and-the-institution.

[92] Here I will quote Anna Tsing's understanding of Bruno Latour's idea of translation—who argues that " technology and science studies… who argue that you might want to see what happens when an engineer and electric motor are working together—that's a process he wants to call translation" which in itself is a creative endeavor—to expand the boundaries of our current practice.
Display Distribute and KUNCI Study Form & Collective, "Living Amidst the Ruins," in *[CATALOGUE] No. 03*, 3 (Seoul Mediacity Biennale, 2018), https://displaydistribute.com/mukluk/catalogue-0z3/.

[93] Abdullah, "The Emerging Alternative Practices in Malaysian Art (1990s – 2015)."

10.2
Archives

- **My Art Memory Project**
  Five Arts Centre

10.3
Reports

- **Where Art Happens: Bluff your way through this first-ever map of the Malaysian Art World**
  2009, Rogueart

- **Mapping KL Art Space**
  2009, Yap Sau Bin

- **Narratives of Malaysian Art Online Blog**
  2012, Rogueart

- **Kuala Lumpur Tourism Master Plan**
  2012 – 2015, DBKL

- **Kuala Lumpur Heritage Trail Master Plan**
  2016, DBKL

- **Mapping Creative Hubs Malaysia**
  2017, British Council

- **Kuala Lumpur as Cultural and Creative City Report**
  2018, CENDANA

- **Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District Strategic Master Plan**
  2019, Think City

- **Connecting Creative Communities— Creative Hubs in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia & The Philippines**
  2019, British Council

- **Meja Bulat: Sidang Suara Seni (Round Table: Art Voice Conference)**
  2019, CENDANA

- **Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District Next Generation Perspective**
  2020, Think City

- **COVID 19 Impact to the Arts Report**
  2020, CENDANA

- **Independent Music Ecosystem Map**
  2020, CENDANA

- **Performing Arts Ecosystem Map**
  2020, CENDANA

- **Visual Art Ecosystem Map**
  2020, CENDANA

- **Audience Propensity to Return to Arts Activities and Venues Report**
  2020, CENDANA

- **Situational Analysis of Creative Hubs in Malaysia Report 2019 – 2020**
  2020, British Council

10.4
List of Reports Conducted Internationally

International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)

- **IFACCA World Summit on Arts and Culture**
- **IFACCA Reports**[99]

UNCTAD—United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

- **UNCTAD Creative Economy Report series**

Creative Europe—EU-funded programs

- **Creativehubs.net**
  European Creative Hubs Network is a 2-year project. British Council is leading the work, in partnership with six European creative hubs— Bios in Greece, Addict in Portugal, betahaus in Germany, Kulturni Kod/Nova Iskra in Serbia, Creative Edinburgh in UK and Factoria Cultural in Spain—and the European Business and Innovation Network.

- **Culture Partnership.eu**
  Website developed under the EU-Eastern partnership Culture and Creativity Program 2015 – 2018

- **Europe's Creative Hubs Summary Report 2015**
  Funded by Portuguese bodies

---

[99] "We publish a range of reports that explore key issues related to arts and culture in public life. We publish trend reports and briefings for members, as well as occasional extended reports that are created in collaboration with external researchers. Our series of 50+ D'Art Reports (2002 – 2018) explore a range of issues from cultural leadership, the relationship between local cultural policies and national frameworks, to national arts advocacy campaigns, Indigenous arts policy and cultural diversity."

"Reports | IFACCA—International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies," accessed March 5, 2021, https://ifacca.org/en/what-we-do/knowledge-data/reports/.

11
Bibliography

Abdullah, Sarena. "The 1980s as (an Attempt in) the Decolonialization of Malaysian Art." Southeast of Abdullah, Sarena. "The 1980s as (an Attempt in) the Decolonialization of Malaysian Art." *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia* 4, no. 1 (2020): 3 – 29, https://doi.org/10.1353/sen.2020.0002. "The Emerging Alternative Practices in Malaysian Art (1990s – 2015)." *Art & the Public Sphere* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 2018): 25 – 41, https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.7.1.25_1.

Ahmad Suffian Asmawi Bin Ponijan, Mohamad Faizuan Mat, and Sarah Naemah Aman Leong. "The Visual Arts Education Crisis in Malaysia: Placement of Students into the Arts Curricular Stream at the Upper Secondary Level in Malaysian Secondary Schools." *Journal of Visual Art and Design* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 79 – 92, https://doi.org/10.5614/j.vad.2019.11.2.1.

Antoinette, Michelle. "Mapping Regional Difference: Institutionalized Cartographies of Southeast Asian Art." *Brill Academic Publishers* 178 (January 3, 2014): 81 – 155.

