

WEAVING VIRTUAL TRAJECTORIES IN CREATIVE-HUBS

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ABSTRACT

Dalam satu dekade terakhir ini, perhatian masyarakat pada persoalan kreativitas semakin meningkat seiring dengan semakin terlihatnya kontribusi kebudayaan dalam membangun ekonomi. Kepercayaan bahwa industri kreatif merupakan salah satu sektor ekonomi yang mampu bertahan dalam berbagai krisis yang menimpa dunia ini salah satunya ditandai fenomena kemunculan beberapa simpul kreatif yang secara global dikenal dengan istilah '*creative-hub*'. Simpul-simpul yang mewadahi berbagai potensi kreatif ini bertujuan untuk memberikan kontribusi nyata pada perkembangan ekonomi bagi lingkungan sekitarnya. Jika pandangan umum di Indonesia menganggap bahwa sebuah *creative-hub* adalah aglomerasi aktivitas yang bersifat fisik, nyatanya simpul ini juga dapat berbentuk jaringan virtual yang berbagi kesamaan tujuan untuk kemajuan bersama. Berangkat dari konsep Arturo Escobar mengenai lokus kebudayaan, tulisan ini hendak mengkaji bagaimana simpul kreatif juga dapat berfungsi untuk mengumpulkan potensi kreativitas dalam lintasan-lintasan yang terjadi dalam ruang imajiner, yang mampu mendorong produktifitas dan membuka peluang pengembangan kreativitas secara global. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif berupa studi literatur dan studi kasus, tulisan ini menyertakan program-program simpul kreatif virtual yang berhasil dijalankan oleh Creative Dundee di Inggris, dan jaringan yang dibentuk oleh Sasikirana KoreoLAB & Dance Camp di Bandung, sebuah inisiatif yang mengumpulkan berbagai potensi dalam bidang seni tari di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Simpul Kreatif, Industri Kreatif, Kreativitas, Ruang Virtual

ABSTRAK

Along with the increasing contribution of culture in the development of the economy in this past decade, people have –more than ever, turn their heads onto the issue of creativity. The notion of creative industry as one of the economy sector that survives the global crisis leads to the emerging phenomenon of platforms known as '*creative hubs*'. The goal of these platforms of creative groups or individuals is to actively contribute to the cultural economy in their. In Indonesia, '*creative hubs*' are often related to a physical agglomeration of collective activities, whereas this platform can actually be found in the form of virtual networks that share common visions for collective development. Having Arturo Escobar's concept on the locus of culture as the point of entry, this paper will study how creative-hubs can provide imaginary spaces to unleash trajectories for creative potentials, and how they build the ability to support productivity and unfold global

empowerment opportunities. Using a qualitative method of literature and case study, this paper will include successful programs of Creative Dundee, a creative-hub in England, and Sasikirana KoreoLAB & Dance Camp network in Bandung, an initiative that seeks talents in the field of performing arts, especially dance, in Indonesia.

Keywords: Creative-hub, Creative Industry, Creativity, Virtual Space

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades –more than ever, culture is taking part as a significant feature in the discussion of global political economy and urban development. Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI), according to the report in “Cultural Times, The first global map of cultural and creative industries” (2015), contributes one third of the global GDP and USD 2,250 billion of revenues worldwide. The industries employ 29.5 million of people which calculates to 1% of the world’s active population. The report also mentions that this sector of economy has created a multipolar mapping, having Asia-Pacific as the top market with its large population, followed by Europe and United States as second and third largest CCI driven markets in this world.

In the world of scholars, discussions, concepts and theories are constantly constructed around the development of culture and creativity as it increasingly shows more impact to the political economy of cities, regionals, and jurisdictions across the globe, influencing work force, welfare, and governmental policies (Zukin, 1995; Scott, 2000; Hutton, 2016). In 2001 John Howkins generated a model of industry classification that is mostly used in cultural plannings throughout the globe, focusing on the contribution of creative products and services to the growth of economy, ranging from arts to science and technology. One of the most influential and widely imitated concept came from Richard Florida (2003) with his ‘creative class’ model, which stated that creative economy creates new geography, where in this creative milieu individuals and groups of the creative core tend to cluster together in a specific conducive environment to strengthen their productivity. He argues that place and communities are more critical factors than ever in building a strong economy foundation, and the economy itself increasingly takes form around real concentrations of people in real places (Florida, 2003).

