

Partner South East Asia

Indonesia: Beyond the art of *'nongkrong'*

Report: March 2022

Highlights

- **Nongkrong means ‘hanging out’ in English. It is an integral part of networking and collaboration in Indonesia, as well as part of the creative process.**
- **This session provided the Indonesian market context and insights into its arts and culture sector.**
- **A new generation of creative city-making is redefining approaches to creativity and urbanism.**
- **Festivals bring people together and is a catalysing force for a city’s cultural life. They’re platforms for people to express themselves, and they contribute to economic and social development.**

Overview

The session started with an overview of the Indonesia’s arts, culture and creative economy, as well as insights from the British Council’s research *Festivals in South East Asia: Catalysts for the Creative Economy* and [Indonesia Cultural Cities profiles](#).

Camelia Harahap, Head of Arts Indonesia, British Council, emceed the session. Hugh Moffatt, Country Director Indonesia & South East Asia Cluster Lead, British Council, opened the session.

The panel discussion featured three artists and artistic directors with creative relationships between the UK and Indonesia. Adam Pushkin, a freelance producer and director, led the conversation titled *Indonesia – The Art of ‘Nongkrong.’* They spoke about the benefits of collaboration and how the UK and Indonesia can learn from each other.

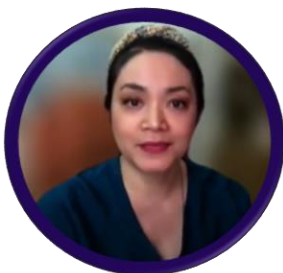
Opening remarks: Hugh Moffatt



The British Council has partnership programmes with 50 organisations. It has facilitated many UK-Indonesia connections over the last five years, such as the [UK/ID](#) campaign¹ from 2016-19. In November 2021, Foreign Secretary of the UK, Liz Truss, visited Indonesia, endorsing the two countries' partnership.

Indonesia has a strong focus on the creative economy. It led the [International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development](#) at the UN in 2021. In the following year leading to the G20 meeting², it'll continue to seek creative economy and sustainable development as a core element of post-pandemic economic recovery.

Overview of Indonesia's arts and culture: Linda Hoemar Abidin



Linda is the treasurer of [Koalisi Seni](#), Indonesia's only organisation working on arts policy advocacy. It collaborates with institutions, communities and members throughout Indonesia.

In the arts community, hanging out for discussions didn't include important stakeholders like the government and business. There was a lack of understanding of arts-related policies and regulations. Therefore, in 2012, 41 cross-disciplinary arts practitioners formed Koalisi Seni to voice the art sector's invisible concerns.

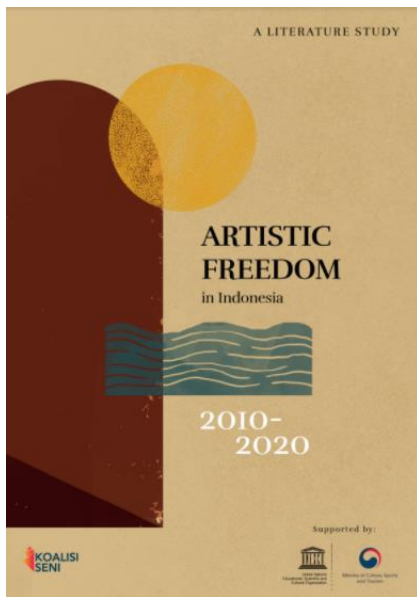
¹ UK/ID was a three-year campaign to encourage contemporary cultural exchange by helping artists and creative communities to connect and collaborate.

² The G20 Leaders' Summit 2022 with the theme *Recover Together, Recover Stronger*, will be held in Bali in October.

Koalisi Seni serves as a knowledge hub focusing on policy advocacy in the arts. In 2018, they facilitated Indonesia's first ever Indonesian music conference.