Arsip Indonesian Visual Art Archive. *IVAA ARTJOG14 ART|JOG|14—IVAA Public Discussion Forum: Ise Parking Project*, Malaysia, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bvbXVPpfQE.

Arts Ed. "Sasaran Art Association." Documentation Project and resource Site. Community Based Arts and Cultural workers in Malaysia. Accessed March 4, 2021, https://www.communityarts.my/profile-sasaran-association.

Arts-ED. "Community-Based Arts and Culture Education." Year in Review. Penang, Malaysia: Arts-ED, n.d. https://www.arts-ed.my/updates-blog/2019/12/5/keeping-the-traditional-games-going.

Barker, Thomas, Lee Yuen Beng, and School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, MALAYSIA. "Making Creative Industries Policy: The Malaysian Case." *Kajian Malaysia* 35, no. 2 (2017): 21 – 37. https://doi.org/10.21315/km2017.35.2.2.

Biji-biji. "Beyond Bins—Biji-Biji Initiative." Biji-biji. Accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.biji-biji.com/what-we-do/beyond-bins/.

British Council. "Creative Hubs." British Council | Creative Economy. Accessed March 4, 2021, https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/projects/hubs/.

Laman Khas Belanjawan 2021. "Budget 2021 Official Budget." Accessed March 5, 2021, http://belanjawan2021.treasury.gov.my/index.php/en/.

CENDANA. "Kuala Lumpur as a Cultural & Creative City." Kuala Lumpur, 2018.

Dinesh Kumar Maganathan. "Malaysian Community Arts Groups Score Big Wins at Boh Cameronian Arts Awards | The Star." News. The Star, July 3, 2020, https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2020/07/03/malaysian-community-arts-groups-score-big-wins-at-boh-cameronian-arts-awards.

Dovey, John, and Andy C. Pratt. "Creative Hubs: Understanding the New Economy." Creative Hubs. British Council, 2016.

Enterprise Connect and the Creative Industries Innovation Centre. "Creative Industries Economic Analysis." Centre for International Economics, June 30, 2009, https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/bitstream/10453/34839/1/CIIC_COLLATERAL_55_original.pdf.

European Creative Hubs Network. "European Creative Hubs Network." Research. European Creative Hubs Network, 2018, http://creativehubs.net/.

Fahmi Reza. *Wayang Kulit "Tragedi Insan Berembang,"* 2006, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmHqo3OjWQsA.

Five Arts Centre. "Grants | Five Arts Centre Malaysia." Five Arts Centre, 2021, https://www.fiveartscentre.org/krishen-jit-fund/. Five Arts Centre and Arts-ED. "Meta Timeline—AEAM." Arts Education Archive Malaysia, 2017, https://myartseducationarchive.com/meta/.

"Teater Muda Programme, Five Arts Centre & Young Theatre Penang." Arts Education Archive Malaysia, 2017, https://myartseducationarchive.com/selected-programs/teater_muda/.

Ilham Gallery. "Ilham Gallery Youtube Channel." Youtube. Accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClN-3Yo5Fgi-WH2I-CY_aC_Q/videos.

ILHAM Gallery. "Learning Online Resources | ILHAM Kuala Lumpur." Ilham Gallery. Accessed March 6, 2021, http://www.ilhamgallery.com/learn/tips/learning-on-line-resources.

Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Human Rights of Parliamentarians: 186th Governing Council Session." Inter-Parliamentary union Archive, April 1, 2010, http://archive.ipu.org/hr-e/186/Mal15.htm.

"Introduction." In *Museums, History and Culture in Malaysia*, 1 – 41. NUS Press, 2014.

Jomo, K. S. "The New Economic Policy and Interethnic Relations in Malaysia." *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development* 7 (2004).

Khaidil, Husna, Ali Alasri, and Kye Lee Clarissa Lim,. "Five Arts Centre—Creative Hubs Malaysia." Database. Creative Hubs, 2020, https://creativehubs.my/creative_hub/five-arts-centre/. "ReformARTsi – Creative Hubs Malaysia." Creative Hubs, 2020, https://creativehubs.my/creative_hub/reformartsi/.

Khairuddin, Nur Hanim. "Rumah YKP: Art in the Margins of Society." *Yi Shu* 11, no. 5 (n.d.): 71 – 80.

Kwok, Kian Chow. "United Artists Malaysia." The Literature, Culture and Society of Singapore. Accessed March 4, 2021. http://www.postcolonialweb.org/singapore/arts/painters/channel/3.html.

Lash, Scott, and Celia Lury. "Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things," n.d., 22.

Leow, Puay Tin. "Theatre for the Young." *Berita Shell*, January 1993, 4.