The notion of place as a concentrated melting point for creative potentials unfolds into several manifestations, one of the most recently popular term of these kinds of clusterings are the ‘creative hubs’, where collaboration, innovation and enterprises become the basic stepping ground of this specific agglomeration. Following United Kingdom’s leading policy in constructing the infrastructure creative economy, The British Council has recently released a paper entitled “Creative Hubs: Understanding The New Economy” (2016) that tries to reveal why these thriving number of clusters have become a new way of organizing communities with the involvements of innovation and development, embedded to particular cultural context where each member of the hubs have the opportunity to empower their own value systems.

On the other side, the economic inflation have also caused a challenging fact on the property market especially in urban spaces. Renting spaces have become unbearably high, not to mention taxing systems and the amount of fund needed to gather a number of companies to cluster in one particular space. To many places, where the government do not invest on fostering the physical hardware for creative millieus, this condition have generated the emergence of 'nomadic' creative hubs, a phenomena where creative potentials virtually gather under a certain management to develop their business. With technology bringing high access of communication system and information, these virtual creative hubs open the chapter of new economy and new geography of imaginary spaces across the globe, bringing at the same time spatial complexity to many urban areas around the world.

In this paper, I am particularly interested to highlight the notion of 'place' for these virtual creative hubs, how the boundaries are set in these imaginary clusterings, and how these hubs react to the ever changing landscapes of human geography. What does 'place' mean for these rapid changing clusters? Even more so than in other periods of economic change, we are faced with societies that are constructed through the internet, new technologies of communication and modern transportation. How does it influence our understanding of culture? As a point of entry, this paper will refer to Arturo Escobar's concept on the locus of culture (2001), where he stated, "Place has dropped out of sight in the 'globalization craze' of recent years, and this erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy."

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the idea of place, this paper use a literature study on the issue of cultural spaces which includes a review on the difference of the term 'space' and 'place' according Arturo Escobar's article "Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization" (2001), aligned with the critical perspective on urban development study by Thomas A. Hutton (2016) in his book "Cities and The Cultural Economy". This literature study is useful to articulate the distinctive meanings of 'place' in today's cultural landscape as a theoretical background, before I connect them to the practices that are found in the society.

More literature research is substantial to create a common understanding of the definition of 'creative hubs' where the information is extracted from the British Council's publication on Creative Hubs Report 2016, including an example of the practice in Creative Dundee, one of the nomadic creative hub projects that were highlighted as to have a virtual networking system.

For comparison in a more regional based case study, I include a review based on an action research about Sasikirana KoreoLAB and Dance Camp, a network for young performing arts potentials in Indonesia that are gathered to develop their skill, knowledge and sustainable support system. The community draw its member from all over Indonesia through an open-call, and has progressed from only having an annual intensive dance workshop to an all-year-around communication system that contributes to the development of the member's career in the performing arts world

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In understanding the significant role of creative hubs, I would like to begin with the discussion of the term 'place' itself. This, I believe, becomes important notion in order to gain a comprehensive understanding in recognizing the context of locality in the webs of cultural and creative potentials as such found in the networks of creative hubs. As we all realize, the world is now facing the era of globalization where cultural and personal identity becomes a challenging issue to discuss, having the internet and new technology opening the access to cross the borders between nations, the enacted creative common property rights and the constructions of new economy policies.

Following the theoretical stepping ground of the cultural context of locality in these networks, I will proceed to the definition of creative hubs itself, with the purpose of elaborating the possibilities of formations in constructing different kinds of networks. Through several cases, I will then emphasize on the factors in these networking system that are essential to use in operating creative hubs.