In 2018 and 2019, they participated in the [Indonesia Development Forum \(IDF\)](#), held by the Ministry of National Development Planning.

In 2019, Koalisi Seni worked with the Ministry of Education and Culture to prepare the [UNESCO 2005 Convention](#) Quadrennial Periodic Report (QPR).



In 2020, UNESCO commissioned Koalisi Seni for a [study](#) on Indonesia's artistic freedom. It revealed violations of the six rights of artistic freedom³. It also highlighted the need for collaboration with human rights organisations to advocate the issue.

In 2010, the government issued tax incentives for donations, including for arts and culture activities. However, unclear regulations on philanthropic tax discourage potential contributors as they're unsure about tax deductions.

Image courtesy of UNESCO/Koalisi Seni

Koalisi Seni was actively involved in the formulation of the [Law on the Advancement of Culture](#) that mandated the establishment of the [Cultural Endowment Fund](#). However, its implementation is delayed as local and central governments are not aligned⁴.

Koalisi Seni also consulted on the [Law of Creative Economy](#) that mandates the development of a sustainable creative ecosystem and sees the creative sector as a potential source of GDP.

³ The six rights of artistic freedom are the right to:

- create without censorship or intimidation
- have artistic work supported, distributed and remunerated
- freedom of association
- protection of social and economic rights
- participate in cultural life

⁴ As per Feb 2022, the Cultural Endowment Fund's establishment is referenced through the Presidential Decree no 111 (year 2021) about Endowment Fund in the Education sector

However, there is no specific institution to execute the mandates and no clear definition of creative practitioners as workers and their rights.

Occupation in the arts is not protected by Indonesia's labour law. Most jobs in the sector don't have the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards. There are no standard minimum wages, standard prices for the procurement of arts services, standard working hours, occupational health and safety, and health coverage.

Cultural cities and festivals

This segment featured two research commissioned by the British Council:

- Research on cultural cities that covered Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam and China
- Mapping of the festivals landscape in South East Asia

Tom Fleming, the director of [Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy](#), which develops cultural and creative strategies for nations, regions and cities, led the talk.



Clockwise: Tom Fleming, Tita Larasati, Felencia Hutabarat

Policy work gets the creative industry a seat at the table: Tita Larasati

Tita is an academic and part of the International Advisory Council of UK's [Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre \(PEC\)](#)⁵ to exchange knowledge about Indonesian and global creative industries. She is also Deputy of Strategic Partnership, [Indonesia Creative Cities Network \(ICCN\)](#). Tita shared her work on transforming Indonesia's culture and creative economy.



Image taken from Tita Larasati's presentation showing Indonesia's expansive geography and population diversity present many challenges, as well as opportunities to advance its creative economy.

Young people dominate Indonesia's demography. There are initiatives in cities for them to gather, do business and enjoy activities. They've turned idle spaces into vibrant places to accommodate themselves.

⁵ PEC provides independent research and policy recommendations for the UK's creative industries.