Liau, Swee-Foong. "Implementation of Arts Education in Malaysian Primary Schools: The Teachers' Perspective." In *3rd International Music and Performing Arts Conference Proceedings*, 245 – 50. Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris,: Tanjong Malim: Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, 2018.

Lin, Rowen. "Pangkor Island Festival Celebrates Arts, Culture, Boat-Building | The Star." The Star, 09 2019, https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/travel/2019/09/02/pangkor-island-festival-art-exhibition-heritage-culture.

lostgensadmin3. "Petaling Street Community Art Project • Lostgens." *Lostgens* (blog), September 1, 2011, https://lostgens.org/petaling-street-community-art-project/.

Low, Ling. "Connecting Creative Communities—Creative Hubs in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia & The Philippines." Creative Economy British Council. Kuala Lumpur: British Council, 10 17. https://www.britishcouncil.my/sites/default/files/bc-regional-creative_hubs_report_sea.pdf.

Mah Junyi and Low Peysien. "Seni Tiga—KongsiKL." KongsiKL. Accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.kongsikl.com/seni-tiga.

"Mapping Creative Hubs in Malaysia," n.d.

MInistry of Finance. "Penjana—Short Term Economic Recovery Plan." Ministry of Finance, 2020, https://penjana.treasury.gov.my/pdf/PENJANA-Booklet-En.pdf.

Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. 1. Harvard University Press paperback ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012.

"National Culture Policy | Prime Ministers Office (PMO)."
    Accessed March 4, 2021,
    https://www.pmo.gov.my/2019/07/national-culture-policy/.

Nesbitt, Rebecca Gordon. "Harnessing the Means of
    Production." Society of Control. Accessed March 4, 2021,
    http://www.societyofcontrol.com/pmwiki/Akademie/
    uploads/Main/harnessing.htm.

Ooi, Kok Chuen. "Once Upon A Time In Malaya @ Arteri." Lost
    Files by Southeast Asian Art Resource Channel. *Arteri*
    (blog). Accessed March 4, 2021,
    http://arteri.search-art.asia/2009/06/27/once-upon-a-
    time-in-malaya/.

Pillai, Janet. "Cultural Collectives in Southeast Asia: Initiating
    Change in Community Consciousness through Engaged
    Arts," 11, 2010.

Rais Yatim. "Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara Mampu Lonjak
    Ekonomi Dan Sosio-Budaya Negara | CariGold Forum,"
    2011,
    https://carigold.com/forum/threads/dasar-industri-kreat-
    if-negara-mampu-lonjak-ekonomi-dan-sosio-budaya-neg-
    ara.278062/.

ReformARTsi. "Kisah: Highlights of Arts Survey by UNDP
    Malaysia & ReformARTsi." Accessed April 22, 2021,
    https://www.facebook.com/ReformARTsi/vid-
    eos/776169673168876.

Saidon, Hasnul, Ray Lagenbach, Ramlan Abdullah, Nur Hanim
    Kairuddin, Rachel Ng, and Beverly Yong. "Some Ideas on
    How to Discuss Art Education in Malaysia: A Conversation."
    In *Infrastructures: Narratives in Malaysian Art*, 324 – 35.
    Kuala Lumpur: Rogue Art, 2016.

Smith, Richard, and Katie Warfield. "The Creative City: A
    Matter of Values." In *Creative Cities, Cultural Clusters and
    Local Economic Development*, edited by Philip Cooke and
    Luciana Lazzeretti, 287 – 312. New Horizons in Regional
    Science. Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, MA: Edward
    Elgar, 2008.

Soon, Simon. "Angkatan Pelukis Se-Malaysia." In *Routledge
    Encyclopedia of Modernism*, 1st ed. London: Routledge,
    2016,
    https://doi.org/10.4324/9781135000356-REM755-1.

Tan Sei Hon. "Rumah Air Panas (RAP)." Universes in Universe,
    December 2004,
    https://universes.art/en/nafas/articles/2004/rap.

The Tuyang Initaitive. "Tuesday Tales—Tuyang." Tuesday Tales
    (blog). Accessed March 6, 2021,
    https://thetuyang.com/category/tuesday-tales/.

The Tuyang Initiative. KELUNAN: Trailer, 2020,
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5cM1THwwgQ.

Theatresauce. "Directory of Theatre Companies in Malaysia."
    Theatresauce. Accessed March 6, 2021,
    https://www.theatresauce.com/community.

Think City. "About Think City Institute." Institute. Think City,
    2021,
    https://thinkcity.com.my/about-tci/.
    "Visualising Malaysian Cities." Think City, February 11,
    2021,
    https://thinkcity.com.my/urban-analytics/.