Drawing Cultural Lines Around Places

"New spatial concepts and metaphors of mobility — deterritorialization, displacement, diaspora, migration, traveling, border-crossings, nomadology, etc. — have made us aware of the fact that the principal dynamics of culture and economy have been significantly altered by unprecedented global processes." (Escobar, 2001)

When Escobar wrote his argument about the significant meaning of 'place' and his concern about the state of being 'placeless' in 2001, it was still a decade before information technology really take over the reality in our everyday lives. The post-industrial era have gone so far in creating trans-national service-based networks and the post-Fordism generated a new international division of labor favoring in developing countries. In "Cultural Sits in Place: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization" (2001), Escobar distinctively separates the meaning of 'place' and 'space'. He withdraw his perspective from ancient to modern philosophy that saw 'space' as the absolute, unlimited and universal, banning 'place' to the realm of the particular, the limited, the local, and the bound. Another way of seeing it is that "space had to be dissociated from the bodies that occupy it and from the particularities that these bodies lent to the places they inhabit." This perspective is very much associated to the anthropological point of view where locality becomes an important factor to study a particular culture. In order to understand human existence, he argues, we must recognize that place, body, and environment integrates with each other.

However, Escobar recognizes the emergence of new technology with the notion that human are not only local, but inseparably linked to both local and extralocal places through networks, in terms of the way it connects persons and places. To this extent, places gather things, thoughts and memories in particular configurations and it is characterized by openness rather that by unitary self-identity (Escobar, 2001:143). Places connect with each other to form regions which suggest that porosity of boundaries is essential to place, as it is to local constructions and exchange. He quotes the philosopher Edward Casey (1996) that "locality, in this way, becomes marked by the interplay

between position, place and region; by the porosity of boundaries; and by the role of the lived body between enculturation and emplacement.”

Nowadays, through several factors, people are faced with the role of being ‘placeless’. The transnational flows of people characterized by complex relations of culture and power that goes local beyond local bounds. In this displacement situations though, as Escobar sees it, people seem to create boundaries, and to some extent these porous boundaries must have the ‘locality’ even when people are relocated. In understanding this deterritorialized culture connected to social movement, he argues that to construct place as a project, to turn place-based imaginaries into a radical critique of power, and to align social theory with a critique of power by place requires the knowledge of historical conjunctures, political economy and the relations of power.

This knowledge becomes a substantial factor in shaping new spatial concepts in contemporary urban areas considering the complexity and fluidity of post-industrial era where not only constituted by physical agglomerations, the networks of people are now constructed by virtual trajectories of trans-national and intercity connections. Agglomeration economies reflect the strength of production networks, as well as the intensely social nature of advanced economic systems, facilitated by the co-location of firms, labor, consumption, and housing (Hutton, 2016: 194). It is clearly then to say that ‘place’ in terms of the clustering of potentials in these networks is not the case of domestication but rather expanding the activities into a higher level of productivity.

Marking Trajectories in Creative Hubs

In a similar context of economic and social activities, the creative world is familiar with Project-based Organization (PBO) that are exist in a variety of industries. PBOs identify a vast range of organizational forms that are characterized by the creation of temporary structures oriented to the completion of a project with specific tasks (Sydow et al., 2004 in Bettiol and Sedita, 2011). Unlike PBOs though, creative hubs are created in more sustainable projection, open the possibilities for multiple projects, and seeking the potentials of diversity.

Aware of people’s vague understanding of the term ‘creative hubs’, The British Council published a report produced by Prof. Jon Dovey, Prof. Andy C. Pratt and their associates in the City University of London (in affiliation with the University of West of England, REACT, Creativeworks London, and The Watershed), entitled “Creative Hubs: Understanding the New Economy” (2016). In the report, creative hubs is defined as “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”. Common usage does not differentiate between incubators, accelerators, labs and hubs where they discuss the proliferation of these organisations.