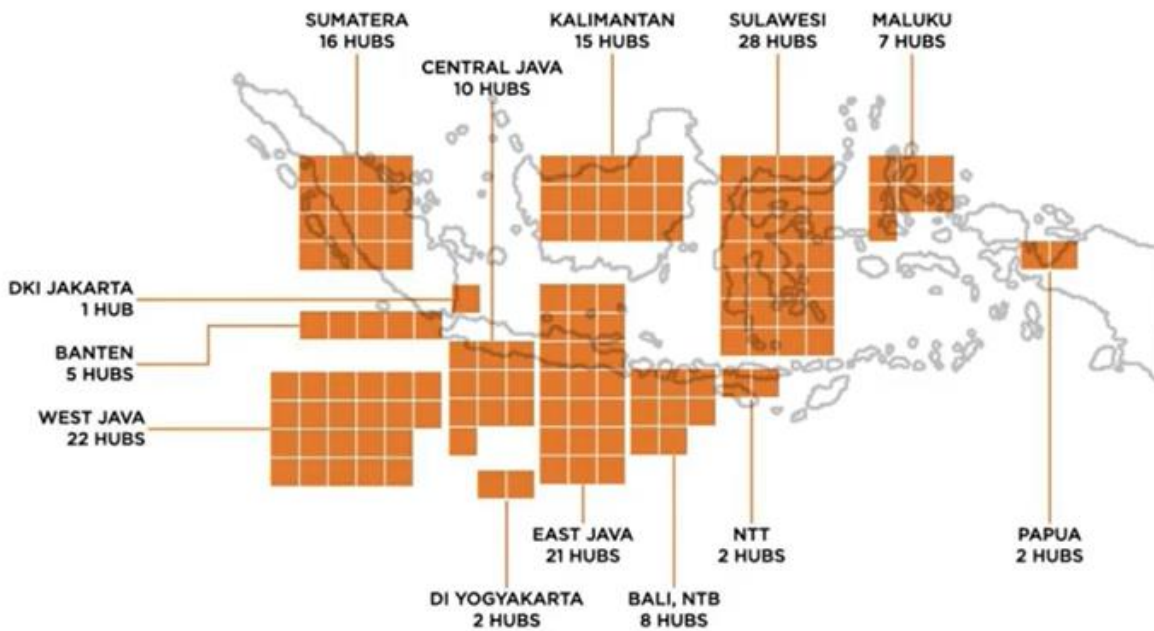


Image taken from Tita Larasati's presentation showing ICCN's mapping of creative hubs belonging to young people.

ICCN participated in the drafting of the [10 Principles of Creative Cities](#). It also contributed to the white paper [Inclusive Creative Economy and the Future of Work](#) and policy recommendations of [U20 in Riyadh](#)⁶. Human-centred development using technology will help meet the challenges of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Besides bottom-up initiatives, concepts, methods and models need to be reinforced through different channels. For example, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) has a conference to gather ideas from academics for the creative economy.

ICCN's CONNECTI:CITY connects creative hubs at the regional level to influence the development of provinces, cities and agencies. This effort led to the passing of a bill on creative economy at the city level.

⁶ Urban 20 (U20) provides a mechanism for cities to engage in the G20.

Citizen initiatives drive festivals: Felencia Hutabarat

Felencia co-founded [Jogja Festivals](#). She's also a cultural producer and researcher who works across the Indonesian and global cultural landscapes.

Jogja Festivals is an organisation founded by 15 festivals in Yogyakarta and has grown into a festival forum with a membership of 55 festivals all over Indonesia. It focuses on:

- Cultural capacity
- Creative economy growth
- Environmental awareness
- Tolerance and inclusivity
- Opportunities for minorities

Jogja Festivals' *Research on Festivals in Southeast Asia: Catalyst for the Creative Economy* examined the link between cultural festivals and the creative economy. The 2021 research discovered that many festivals were created to celebrate traditions and cultural identity.

Research on
Festivals
in South East Asia
**CATALYSTS
FOR THE
CREATIVE ECONOMY**



FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

- Knowledge production - Jakarta Biennale
- Cultural Exchange - Ngayogjazz
- Showcasing and collaborative works
- Reflection
- Education
- Public Appreciation

Image taken from Felencia Hutabarat's presentation showing the six functions of festivals.

In relation to *nongkrong*, most festivals are not government-initiated, but a result of people spending time together. Eighty per cent of festival production are citizen initiatives and self-organised.

Many festivals are admission free to make them accessible for the audience, yet have been running for six to ten years, showing the resilience of organisers.

Questions for discussion

Where can exchange with the UK arts and culture sector be most impactful for Indonesian festivals and in terms of city making?

Felencia: The lessons we can offer to the UK are how festivals here can grow organically regardless of the little governmental support, and the resilience of Indonesian organisations.

How do you make connections between top-down and bottom-up in community activism and informal activities and policies?