T.I.G.A. "About T.I.G.A." *T.I.G.A (Tindakan Gerak Asuh)* (blog),
    February 18, 2013,
    https://tindakangerakasuh.wordpress.com/about/.

TK Sabapathy. "Merdeka Makes Art or Does It?" In *Vision and
    Idea: Relooking Modern Malaysian Art*. National Art Gallery,
    1994.

Tuesday, 28 Apr 2020 11:50 AM MYT. "Arts for Malaysians, Not
    Just Tourists—ReformARTsi Coalition | Malay Mail." Malay
    Mail, April 28, 2020,
    https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-
    think/2020/04/28/arts-for-malaysians-not-just-tour-
    ists-reformartsi-coalition/1860882.

Tuyang Initiative. "Dayak Lore: Tales of Sarawak Encapsulated
    into a Colouring Story Book.—Tuyang." The Tuyang
    Initiative (blog). Accessed March 6, 2021,
    https://thetuyang.com/2020/07/11/dayak-lo-
    re-tales-of-sarawak-encapsulated-into-a-colouring-sto-
    ry-book/.

Wendy Teo. "The New Normal Reading Club." Borneo
    Laboratory. Accessed March 6, 2021,
    http://borneoartcollective.org/researchthink-
    tank/2020/8/26/the-new-normal-reading-club.

Yeoh, Lian Heng. "Lostgens' Contemporary Art Space."
    Lostgens. Accessed March 4, 2021,
    https://lostgens.org/.

Andrea Filmer, "Penang's Arts Scene Kept Alive by Resilient
    Community Spirit | The Star," News, The Star, March 9, 2020,
    https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2020/03/09/
    penang039s-art-scene-kept-alive-by-resilient-community-
    spirit.

Acknowledgements

AUTHOR

Clarissa Lim Kye Lee[1], Roslina Ismail[1]*,
Poon Chiew Hwa[2], Florence Lambert[3]**

EDITOR

June Tan

RESEARCH PROJECT LEADER

Roslina Ismail[1]*, Florence Lambert[3]**

CO-RESEARCHER

Poon Chiew Hwa[2], Erica Choong[3]

RESEARCH MEMBER

Clarissa Lim Kye Lee[1], Husna Khaidil[1], Ali Alasri[1]

LAYOUT

Bryan Chang

[1] Visual Studies Program
[2] Department of Music
     Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya,
     50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

[3] British Council
     Ground Floor, West Block, Wisma Golden Eagle Realty,
     142C Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*   Corresponding author: roslina_i@um.edu.my

** Corresponding author: florence.lambert@britishcouncil.org.my

48 *Hubs For Good research members interviewing Next New Wave (SeaShorts Film Festival).*

IMAGE CREDITS

1 Page iv © The Zhongshan Building

2 Page 2 © Bryan Chang

3 Page 3 © Andrew Fotoworld

4 Page 7 © Rainforest World Music Festival Fringe

5 Page 8 © Arts-ED

6 Page 10 © MATAHATI

7 Page 15 © PORT Commune

8 Page 16 © Festival Kolektif

9 Page 21 © Badan Warisan

10 Page 22 © Hubs For Good

11 Page 25 © What About Kuching

12 Page 26 © Yayasan Sime Darby Arts Festival

13 Page 28 © Cooler Lumpur Festival

14 Page 28 © Arcane Artisan

15 Page 29 © ReformARTsi

16 Page 30 © Little Giraffe Story House

17 Page 30 © PORT Ipoh

18 Page 31 © Sembilan Art Residency

19 Page 33 © Seni Tiga #10 Impermanence

20 Page 34 © Borneo Laboratory

21 Page 37 © Ruang Kongsi

22 Page 41 © Bryan Chang

23 Page 43 © The Tuyang Initative

24 Page 44 © Ian Teh

25 Page 45 © FabCafe Kuala Lumpur

26 Page 47 © We Are Filamen

27 Page 47 © Me.reka

28 Page 49 © Bryan Chang

29 Page 50 © REXKL

30 Page 51 © Borneo Benkel

31 Page 54 © Safehouse KL

32 Page 55 © George Town Literary Festival

33 Page 56 © Cult Creative

34 Page 57 © Bryan Chang

35 Page 58 © MulaZine

36 Page 59 © Instant Café Theatre Company

37 Page 61 © Lostgens'

38 Page 62 © ASK Dance Company

39 Page 63 © RIUH

40 Page 64 © 35@Jetty

41 Page 65 © Kwai Chai Hong

42 Page 66 © New Naratif

43 Page 67 © Rekan

44 Page 70 © Toccata Studio

45 Page 71 © Hin Bus Depot

46 Page 72 © Faiz Alavi

47 Page 73 © All is Amazing

48 Page 90 © Hubs For Good