In addition to that, the report emphasize the importance to recognize the difference of creative hubs and cluster. While using the same element of networking and spatial elements, the idea of creative clusters is based on co-locating similar business elements in a closer region, or perhaps even in the same building, to increase effectiveness and efficiency of production, whereas for hubs the ‘local’ is an urban

cultural system that extends beyond a single building or networks of buildings. Becoming a 'hub' of a network is an act of managing beyond the simple act of naming or designating a hub. Which networks are linked, and which forms of cultural production are supported and connected, becomes one of the defining characteristics of the hub and also self-defines its mission. It is important to acknowledge that hubs are created on the ground of multiple stakeholders and that a daily management is significant in driving the complexity of its members.

The British Council offers a variant of forms in constructing creative hubs:

1. Studio: Small collective of individuals and/or small business in a co-working space
2. Centre: Large-scale building which may have other assets such as a café, bar, cinema, maker space, shop, exhibition space
3. Network: Dispersed group of individuals or businesses –tends to be sector or place specific
4. Cluster: Co-located creative individuals and business in a geographic area
5. Online Platform: Uses only platform methods –website/social media to engage with a dispersed audience
6. Alternative: Focused on experimentation with new communities, sectors and financial modes

The most important impact of these structures is how its organisation has a compelling model for the support of creative production. sector. The key to successful hubs is in the curation and the mobility of their of activities. These can range from social and cultural events, to bringing in ideas and provocations, to traditional business skills and development and access to specialist services (technical and financial). They also relate to the indefinable creation of artistic communities thus the organisation involves a huge reliance on trust and reputation in the individuals and communities they are dealing with.

In another word, the achievement of creative hubs depends on how the organisation is capable on keeping the society inside to feel beneficiaries to each other, having a positive transactions of creative capacities within the hubs, and instead of being in competition with each other, the communities grow a sense of complementing each elements of the hubs with their specialty or skills. However, an evaluation system is required in order to maintain a balanced function in the community, where it is important that everyone in the hubs are running their businesses within the same vision of development.

To identify and re-evaluate a creative hub, it is useful to recognize the basic elements that construct this networking system whether the hubs are based on physical or virtual networks, those are:

- Programmes
- Processes
- People
- Place
- Partnership
- Value and values
- Impact and assets

The framework of these elements gives us the possibility to analyze cultural ecosystem within the hubs while monitoring the function and the modes of knowledge transfer within the hubs. It is important to note that the development in creative hubs includes dynamic process that emphasize on the continuity of the group, under a certain management to practise sustainable governance. Especially in the case of virtual networks, it is necessary for the management to maintain the community to keep having the same corridor of frame works and share the same vision towards development.

As an attempt to create a better understanding of how creative hubs operate using virtual connectivity as the basic framework, I analyze some case studies :

Case study: Creative Dundee⁷⁰

At the beginning, the hub started as a side project on an internet blog in 2008 with the aim to cover interest of people and project within the area of Dundee, England. The main objective of this nomadic community was to feature projects of people that were not profiled in a bigger scene of the arts, and to be a focal point of creativity in the city. Nowadays, Creative Dundee's main objective is to support creative talent to base, grow and sustain their practise in and around Dundee by connecting and amplifying the city's creativity.

Within five years since the starting point of the blog, without a physical building as the basic working ground, Creative Dundee developed some business models that were published in CD, joined the Pecha Community, and crowdsourced Dundee to campaigned the city as one of creative melting point in England. In 2013, it was established as a legal enterprise, and from there launched several programmes that were designed, developed and ran as a platform for citizens to share thir ideas about Dundee's future, in association with Dundee Partnership and Fleet Collective. The organisation is supported by Creative Scotland and Dundee City Council and as a social enterprise, it generate around 50% of income through trading activities, reinvesting profits back into creative businesses and the local communities.