Tita: For top-down approaches, evidence is needed for the government to justify their budget, policies and regulations. For bottom-up development, the Creative City Index connects to the government's KPIs.

Panel discussion: UK-Indonesia collaborations

This session on the importance of *nongkrong* in creative work was moderated by Adam Pushkin, who has worked on creative collaborations, residences and festivals in the UK, India and Indonesia. Three panellists from Indonesia and the UK joined the conversation.



Clockwise: Jack Lowe, Hana Madness, Sarah Archdeacon, Adam Pushkin

Going with the flow: Sarah Archdeacon

Sarah is Artistic Director at [Coral](#), a London dance company that works with youths and adults with learning disabilities. They've collaborated with Jakarta-based [Gigi Art of Dance](#) since 2019.

It started with an invitation from [Impermanence](#), a dance company based in Bristol. They asked DJ, Coral's Associate Artistic Director, to lead a residency in Indonesia, which Gigi was a part of. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Coral and Gigi worked on a digital dance toolkit, setting time to come together virtually, while developing ideas in their own time.

To Sarah, not having a pre-determined outcome made the lockdown collaborations successful. The creative process was open-ended, with project participants responding to each other as they went along.

Hanging out leads to opportunities: Hana Madness

Hana is a visual artist in Jakarta. She uses her art and voice as mediums to address mental health issues based on her personal experience as someone with mental disability.

Hana explained that *nongkrong* is rooted in the lives of Indonesians because gathering and chatting is part of their culture. Even though *nongkrong* may seem lazy, conversations on topics like culture, politics, economy, nationality and environment can produce ideas with positive impact.

The hangout scene in junior high school brought Hana into the arts. It also led to professional opportunities. Hana started working with the UK in 2016, when the British Council in partnership with Unlimited Festival, invited her to a seminar on arts and disability.

She then joined the Indonesian delegation to the [Unlimited](#) festival⁷ in London. When she returned, she met the Directorate of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture to discuss about Indonesia having its own arts and disability festival.

In 2018, with a British Council grant, she teamed up with James Leadbitter, aka [the vacuum cleaner](#), to produce [In Chains](#)⁸, a documentary about mental health. It was presented at [Festival Bebas Batas](#)⁹ as part of [UK/ID 2018](#). The film went on to festivals in the UK, Germany, Australia and Indonesia. This led to international connections and other collaborations.

Hana doesn't hide her disabled identity and advocacy for mental health issues. Before, she was afraid this would become an obstacle for her to enter the artistic ecosystem. Now, she works with others to create artistic growth, empathy and new understandings. Working with UK organisations and artists has helped her to understand the art world structure, present her ideas and work better, and give her work more value.

⁷ Unlimited is a biennial festival that celebrates the artistic vision and creativity of disabled artists. It features dance, performance, comedy, music and the visual arts.

⁸ The documentary is about a mental health community in West Java who were previously subjected to a practice of shackling, chaining or confinement (known as *pasung*) because of their disability.

⁹ Festival Bebas Batas celebrates art by disabled people.

Jack Lowe

Jack is Artistic Director/CEO/Technical Dramaturg of [curious directive](#), a theatre company based in Norwich.

He collaborated with Makassar-based Rais (visual developer) and Reza (sound artist) on [Deciphering](#). It's a theatrical journey to the origins of human communication and creativity, inspired by the discovery of the world's oldest cave painting at Leang Tedongnge in a rural Sulawesi.

The duo became Jack's eyes and ears in Indonesia. The creative output of the play depended on what they recorded. In turn, Rais and Reza trusted Jack to work with what they've found. This openness and trust showed that whomever was in the room, was the right person for the collaboration.

Jack finds that devised and collaborative theatre in the UK is conservative, while Indonesian artists work with a wider family of artists. They also have interests beyond their individual discipline and are self-learners.

Watch the video recording [here](#).