Inclusion and accessibility is a core elements in their activities, and the main process are worked out in to:

- Amplify
- Connect
- Cultivate
- Collaborate

⁷⁰ Literature review from www.creativedundee.com (4 December 2017), completed with extracted information taken from Gillian Easson, the director, in her visit to Bandung Creative Hub, 23 November 2017 (the event was supported by The British Institute, as part of UK/ID Festival 2017)



Fig. 1. Creative Dundee annual meeting
(Doc www.creativedundee.com)

Creative Dundee helps to support the city to gain recognition in the British national level with the acknowledgement from Tech Nation Report 2017, highlighting Dundee to have the highest turnover growth in the UK of 171% with also 91% of Dundee's tech sector rated the city's quality of life as good. They now continue to support local creative communities to start up enterprises by offering a startup toolkit when joining the community.

Case Study: Sasikirana KoreoLAB & Dance Camp⁷¹

Sasikirana KoreoLAB and Dance Camp (SKDC) started as an initiative to bring back the notion of the body as a tool of expression, not just the medium of representation. Taking a fragment from the picture of thousands of dancers in the Asia-Pacific region, SKDC place Indonesia as one of the most important melting pot for dance where contents, substances and skills are abundantly found and eager to be developed. The program focuses on the contemporary dance forms, having the knowledge that this particular genre is progressively developing in the performing arts world, in the belief that it allows artists to react to their surroundings and place their statements towards the political and socio-cultural environment around them.

Every year since 2015, SKDC holds an intensive week of dance workshop taking place in NuArt Sculpture Park, Bandung, Indonesia as an annual gathering for its participants. Every year, around 20-25 young dancers gather from all over Indonesia through an open call and selection, and get trainings and tutoring from internationally-

⁷¹ I conduct an action research about Sasikirana KoreoLAB and Dance Camp as my part in the organizing team every year since 2015. So far the annual gathering has been conducted three times, while the community maintenance is managed all year around

known dance professionals in order to develop their skill, conceptual thinking, and creativity. They will be accommodated all-board without charge, having the awareness that one of the problems for artistic development in Indonesia, and South East Asia in a bigger area, is finding supports for financial resources. At the end of each camp, the participants show a work-in-progress presentation in front of public. This program has received high appreciation from public and the media over the last couple of years, and they determine to continue its positive outcome in order to develop a better ecosystem for the contemporary performing arts scene in Indonesia.

After three years of development, it has become obvious that the member of this community has grown a much stronger working ground, not only to physically gather for workshops, but also starting a business model to develop their existence in the performing world, not only in the national scop, but also internationally. So far, the size community have grown from starting with 31 members in 2015 to more than 80 creative individuals that are actively keeping the community alive in a daily basis, although physically the members live in in different parts of Indonesia. The network created in SKDC has snowballed into a daily organization of cross-territorial team work, sustainable information system, and starting to generate a source of income for its members.

This growth is aligned with SKDC main objectives which are:

- To develop creativity in the contemporary dance field in the context of skill development, conceptual thinking, construction of idea, and artistic execution
- To build a sustainable network of dancers in the contemporary dance scene
- To actively contribute to the development of performing arts scene, especially in Indonesia and Asia region
- To map and document the development of contemporary dance by sustainably engaging with all participant and alumni of SKDC



Fig. 2. SKDC annual dance camp, opportunity to expand knowledge and build networks (Doc. SKDC documentation team)

The fact that the members of this community lives sporadically around Indonesia and some parts of South East Asia region, it is necessary to keep virtual trajectories visible for everyone, that there is the same goal to reach, which is creating a better infrastructure for the performing arts. The physical existance may appear in different places, but the impact of being together in a hub creates a stronger political statement for each of the members.

CONCLUSION

Cultural trajectories has infiltrated many kinds of places in the era of post-industrialism, including to creative firms and labours, therefore it is important to be flexible and to be open to new kinds of enterprises in developing our business. Creative hubs offers a fresh formation of 'place' for the dynamic creative potentials, and at the same time a solution for having stronger political power without the need to physically located together. The sense of locality lies on the ability of the organisation to maintain the shared vision and nurturing the common goal of the creative hubs which can cultivate the sense of belonging for each members of the creative hubs to contribute in the development and being complementary to each other. This condition will construct new grounds of existance and significant articulation of productivity in the economic, cultural and ecological dimensions.

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